

## **New York Yearly Meeting Worship and Action Update, 2/13/03**

Dear Friends in New York Yearly Meeting:

Truth is one way we name what we seek in worship and in deliberate living. We rely on factuality. We welcome inquiry and testing. We cherish truthfulness and forthrightness. These are essential parts of our Quaker way.

When we doubt public sources of information, when we think we see patterns of misinformation, we must listen deeply for truth. We refuse to fill our consciousness with lies, or fear of lies. We trust that in seeking earnestly and worshipfully for truth, we shall surely find it.

Friends at the Worship and Action gathering in Perry City last Saturday shared sources of information they find useful, the beginning of an annotated information source list. If you are interested in this project, consult Quakerwanda for messages about "truthtelling" (subscribe by sending a message from your e-mail address to quakerwanda-subscribe@yahogroups.com).

And it is good to smile---as United for Peace and Justice has put it, "Don't be confused by the news -- we have a legal permit to rally on February 15 in New York City, on First Avenue stretching north from 49th Street." The New York City gathering in support of the "World Says No to War" will be a stationary event, rather than a march, so dress warmly if you plan to attend. Meetings for worship in support of maintaining our centeredness will be held on Saturday morning at both Brooklyn Meeting (at 9:30 A.M.) and 15<sup>th</sup> Street Meeting (at 10:00 A.M.). Friends are then invited to assemble with Mennonites at 53<sup>rd</sup> Street and Second Avenue before proceeding to the rally.

Updated information about the demonstration is available at [www.Unitedforpeace.org](http://www.Unitedforpeace.org). Information about pre-rally meetings for worship and Quaker gathering places is available through the NYYM website at [www.nyym.org/events/15feb03worship.html](http://www.nyym.org/events/15feb03worship.html).

People gathering in New York City and traveling to the legally permitted rally are advised by United for Peace and Justice, "In general, marching on the sidewalk without a permit is legal so long as you do not obstruct pedestrian traffic. Marching in the street without a permit would be an act of civil disobedience." United for Peace emphasizes that "there will be no civil disobedience planned for this event."

There are many understandings of civil disobedience! The American Friends Service Committee has a detailed policy that distinguishes among different kinds of civil disobedience. During the sanctuary movement we learned from Friends at the forefront, especially Jim Corbett, of a distinction between civil initiative and civil disobedience. Some of us have signed the pledge of resistance, promising to perform acts of civil disobedience if the United States escalates the war on Iraq.

Most Friends value the rule of law as part of civil good order. As we test our leadings and make distinctions, our patience with one another may also be tested. For some Friends, some times, holy obedience becomes civil disobedience. We need to know - we need to have deep familiarity with - That to which or the One to whom we are obedient.

Civil disobedience as authentic witness is a profoundly spiritual act. It arises from having touched that place where Truth is revealed and then we can do no other. We become instruments of and witnesses to that Truth. Civil disobedience as witness may be played out in the political arena, may have political implications, but it does not arise from political ideology nor is its purpose solely to achieve political ends. It arises from a spiritual leading and is spiritually guided. And for Friends, a leading is discerned and supported in community.

As we accompanying one another along our Quaker way, we join in the prayer: "Dear God, search every corner of my heart - our hearts - for any hint of indulgent disorder or desire for ill-will. Illuminate those dark places with the Light of Truth and make our hearts pure."

In care,

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

*"That which is set up by the sword, is held up by the sword; and that which is set up by spiritual weapons is held up by spiritual weapons, and not by carnal weapons. The peace-maker hath the Kingdom, and is in it; and hath the dominion over the peace-breaker, to calm him in the power of God.*

*"And Friends, let the waves break over your heads. There is rising a new and living way out of the north, which makes the nations like waters. The days of virtue, love and peace are come and coming, and the Lamb had and hath the kings of the earth to war, [and] will overcome with the sword of the Spirit, and the word of his mouth."*

Epistle 9 of George Fox (about 1652)  
[ed. Cecil W. Sharman]

*"Our life is love, and peace, and tenderness; and bearing one with another, and forgiving one another, and not laying accusations one against another; but praying one for another, and helping one another up with a tender hand."*

Isaac Penington, 1667