

New York Yearly Meeting Worship and Action Update, 2/7/03

Beloved Friends,

The second month of a new calendar year has begun. The world whirls. Words and pictures whirl around us. What holds, where do we turn for grounding? Direct connection with loved ones? Trees? Stars? The music of Bach? Shared worship? Local meeting?

The name of what we trust may be unspeakable; what we trust is real.

Our practice is preparation and seeking. How we seek is wonderfully rich and varied—off the wall crazy different. The seeking we share as Quakers tends to be "sober." We come together, sit quietly together, share compelling truths. Sometimes we dance!

We uphold one another as we respond to Truth, as we meet for potlucks, as we offer and accept hospitality.

This evening (Friday) and tomorrow (Saturday) some New York Yearly Meeting Friends, both adults and high school and junior high age, are gathering in Perry City for extended worship and reflection with attention to action for peace. Another gathering is planned for the last weekend in April (location to be determined).

Friends who gathered in January in Poughkeepsie suggested that one form of shared worship could be spending five minutes every morning at 7 A.M. praying for peace. Tom Rothschild of Brooklyn Meeting shares these Thoughts on Prayer for Peace:

"I spent my five minutes this morning, as I so often do (when I am able to do it at all) not expressing a 'prayer for peace' but trying to understand the meaning of praying for peace.

"We have spoken about the insight (not unique to Quakers, but which as a group we certainly share strongly) that peace is not something which 'happens' or which we 'bring about' in the world, but that it begins from living within that Life and Power of peace, which we can then attempt to share. I have the firm conviction that we cannot pray simply, 'God, make there be peace in the world'; this is not something for which we can passively petition. My prayer must then be like the prayer of St. Francis, 'Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace.' God, Spirit, the Divine—however one names this Life and Power—works through people.

"But I cannot truly be an instrument of God's peace except when I am actually living in that Life and Power (which of course changes from moment to moment). So it seems to me there is a step preceding the prayer of St. Francis, underlying it: My first prayer must be that I myself become able to live in that Life and Power, and that I live there more and more of my life.

"This in turn gives new meaning to the exhortation to pray unceasingly. To the degree that I actually can live my own life within that greater Life and Power, I will be living in that contact with the Divine which is a state of prayer.

"And so my prayer becomes, 'Help me, show me how to live my life within the Life and Power that takes away the occasion of war, that forms a basis on which peace may grow; and help me become an instrument to share that with others, so that my community, and the community beyond my community, may come to dwell there also.' "

People all over the world and in the United States are planning to demonstrate for peace on February 15 and 16. A demonstration in New York City on Saturday, February 15, is being coordinated by United for Peace, a coalition of which the American Friends Service Committee is a member. Information about plans, which are in dispute with the City of New York at the time we write, will be available on the United for Peace web site www.unitedforpeace.org. A great many people are headed for New York City, whatever is decided by the authorities. Particular plans for Quakers will be circulated in a special Update when they are known.

Brooklyn Meeting invites Friends to join in worship on Saturday morning, to return to the meetinghouse after the demonstration for a spaghetti dinner, and to spend Saturday night following the demonstration on February 15, to stay for meeting for worship on Sunday if they wish. The meetinghouse will be opened Saturday morning by 9 A.M. Meeting for worship will be from 9:30 A.M. to 10:30 A.M. Sleeping arrangements will be on carpet or bench cushions. **BRING YOUR OWN SLEEPING BAG OR BLANKETS.** Backup locations have been arranged in case of excess numbers, and for those for whom sleeping on the floor is physically impossible. Friends who would like hospitality are asked to email Tom Rothschild TomR@tnrmediate.com or call him at 718-802-1862.

UPCOMING EVENTS: February 15, Peace Demonstration in New York City and in cities around the world (see above for more details)

February 16, 5 P.M., FCNL nationwide conference call, <http://www.fcnl.org/iraq-war.htm>

February 17–21 Congressional recess; FCNL urges us to make appointments now to meet with legislators when they are home. More information: <http://www.fcnl.org/iraq-war.htm>.

March 8 training session on Counseling Soldiers On Military Discharges And GI Rights in Westport, Connecticut, sponsored by Purchase Quarter. See <http://www.nyym.org/events/pq8mar03.html>.

Peace-filled greetings,

Linda Chidsey, Vicki Cooley Fred Dettmer
New York Yearly Meeting Worship and Action working group

from Rochester Monthly Meeting's weekly *Under the Clerk's Hat* of 1/30/03:

"Art thou in Darkness? Mind it not for if thou dost it will fill thee more, but stand still and act not, and wait in patience till Light arises out of Darkness to lead thee." —James Naylor

Let us be loving & gentle with one another, and especially with those with whom we disagree, either in person or in spirit.

"O my dear Friends, that there may be kept down in you that which is forward to judge, to approve or disapprove, and may the weighty judgment of the seed be waited for. And oh, do not judge, do not judge, before the light of day shine in you and give forth the judgment; but stand and walk in fear and humility, and tenderness of spirit, and silence of flesh." —Isaac Penington

Let us remember that there are many gifts and many callings, and that we are each called just to our own, yet let us be thankful for and supportive of the work of others.

"There is a variety of gifts, but always the same Spirit. There is a variety of ministries, but we serve the same One. There is a variety of outcomes, but the same God is working in all of them. To each person is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." I Corinthians 12:4