

Worship and Action Update, 11/7/03

Dear Friends in New York Yearly Meeting:

This past weekend, nearly 60 Friends in New York Yearly Meeting from 31 monthly meetings gathered at the Rotary Sunshine Camp in Rush, New York (south of Rochester) and at Powell House for the first two of the three planned Worship and Action for Peace retreat gatherings. A statement and a summary report from these gatherings is offered below. The notes from the retreat gatherings will be posted on the New York Yearly Meeting Web site as they are available. The third retreat gathering will take place at Rahway & Plainfield Meetinghouse in New Jersey on November 14 and 15. Detailed information, registration forms, and driving directions are available at <http://www.nyym.org/events/retreats31oct03.html>.

Where is our Peace Testimony leading New York Yearly Meeting Friends? A Worship & Action Update in the near future will share, as we are able, further substantive responses offered. Friends will have continuing opportunity to discover their unity in the truth at Representative Meeting, to be held December 5 - 7 at Pace University and Purchase Meetinghouse (information available at <http://www.nyym.org/events/repmtg0312.pdf>).

Friends in NYYM continue to be active in witnessing for peace. Friends are gathering at Flushing Meetinghouse (137-16 Northern Boulevard, between Main Street and Union Street, in Flushing, Queens) on Saturday, November 8th, at 11:00 A.M. to distribute American Friends Service Committee leaflets with information about conscientious objection in front of a nearby military recruitment center.

STATEMENT FROM WORSHIP & ACTION for PEACE RETREAT AT POWELL HOUSE

Thirty-five Friends from 19 monthly meetings gathered at Powell House October 31–November 2, 2003 to spend time in retreat on the query: Where does our peace testimony lead New York Yearly Meeting Friends now? Friends came prepared, having worshiped individually and corporately in their monthly meetings on this query and a series of supporting queries.

From a gathered worship, a common sense of the urgent challenges of our times was affirmed. These call for fundamental change, the shape and form of which is yet to be clearly named and, in good order, seasoned. Friends acknowledged how important it is to our witness to stay grounded in worship and love, and that this is the only way it will be effective. We are called to remain centered in the Spirit to find Truth in our world and reveal it in our lives.

What was named includes tax witness, education relating to issues of global economic injustice and sustainable living, resistance to militarization in our

society including recruitment, support of Quaker organizations, outreach to other religious bodies, valuing Alternatives to Violence Project, and effective communication with others holding different views. These undertakings are commended to Friends for prayerful consideration.

We recognize the power of our diversity of gifts and the different places we are in on a common journey to bear witness to the Ocean of Light that sets one free of the oppressing role of fear in our lives. Friends, as led, are encouraged to ground leadings in the lives of their monthly meetings and network via the various communication tools supported by the Yearly Meeting. Friends are commended to consult and engage youth and young adults in these endeavors.

—*Statement from Friends gathered at Powell House, 11/2/03*

SUMMARY REPORT FROM WORSHIP & ACTION FOR PEACE RETREAT AT SUNSHINE CAMP

Twenty-two Friends from 12 monthly meetings participated in the retreat gathering held at the Rotary Sunshine Camp in Rush, NY, south of Rochester. We spent our time in extended worship, settled discussion, and in conversation at meals, fed by love. We were deeply engaged, patient, and kindly disposed toward ourselves and one another; troubled by the troubles of our world and our involvements in them, and still hopeful for ourselves and the world.

In groups of 3 or 4, we shared how things were going for us in this [Sunshine Camp] retreat gathering, and listed "what I find compelling now, for me/us as Friends." These included:

- S We can't listen when we're trying to protect ourselves.
- S Find - learn - way(s) to work with "opponent" as we are united by our concerns, *e.g.*, depleted uranium unites us with veterans; Jews and evangelical Christians are united by concern for AIDS funding.
- S Alternative sources of information. As we search for these sources, remain centered in ourselves.
- S For Friends at home, → fostering connections to the larger world → outreach in the world.
- S How to be really present in attitude of worship.
- S Energy and time - find focus for each individual - discernment.

- S How to deal with anger within myself.
- S To allow myself to open to the Spirit, to be of service beyond my household.
- S Each of us is at a different place + we are where we ought to be.

Out of the small groups, participants also raised up issues for the wider community of Friends. These include:

- ¶ How do we bridge the gap between what peacemakers do and peace? What do peacemakers need to do to make their work more effective? What is the [peacemaking] equivalent of controlled burns? Conflict transformation.
- ¶ If we are to work for peace in the greater global community, do we not need to work for peace within and between ourselves and within our own meeting communities?
- ¶ Can the political-economic structure that is needed in following our peace testimony be revealed, healed, redeemed?
- ¶ Healing—what is the disease? Understanding the problems of colonialism in Ireland, or in Palestine-Israel; of migrants—education—children; of the growing concentration of corporations—money; of the lack of community—scarcity attitude.
- ¶ Examining our participation as Friends in structures leading to war.
- ¶ Awareness: Become aware of the impact of media upon our thinking and our expectations for ourselves and others; of underlying violence in our society—children learning violence—myth of redemptive violence; of holding in the Light those who are oppressed, who have given up hope; of work here at home in our own communities and elsewhere.
- ¶ "Formation"—"training"—for nonviolence/inner peace/children. Training matters. What we teach our children is so important. Kids need to hear stories of peacefulness. Literary award for peace-writing! Possible categories: children's stories, ways we can support one another in working for peace - being countercultural.
- ¶ Addressing 100-year vision. Conflict between democracy and capitalism: what Friends can offer as an alternative.

- ¶ Spiritual renewal of local meetings. Lack of community - scarcity - attitude of scarcity. How to be really present in attitude of worship. Ways we can support one another in working for peace.
- ¶ Articulating vision of where we want to be as a community so that individuals know how what we work on fits together. Support of monthly and regional meetings for leadings. Support for ecological simplicity, alternatives. Support for fair trade, alternatives in clothing, others Unwillingness to accept oppression - not in my name.

Friends want to gather again. In our closing worship at the Sunshine Camp a Friend said, "Practice resurrection."

Peaceable greetings,

Linda Chidsey, Vicki Cooley, Fred Dettmer
NYYM Worship and Action working group

Jerusalem

*And did those Feet in ancient time
Walk upon England's mountains green?
And was the holy Lamb of God
In England's pleasant pastures seen?*

*And did the Countenance Divine
Shine down upon those clouded hills;
And was Jerusalem builded here
Among those dark Satanic mills?*

*Bring me my bow of burning gold:
Bring me my arrows of desire:
Bring me my spear, O clouds unfold,
Bring me my chariot of fire.*

*I shall not cease from Mental Fight,
Nor shall my Sword sleep in my hand,
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England's green and pleasant land!*

- William Blake

Manifesto: The Mad Farmer Liberation Front

*Love the quick profit, the annual raise,
vacation with pay. Want more
of everything ready-made. Be afraid
to know your neighbors and to die.
And you will have a window in your head.
Not even your future will be a mystery
any more. Your mind will be punched in a card
and shut away in a little drawer.
When they want you to buy something
they will call you. When they want you
to die for profit they will let you know.*

*So, friends, every day do something
that won't compute. Love the Lord.
Love the world. Work for nothing.
Take all that you have and be poor.
Love someone who does not deserve it.
Denounce the government and embrace
the flag. Hope to live in that free
republic for which it stands.
Give your approval to all you cannot
understand. Praise ignorance, for what man
has not encountered he has not destroyed.*

*Ask the questions that have no answers.
Invest in the millennium. Plant sequoias.
Say that your main crop is the forest
that you did not plant,
that you will not live to harvest.
Say that the leaves are harvested
when they have rotted into the mold.
Call that profit. Prophecy such returns.*

*Put your faith in the two inches of humus
that will build under the trees
every thousand years.
Listen to carrion—put your ear
close, and hear the faint chattering
of the songs that are to come.
Expect the end of the world. Laugh.
Laughter is immeasurable. Be joyful
though you have considered all the facts.
So long as women do not go cheap
for power, please women more than men.*

*Ask yourself: Will this satisfy
a woman satisfied to bear a child?
Will this disturb the sleep
of a woman near to giving birth?*

*Go with your love to the fields.
Lie down in the shade. Rest your head
in her lap. Swear allegiance
to what is nighest your thoughts.
As soon as the generals and the politicians
can predict the motions of your mind,
lose it. Leave it as a sign
to mark the false trail, the way
you didn't go. Be like the fox
who makes more tracks than necessary,
some in the wrong direction.
Practice resurrection.*

- Wendell Berry

(From *The Country of Marriage* by Wendell Berry, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., ©
1973)