



SPARK

New York Yearly Meeting
The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

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September 2016



Reflections on Summer Sessions Voices from our Yearly Meeting

Let us gather together at
Fall Sessions
Nov. 11-13, 2016
Teen and Youth programs available
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Community Worship: A People Gathered

Melinda Wenner-Bradley
Children and Youth
Field Secretary

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Sammond's
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Privilege

Fell Cadwallader
Ithaca Meeting

Deeply moved by the conversations surrounding White Privilege, I'm struck by the tone of seeking. Within Ithaca Monthly Meeting and the wider Quaker community, the elevation of the conversation has been heartfelt. My own acceptance that all I have arises from a decimated Native American Culture, an economic foundation built upon the lives of slaves and maintained on the backs of many around the globe has afforded me a deep connection to this conversation. I seek to learn more.

First I explore the 2016 White Privilege Conference website. There I find the page entitled "What is the WPC?" containing six bullets answering the question, two of which start with the words, "It is not..." I am struck by the need to begin the core illumination of this

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Silver Bay: The Venue

Nancy Black
Brooklyn Meeting

"Love for you the earth and love for you are having such a long conversation in my heart" (Mary Oliver)

And so I return from my eleventh year of Summer Sessions at Silver Bay, New York, my heart filled with love for the beauty of this spot of earth and for the people—those on the porch, in worship sharing, and in business meetings. I return home with a renewed sense of the presence of the Divine and a new energy to be of service to my Brooklyn Monthly Meeting family.

When Friends speak about changing the venue of Summer Sessions, I feel a little panicky, as if one of the centers of my being were about to be taken away, as if someone suggested that we tear down Brooklyn Meetinghouse and

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A "holy experiment" was introduced to the yearly meeting body at our Sessions. Monday through Friday mornings after breakfast, Friends of all ages gathering in the Auditorium for semi-programmed worship to begin our days. In light of the Yearly Meeting's leadings and priorities, and the theme of this year's Sessions, "Nurturing the Blessed Community at Every Age," we lived into our hopes for multigenerational connection.

The proposed goals of Community Worship include that it be a joyful, playful time together, accessible across ages. It is a time to come together to ground and center as a body in preparation for moving into the rest of the day, with the hope that it also nurtures connections between people—those known to one another, and new friends. It provides an opportunity to meet one another where we are, not putting age-role expectations on anyone or serving as a "children's

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Notices

New Members

Thomas Fee — Shrewsbury
Rev. Fred Jensen — Collins

Transfers

Maureen McGovern, from Fifteenth Street to Brooklyn.
Carl Peterson, from Ridgewood to Ithaca.
Ruth Yarrow, from Northwest Yearly Meeting to Ithaca.

Deaths

Gioia Brock, member of Catskill, on May 24, 2016.
Margaret Dobbs, member of Montclair, on July 3, 2016.
Robert Sisler, member of Conscience Bay, on July 2, 2016.

MEETING NEWS

Youth Institute 2016

This year's multigenerational Youth Institute, hosted by Powell House and supported by the Youth Committee, included thirty participants from thirteen NYYM meetings, two NEYM Friends, and several at-large Quaker-friendly folks. Participants and staff represented all age groups, almost half of them children, teens, and young adults.

JYM youth clerks also participated for the first time attending two workshops on clerking, both the "nuts and bolts" of this ministry and the dynamics of clerking at Summer Sessions. Seven other workshops presented a variety of approaches to nurturing youth. Multigenerational plenary sessions gathered the group to discuss where the Life is in our meeting communities, and how to nurture inclusion of all ages.

"The Surprising Quakers, Heralds of Peace in a World of Conflict"
Christian History Magazine recently devoted a whole issue to Friends that was quite good and thorough. It featured several historical essays and biographies, a piece on Quaker beliefs and a glossary of Quaker terms, and articles on various aspects of Quaker witness. You can read the issue in its entirety at christianhistoryinstitute.org.

Oakwood Friends School

This school year was one of changes and some major accomplishments. Peter Baily, head of

Around Our Yearly Meeting

school for 15 years, left the area to take another job at the end of the 2015 school year. Chad Cianfrani, a longtime teacher and administrator at Oakwood, was interim head this year. After a nationwide search, with a number of well-qualified candidates, Chad was chosen as the permanent head. He attended Summer Sessions and was introduced to Friends there.

This year, Oakwood had the largest and most diverse student population in over eight years. Oakwood shared its Quaker mission with students from 13 countries and across the United States. Oakwood is committed to offering one of the highest levels of financial aid of any peer institution, including other Friends schools.

Farmington Friends' trip to Mennonite Central Committee's Material Resource Center

Friends from Farmington Meeting visited and worked with the Mennonites' Materials Resource Center (MRC) this June. The MRC serves as a collection point in the U.S. for receiving, packing and shipping donated materials for those in need, particularly refugees overseas. Friends heard stories from some of those refugees, and got to work tying quilts, compressing clothing into bales, inspecting cans, etc. The full report of the trip is well worth reading: <http://www.nyym.org/sites/default/files/Quilting-at-Mennonite-Center.pdf>

Friends of African Descent

The Fellowship of Friends of African Descent met in Philadelphia last August. Their theme was Recharge, Renew, & Rejoice. Twelve Friends from NYYM participated. The Fellowship's epistle and minute on state-sanctioned violence is available on the Black Concerns tab of the NYYM website. The Fellowship scheduled an August 2017 trip to Ghana, as part of their mission to uplift Quakers of African Descent around the world. The YM contacts for the Fellowship are Angela Hopkins, Jerry Leaphart, Gloria Thompson, and Helen Garay Toppins.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Helping Conflict Become Connection: a Powell House workshop facilitated by members

of NYYM's Committee on Conflict Transformation, Oct. 21-23, 2016

Conflict is a normal and integral part of all dynamic organizations and relationships. Yet Quaker meetings can become paralyzed by fear and distrust when conflict occurs. Addressed creatively and confidently, however, it can be transforming. When we learn to address episodes of conflict openly, bravely, and creatively, we can strengthen the meeting body's capacity to handle challenges, we deepen our accountability to each other, and we open ourselves to the transforming power of God in our lives. For more information visit www.powellhouse.org

AVP Conflict Resolution Basic workshop in Neptune City, NJ October 14-16

At this fun, interactive, weekend-long workshop, you will learn how to resolve disputes peacefully with family, neighbors, and co-workers. Details and registration info can be found at <http://tinyurl.com/jkxqd2j> or under Events at www.avpnj.org.



Hello from Brooklyn! I'm Sarah Way, the interim Communications Director for the yearly meeting. I grew up in New Brunswick Meeting, attending NYYM Summer Sessions and youth conferences at Powell House, where I now bring my own children. Gathering our community together is a long-standing interest of mine, and I have organized and run

several conferences and retreats for Friends. I'm excited to use my graphic design experience to help us communicate with each other.

I encourage you to write for Spark. Articles in Spark are a form of written ministry and the more diverse voices that are heard, the better. Pieces should be spirit-led, and reflect your personal experience, Quaker history, or present faith and practice on the subject. For example: things your meeting has done; a prophetic message; personal reflection; or whatever else you are led to say.

The **theme** for the next Spark, in November, is **Vocal Ministry**. Vocal Ministry happens when God speaks through us, usually during meeting for worship. It can be profound, scary, rich, moving. The idea that God may speak to and through any of us is one of the most radical facets of Quakerism. Have you had a memorable experience giving or receiving vocal ministry? We welcome articles on this or other related topics. Please send your submissions to me at communications@nyym.org by Oct. 15th.

And don't forget to **share your info**. Share your meeting's news, announcements, and upcoming events with the rest of the Yearly Meeting through InfoShare, our digital newsletter. We publish InfoShare between issues of Spark, in February, April, June, August, October, and December. Send your items to communications@nyym.org. Don't get InfoShare? Email office@nyym.org to get yourself on our email mailing list.

Our talented and wise outgoing Communications Director, Steve Davison, is staying on part-time as Website Coordinator and can be reached at steven@nyym.org.

I look forward to hearing from you. — Sarah Way

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15 Rutherford Place
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office@nyym.org
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SPARK
15 Rutherford Place
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Sarah Way
communications@nyym.org

Steve Davison
steven@nyym.org

Walter Naegle
walter@nyym.org

Christopher Sammond
nyym.gensec@gmail.com

Helen Garay Toppins
office@nyym.org

Privilege

Fell Cadwallader

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conference with a third of the bullets employing a negative.

This draws me closer to my first reaction regarding the phrase “White Privilege” when it was offered as a workshop at IMM. Maybe I’m different in that I firmly believe all I have—health, safety, comfort, and opportunity—rests squarely on the backs of genocide and slavery. Still, I’m intrigued. I investigate email strings and comments. Then I scan the January 2016 issue of SPARK and above the fold on the right hand side is an article by Friend Hitchcock from Rahway and Plainfield Meeting exploring the White Privilege Conference. I read it more than a few times.

I’m left wondering how might the assumptions presented as truth contribute to the topic? Friend Hitchcock shares his surety, “I know we struggle with these issues.” Followed by a wonderful clarification—from what I can only discern is his driving force, presented as a universal motivation—to attend the WPC in Philadelphia: “And we might experience what it feels like to be fully present in a multiracial surrounding and community in which people of color perform significant leadership roles as workshop leaders, as speakers and as conference administrators in equal number with white people.” That, combined with his concern expressed as a reality for all, “We long to affirm the universal goodness of God within us, and yet our Spiritual community remains predominantly white in composition,” prompts queries of my own.


As Friends seem genuinely troubled by our communities, why not reverse the wonder and turn it into action? Instead of wondering why others don’t come to join us—why don’t we go join them? The Beloved Community we seek may just be thriving elsewhere. Could waiting for others to walk through our door, rather than being an indication of a problem, be the problem?

Are Friends’ practices and values as appealing as we believe them to be? They are to us, but how about other cultures? Could it be our presumption of appeal is viewed as entitlement or an example of centuries of privilege? Could it be our temerity of all things, our surety of

truth? I’ll pause here to assure the reader that daily I pick at the log in my eye as I point to the splinter in Friends’.

For nearly three decades I’ve been part of other Spiritual communities, Alcoholics & Narcotics Anonymous. It was only from Friends that I was moved to take a glance around those rooms and look at skin color. First, I found a wonderful spectrum of ideas, values, experiences and abilities. Then I saw color, wonderful hues and shades everywhere. I also saw old, young, male, female, gay, straight, and transgendered. Then I thought about what Friend Hitchcock described as an opportunity at the WPC17 to see people of color in leadership roles and our need to experience that, witness it. How Friends “can listen and learn from racial justice activists, from fellow seekers and most of all, from people of color.” Reading, then quoting that line, returns me to the thought that maybe it’s us. Is our Friends community what we abhor? Paternalistic, presumptive, and rational to the point of blocking the Light that illuminates the Spirit while highlighting skin color, gender, and the myriad of physical attributes that label each of us?

The cord of commonalities that unites Friends has many threads. Traced back through time it has been cut, re-tied, interpreted, re-interpreted, and ultimately seems to have become an opportunity to weave our own, individual cloth. That is the beauty of Quaker practice and, to me, also the consistent loosening of that which binds—shared beliefs arising from common experience. Is the individual experience now greater than the whole?

When I offer statements instead of queries, pronouncements instead of personal experiences, am I what I long to be or what I hope I am not? Thus is it really a surprise we are startled when presented with the reality of our “privilege,” white or otherwise? 

(originally published in the Ithaca Meeting Newsletter, March 2016)

Summer Sessions Bible Study

Jim Schultz
Manhasset Meeting

I was able to attend this year’s summer sessions from Monday through Friday thanks to the

generosity of my monthly meeting. My monthly meeting, Manhasset Monthly Meeting, is predominantly made up of Christian refugees from other monthly meetings. While such a statement might seem harsh, the Bible study at summer sessions did nothing to diminish this sense of being strangers in a foreign land within a religious organization that was founded by people who testified that Jesus Christ spoke to their condition.

I personally love the Bible. I understand that there are others in the Society who feel otherwise but a simple Bible study for those of us who love the Bible and don’t need to assume everything in it is metaphorical should not be too much to ask for. When my meeting resumes its Meetings for Worship with a concern for business next month we will start work on next year’s budget and I am going to be hard pressed to defend our existing covenant donation never mind trying to increase it. If all are truly welcome, how about embracing those to whom Jesus Christ is still speaking to their condition?

Several times over my week at Silver Bay someone would bring up the scripture: Jesus Wept! This morning that scripture was heavy on my heart as I understood that it was no longer his people at Jerusalem He wept for.

With all my Love and prayers,
your friend, Jim Schultz. 

Silver Bay: The Venue

Nancy Black

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replace it with a modern structure. In thinking about changing the venue of Summer Sessions, some important tangibles and intangibles are perhaps being overlooked.


- The palpable presence of the Divine when looking out over the lake, especially at sunrise or sunset
- The ready availability of kayaks, canoes, sailboats, gym, tennis, shuffleboard, and games
- The morning childcare for children too young for JYM
- The resident musicians, the Sunday evening concert, the evening vespers
- The healing center
- Early morning worship at the boathouse

Support NYYM

New York Yearly Meeting supports programs and projects that benefit our members and our meetings in all kinds of ways, from spiritual nurture programs for individuals to financial help with meetinghouse repairs. Won’t you support NYYM in return? You can contribute by mailing a check to the yearly meeting office or by credit card at nyym.org/?q=donate.

- The joy at seeing the swimmers across the lake return and have that look of “I can do it!” on their faces
- The reunion of two or three generations of past attenders of JYM and Powell House youth programs
- The time for folks in our own meeting to have meaningful conversations with one another

In other words, it is not merely a question of what place offers enough beds and food or sufficient space for JYM, general business meetings, committee meetings, or displays of Quaker projects around the world.

It has been suggested to me that the discussion of change of venue for Summer Sessions disguises a more fundamental conflict among Quakers—between those who receive their spiritual uplift through attending committee and general business meetings and those who receive it through communion with nature and fellowship with friends and family. I am one of those people who serve on no Yearly Meeting committee. I only occasionally attend business meetings at Summer Sessions. Yet without the ability to visit Silver Bay each year, I would not have the spiritual energy to serve my meeting (and in the past, my Quarter). And if the venue were changed, say to a college campus somewhere, would I attend? Probably not. Would my family and I vacation at Silver Bay alone? Perhaps, but it would not be the same without the Quakers around us: the interest groups, the conversations with people on the porch, the inspiration of other Friends. This is what a spiritual retreat does: it gives energy for the work ahead. 



Friday morning worship with Junior Yearly Meeting in Silver Bay's boathouse. Photo by Sarah Way

Community Worship

Melinda Wenner-Bradley

(continued from page 1)

worship," but inviting authentic experience of worship together that we all enter as equal participants. Careful consideration was given to the balance of parts in a 30-minute semi-programmed worship, with the hope that there would be an entry for all Friends, inclusive of ages and worship practices in their local meeting. (The Sessions schedule also included open, waiting worship during a time before breakfast.)

After singing together, we centered for a story told in the manner of "Faith & Play," a curriculum that explores Quaker faith, practice, and witness through contemplative storytelling. The story we heard for a few minutes each morning was an adaptation of the Faith & Play story "Prayer and Friends Meeting for Worship." The storyteller, Melinda, connected the story to themes for each day of Sessions: gathering, discernment, beloved community, living the testimonies, and bearing witness to our faith in the wider world. Queries that began with "I wonder..." were shared, and those present were invited to turn to neighbors in the space and spend a few minutes sharing their responses. Follow-

ing this programmed piece, we gathered into silence and waiting worship together; several times, messages rose for Friends out of the silence and were shared. The time together ended with rise of meeting and announcements that made use of the projector and screen in the Auditorium. This was an opportunity to highlight what was happening in both JYM and business sessions that morning, and share what was available to Friends throughout the day's schedule. Threads extended to other parts of our days at Sessions, like the queries that we wondered about at the end of the story, which were shared on table tents in the dining room. (See queries in the blue box.)

Many thanks to Friends who worked on the planning, helped with greeting and care of meeting, and to the young Friends who joined the storyteller on the Auditorium stage and became our facing bench. Particular gratitude to Deb Wood and John Scardina for leading us in singing each morning, and to YA Field Secretary Gabi Savory Bailey who shepherded this new practice into existence with her vision and energy. As with anything new, there were small bumps along the way, but as we reached mid-week, the wrinkles smoothed and our sense of being grounded together was deepened. Ideas and hopes for "next time" were already being shared for Community Worship at next year's Summer Sessions.

Flushing Meeting Holds Experimental Worship for All Ages

On Sunday, July 31, Friends gathered at Flushing Meeting for an experiment in all-ages worship. Gathered for worship were three children ages 2 to nearly 6 and about eight adults. The plan was for the group to make a peace tree from cut-out maple leaves with yarn attached to them. After a prepared introduction featuring a brief quote about peace and ending with George Fox's "Let your life speak," Friends were invited to consider how their life might speak for peace.

Caroline Lane describes what happened next: The most amazing thing was that first a little girl, just getting ready for pre-Kindergarten, and her mother stood up. The mother said she was helping her daughter who couldn't speak loud enough to be heard. The message was that she wanted to be friends with people who didn't have friends. After a bit of quiet, an older girl stood from the topmost bench of the elder's benches where she had been coloring away. She held up her picture of the characters from *My Little Pony*. She introduced each one of the group of friends and told who her friend was and also what kind of pet she had. After more silence, I invited people to hang their leaves on the branch anchored by pebbles into a pot and, if they were willing, to share the message on their leaf. Everyone hung leaves and a few shared their message. In my previous experience leading this kind of worship, the children had not played so prominent a part.

Flushing Meeting's next intergenerational worship is scheduled for October 30. All are welcome.



Community Worship Queries at Summer Sessions 2016:

- I wonder how you might describe your experience of the Light, of God, or of meeting for worship?
- I wonder if you've ever had a message in you that needed to be shared? I wonder what that was like for you?
- I wonder how you listen for Truth?
- I wonder when you have seen God in someone else, or recognized their gifts?
- I wonder what you like best about being in community? I wonder what feels most important to you about our NYYM community?
- I wonder what helps you stop and listen to the Light within?
- I wonder how you have experienced peace, love, and justice?
- I wonder what it means to answer that of God in everyone?
- I wonder, when you go home and walk in the world, how will your actions testify to what you believe?



Invitation to Engage in Building Multigenerational Spiritual Community

Melinda Wenner-Bradley
Children and Youth
Field Secretary

New York Yearly Meeting extends an invitation to monthly meetings and worship groups to consider participation in the Monthly Meeting Partner Project. Along with New England Yearly Meeting, NYYM has received a generous grant from the Shoemaker Fund to help us collaborate with partner meetings. All local meetings are welcome to apply to be partners, regardless of size or geographic location. The heart of the project is intensive work with six partner meetings over the next three years as we seek new ways to nurture multigenerational community life and worship.

The Children and Youth Field Secretary (CYFS) and other yearly meeting staff will work closely with the partner meetings to create a welcoming climate for children, youth, and families. We'll explore possibilities not just for children and youth religious education


continued on next page

programming, but all-ages worship and religious education, and the issues of schedule and space in preparing a place for children and families in the meeting community. Partner meetings will be asked to commit considerable time and energy, in addition to being open to change. The project includes surveys conducted in the Yearly Meeting as a body as well as in the partner meetings, where age-cohort focus groups conducted by NYYM staff and volunteers will open conversations about current experience as well as visioning. Hands-on work done by the partner meetings will implement strategies for growing multigenerational meeting communities using a collaborative, results-focused approach that emphasizes best practices.

Will your meeting answer this call to work and learn together?

This work will look different in each partner meeting, speaking to the condition of that community while also seeking to stretch our experience of outreach and inclusion. The intention is to partner with a variety of monthly meetings and worship groups—large, small, urban, rural, unprogrammed, and pastoral. At the end of the three-year project, NYYM and NEYM will analyze and publish a report that will be made widely available to the Quaker community on the web.

The General Secretary and CYFS will discern the initial sites for the Partner Project. The first two meeting communities will be involved in the project from 2016-19, and will be chosen this fall. Questions for discernment and application are posted on the NYYM website home page, and we hope to receive applications by October 15. Inquiries, questions about process or the project, and applications can be communicated to the CYFS at childrencyouthfs@nyym.org.

The opportunity to work with Friends at the monthly meeting level, the heart of our religious society, is exciting. Through listening and sharing we have much to learn from one another as we seek to envision multigenerational spiritual community in new ways. Will your local meeting answer this call to work and learn together? 

Do Quakers Condone Violence and Cruelty to Animals They Eat?

Elizabeth Root
Perry City Meeting

I am led to contribute this statement because of the feelings evoked at a Farmington-Scipio Spring Gathering. I'm hoping it will inspire Friends of the New York Yearly Meeting to carefully consider choices of food for future Gatherings and Sessions.

I was struck during Farmington-Scipio Spring Gathering at the numbers of Friends who lined up at the carnivore table with no apparent concern that in so doing they were supporting a massive factory farm industry—an industry that perpetrated awful violence and torture upon the animals that ended up on their plates. The number of vegetarians and vegans among us was gratifying. Maybe some of those carnivores, when at home, buy pasture-raised meat from local farms. But we all know the meat served at Watson Homestead was not raised humanely.

Alas, the majority of Americans condone the factory farm industry by routinely buying meat at the supermarket. But Quakers? How incongruous is it that Friends, who claim to abhor violence on the one hand, eat meat from animals that not only endured lives of enormous pain and suffering, but also met with violent death? In so doing these Friends support corporate meat producers who, besides horribly abusing animals, also spread a vast array of nasty pollutants and manufacture antibiotic-resistant bacteria for their consumers.

One can rationalize that once in a while to consume meat by one person or even one family isn't going to make a difference in the big picture. But our Quaker Gatherings and Sessions present opportunities to make a difference. Rather than squander such opportunities, we could witness our belief in non-violence by instructing the chefs at Watson Homestead and other host venues to serve us no meat. We could demonstrate our concerns for animal welfare, the environment, and the routine use of antibiotics on livestock.

There is a lot of literature documenting the intolerable conditions at factory farms. I refer readers to *Pig Tales* by Barry

A Message from Christopher Sammond

The following was shared by our General Secretary as part of a report on staffing from the Personnel Committee:


This is something of a testimony, though it's a hard one to give. In the middle of the night in mid-March, I had the clearest, most direct, and powerful experience of the Divine that I have had for many years. What I heard was that I needed to resign. And I was told to give a year's notice at this summer session.

I spent two months meeting with the committee from my monthly meeting in care of my ministry, testing this leading, and holding it in prayer. While it was a shock, I settled into the rightness of it, and my committee and I were clear in this leading. I then told my Supervisory Committee, and the Personnel Committee.

I raised the issue with them that after 12 years with someone inhabiting this position, with only small tweaks to the job description, that it would be a very good time for the yearly meeting to reassess its staffing structure. This concern arises out of the fact that I have been working for the last year and a half with the Supervisory Committee for the General Secretary (SCGS) to try to make this position more sustainable—for me while I am in it, and for an eventual successor. As the yearly meeting has expanded programs over the years, both my position and that of the Associate Secretary have grown more and more untenable. The work for each position has grown to where it's very hard for one person to do it well. Both Personnel and the SCGS were in agreement with the need for a review of our staffing structure, and Personnel will be bringing that concern to General Services Coordinating Committee this week.

A lot of my focus over the next year will be to do what I can to sustain the crucial growing edges of our community; to help us to not lose momentum. I will also be supporting the elements of our life and structure, which without intentional support might falter or wither, to help as needed in the staffing structure review, and to do all I can to ensure an orderly transition to the next person serving you in this capacity.


I need to make two things clear: I am not leaving this position due to any sense of negativity or dissatisfaction. And some Friends have already asked if I am leaving for another job. I am not. I do not know what is next. I had a clear sense of being called into this work, and now I have an equally clear sense that I am being called out of it.

Being so warmly and lovingly greeted by so many of you as we all arrived here at summer sessions did not make this any easier. All the years of being supported by your love and prayers, your support, and, in many cases, your hospitality as I traveled, brings home to me just how much I am leaving. I thank you all for all of that support, from the bottom of my heart. 

Estabrook, who was interviewed on NPR's *Fresh Air*. The author merely intended to learn about the meat we eat when he embarked on his extensive research on pigs; he had no bias initially. The following is a quote from the Mr. Estabrook:

Of all the things I saw, the thing that hit me the hardest, twisted my guts the hardest, was when I walked into a low, dark barn in Iowa and in that barn there were 1500 sows, pregnant female pigs, and they were all in individual cages that were too small to hold them.... When they did have their babies they would move into something called a 'farrowing crate' which allowed the sow no more room to move, and you take these intelligent, inquisitive, emotional

creatures and confine them to a lifetime—it would be like being confined to a coffin for a lifetime or worse than your dog being confined to its travel case for a lifetime. But that's the way 80 percent of the sows in this country live their entire life.

More about Mr. Estabrook's interview and book can be found at <http://www.wnyc.org/story/tales-of-pig-intelligence-factory-farming-and-humane-bacon/> 

There is that near you, which will guide you; oh! wait for it, and be sure to keep to it...
— Isaac Pennington, 1616-1679

In this issue of Spark the Witness Coordinating Committee of NYYM is featuring FCNL's call for Prison Reform, which is supported in part by the Sharing Fund. The Sharing Fund was created to provide one place where Friends and supporters could make contributions so that each committee or organization would not be burdened with its own fundraising, nor would Friends be burdened with appeals from all sides. Contributions to the Sharing Fund may be sent to the YM office by check, or online at www.nyym.org. If you send a check, please note "Sharing Fund" on the memo line.

Diane Keefe, member of Wilton Meeting
Clerk of FCNL NYYM delegates

Friends Committee on National Legislation Call for Action this Election Season

Prison Reform: the Theme for FCNL's 2016 Annual Meeting November 10–13 in DC. Don't wait!

A message from Jose Woss, FCNL staffer:

Right now, we're working to get Congress to pass legislation to start chipping away at the problem of mass incarceration by addressing mandatory minimum sentencing laws.

- In the Senate: Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act (S. 2123) (Schumer, Gillibrand, Schumer and Bookar are co-sponsors. Please thank them in public and encourage other area senators to co-sponsor)
- In the House: Sentencing Reform Act (H.R. 3713) [NY co-sponsors: Nydia Velazquez (D 7th), Jerrold Nadler (D 10th), Jose Serrano (D 15th), Sean Maloney (D 18th), Louise Slaughter (D 25th), Brian Higgins (D 26th)] and the Recidivism Risk Reduction Act (H.R. 759). Please refer to FCNL.org action center or contact Jose Woss, our lead lobbyist on prison reform, for more information at jwoss@fcnl.org.

The problems these bills address

When someone commits a crime involving drugs, even if the offense is nonviolent, that person is typically convicted and sentenced to a mandatory sentence of 5, 10, even 20 years. The judge who hears the case has very little discretion in setting the sentence. The law demands that, for x crime, a person must be sent to jail for at least y years.

A returning citizen once said to me: "I was a young man. I was convicted for drugs, but sentenced like a murderer."

These excessive sentences have put more and more people of color in prison or jails. The prison population has seen an approximate increase of 500% over the last 40 years.

Imagine bearing the stigma that, after serving your sentence, many people will view you as a bad person, as a second-class citizen? Think about the limits on your job prospects and the ability to better yourself.

Now imagine the effects of that prison sentence on your children: the effects on your child's development, nurturing you aren't able to offer, lost income, diminished opportunities, the permanent loss to your community and your family's future. Mandatory minimums are the most damaging piece of mass incarceration.

There are solutions

The House and Senate bills would help by reducing mandatory minimum sentences. They also help by allowing judges to look at the whole person and the circumstances of the crime in determining how they should be sentenced. Simply put, if these bills pass, it will mean lower prison sentences and fewer people sitting in prisons.

The bills also address the issue of helping people who have been in prison re-enter society successfully. Some prison facilities offer very little help in this area. These bills would improve and implement family and ethics training and more job training. As a result, they would improve people's lives for when they return to society.

We're also focusing more attention on the House, especially after Speaker Paul Ryan announced that he is planning to bring six criminal justice bills—including the two we are focusing on—for a vote in September.



Along with NY Campaign for Alternatives to Isolated Confinement (CAIC), 15th St & Morningside Friends witness in support of the HALT act to end abusive solitary confinement in NYS on Aug 23, 2016, in Marcus Garvey Park, NYC. These rallies are held every 23rd of the month in NYC and Albany and are part of "Together to End Solitary," a national initiative begun by NRCAT (National Religious Campaign Against Torture). Visit nycaic.org for more info. Photo by Chris Japely

Radical Faithfulness and Prison Justice

Report on Purchase Quarterly Meeting

As Friends entered the worship room to begin worship on August 7, they faced a 9' by 6' rectangular construction with opaque ends and transparent side walls. Inside, a solitary woman sat on a straight chair, absolutely still. Signs indicated that this was a mock-up of a solitary confinement cell, where prisoners spend 22 to 24 hours a day, sometimes for years, or even decades. Friends gathered. Ministry was shared. The hour was rich.

After introductions, after-thoughts, announcements, and a brief social period, Friends gathered again in the worship room to hear Judy Meikle speak about her life, work, and recent attendance at a four-month program offered by Pendle Hill. Judy came to the United States from England with her two daughters, and found in Quaker meeting a community of people who seemed "normal" to her. She became involved with the Alternatives to Violence Project, and with serving as a volunteer in prisons. As she got to know some prisoners, she began to feel personally involved in the injustices of the criminal legal system. She became angry. She devoted herself to elimination of the

death penalty in Connecticut, and when that penalty was outlawed, to prison abolition. It was hard, lonely work, and she reached a point of burnout.

Just at that time, she learned about the Pendle Hill program called "Radical Faithfulness." She applied, was accepted, and with financial aid from the Purchase Quarter Scholarship Fund, she attended it. The program was rigorous, involving four weekend residential sessions and much reading and writing between them, as well as the choice of a specific area of activism. Judy chose as her project work towards the abolition of solitary confinement.

Solitary confinement is torture. Its abolition has become the focus of the National Religious Campaign Against Torture. Judy has been working in support of legislation in New York, called the Humane Alternatives to Long Term Solitary Confinement Act (HALT). She asked us to inform ourselves, to sign petitions, to write letters to editors, and to petition our legislators to pass this measure, which would be a landmark improvement and would serve as a model in other states.

There was no business meeting following Judy's presentation, so the Quarter took no action in response to Judy's appeal. However, individual monthly meetings may well be inspired to become active.

Since FCNL invited more than 400 young people to lobby on sentencing reform in March, we've added 16 Representatives to the House reform bills: the Sentencing Reform Act (HR 3713), which has more than 70 cosponsors, and the Recidivism Risk Reduction Act (H.R. 759).

New York Yearly Meeting Fall Sessions

November 11-13, 2016

Ethical Culture Society, White Plains (Saturday)
Scarsdale Meeting (Friday evening and Sunday)

Registration deadline: October 28, 2016

Purchase Quarter is looking forward to welcoming you to the 2016 Fall Sessions, an opportunity to worship, enjoy fellowship and carry forward the work of the Spirit in our yearly meeting. It is one of our priorities as a yearly meeting to be gathered as one body. Participation and involvement of Friends from all regions will help to knit our body together. We need your discernment and input as we conduct our business. Agenda items include preparations for the review of our staffing structure, approving the budget for 2017, and a revision to *Faith and Practice* regarding the use of technology in the conduct of business.

Our Saturday sessions will be held at the Ethical Culture Society, 7 Saxon Wood Rd., White Plains, NY 10605. Friday evening and Sunday program and sessions will be held at Scarsdale Meeting, 133 Popham Road, Scarsdale, NY 10583. Teens 14 and up will spend Friday and Saturday nights at Purchase Meetinghouse, 4455 Purchase St. (Rte. 120), West Harrison, NY 10604. See below for details on the teen and child programs.

Special Friday Evening Program: Our yearly meeting is blessed by having two story tellers in our midst. Janet Carter and Jeannine Laverty will be with us on Friday evening at Scarsdale Meeting from 7:30 pm to 8:30 pm for stories. This event is for the entire, multi-age community.

Meals: Light refreshments will be served on Friday evening, starting at 6:30 pm. Coffee, tea and light munchies will be available Saturday morning in the registration area at Ethical Culture. Lunch and dinner will be served there; prices are on the registration form. Because meals will be served in the area where plenary sessions are held, we will need volunteers to help move tables and chairs before and after both meals.

On Sunday morning, we will have coffee and munchies at Scarsdale. Lunch will be pot luck, provided by Purchase Quarter Friends. A basket will be out to accept donations if you wish to contribute.

Hospitality: Purchase Quarter Friends will be providing hospitality in their homes. Please indicate any special needs on the registration form. Hospitality requests will be honored on a first-come, first-served basis, and cannot be filled after the registration deadline of October 28, 2016. There is also a list of local hotels and motels on nym.org's Fall Sessions page.

Children and Youth: The teen program, for ages 14 and above, will begin on Friday evening at Scarsdale Meetinghouse, with the gathered community of all ages. Afterwards, teens will be taken to Purchase Meeting House, 4455 Purchase St. (Rte. 120), West Harrison, NY 10604. They should bring a pillow and sleeping bag or blanket/sheets for comfort. On Saturday morning, they will be transported to Ethical Culture for worship and the opening business session. They will join younger Friends for a Power of Goodness workshop for the rest of the morning. After lunch, they will be doing a service project. They should wear long pants and bring work gloves. They will be joined by teens from Passage of Hope, an organization that provides living accommodations for unaccompanied minors from other countries. The teens will have supper at Ethical Culture, then go back to Purchase Meeting for an evening of exploring ways to deal with stress. There will be 'self space' time during which teens can catch up with friends, do homework, or rest. On Sunday, teens will have breakfast at Purchase, then join the body for worship at Scarsdale. When teens register, a permission form will be sent to be filled out by a parent or guardian, and handed to adult leaders on arrival.

Elementary school children and pre-schoolers will have a program at Ethical Culture on Saturday. Nadine Hoover, Alfred Meeting, will be sharing stories of the Power of Goodness for the teen and middle-school-age children in the morning. Younger children, ages 4 to 10, will be with Melinda Wenner-Bradley, our Children and Youth Field Secretary. Other adults will be volunteering with them during the day. There will also be a Youth Program on Saturday afternoon for those aged 11-13. Plans were being finalized at press time. Details will be posted on the NYYM website, and will also be available upon request from mleagleson@aol.com.

All children will be at Scarsdale Meeting on Sunday, the teens arriving from Purchase Meetinghouse in time for worship at 11:00, and an extended First Day School program for younger ones being provided by Scarsdale Friends and Melinda Wenner-Bradley.

Childcare for infants and toddlers (up to age 4) will be available if requested by October 28.

It will be important to know how many children will be with us, their ages and any special needs. Please register early! **If no children in an age group are registered by Oct. 28, there will not be a program for that group. Later registrants will be the responsibility of their parents.**

Transportation: Loomis Mayer will be coordinating transportation to and from the White Plains Metro-North station, the Croton and New Rochelle Amtrak stations, and the Westchester County Airport. Please contact him if you will need to be met: call 914-271-4138 or email oomis@aol.com.

Meeting space: Requests for committee meeting rooms should be directed to Roseann Press, rpress123@gmail.com. Please make requests by October 28, 2016. Committee meeting space at Ethical Culture is extremely limited and some rooms may need to have two committees meeting simultaneously. If your committee needs privacy, you may wish to hold your meeting at Purchase Meeting. Should the need arise to use space at Purchase, committee clerks are asked to manage the logistics of getting their committee members to and from Purchase (i.e., carpooling, directions, etc.).

Display space: Given this particular venue, there is no display space. We may be able to make space on or near the registration table for a few flyers. Please be in touch with Roseann Press to see what might be accommodated.

Registration: To register online, download the registration form from our website (nym.org home page), fill it out, and email it to office@nym.org. Then determine the amount (registration and meals plus any contribution to the Equalization Fund). You may pay electronically via our online credit card payment service at: <https://secure.acceptiva.com/?cst=a73d2e> or you may mail your check to the Yearly Meeting office. To register by mail, fill out the registration form and mail it to Helen Garay Toppins, NYYM Office, 15 Rutherford Place, New York, NY 10003. Include a check payable to New York Yearly Meeting. The registration deadline is October 28, 2016.

Registration fees are \$25 for adults 18 and older prior to October 28, and \$35 thereafter; for youth 17 and younger, the fee is \$15 whether registered on time or late. However, please note that child care will not be available for children registered after October 28 if there are no other children in their age group who have registered on time.

Emergency Contact: During Fall Sessions, call Linda Houser: 914-912-7940
DIRECTIONS TO THE ETHICAL CULTURE SOCIETY: 7 Saxon Wood Rd., White Plains NY 10605

By public transport: take the #60 Bee-Line bus, either north from the Mamaroneck Metro-North train station on the New Haven line, or south from the White Plains Metro-North train station on the Harlem line. Get off at Saxon Woods Park and walk one block north to Saxon Wood Rd.

From I-287E or W, take exit 9 to the Hutchinson River Parkway (the Hutch). Go to exit 23 on the Hutch, (Mamaroneck Ave.) and turn right (north), towards White Plains. Saxon Wood Rd. is the first street on the left after the entrance to Saxon Woods Park, which has a traffic light. Saxon Wood Rd. does not have a traffic light.

From I-684S, continue past I-287. I-684 becomes the Hutchinson River Parkway. Continue to exit 23 and proceed as above.

From NY City, take the Hutchinson River Parkway north to exit 23, and proceed as above. Or take the Henry Hudson Parkway north to the Cross County Parkway, then take exit 9 to the Hutchinson River Parkway (north-bound) and proceed as above. Or stay on the Henry Hudson, which becomes the Saw Mill Parkway. Exit 20 of the Saw Mill puts you onto I-87N; and from I-87N take I-287 E. Proceed as in the first paragraph.

From New Jersey, use the George Washington Bridge to cross the Hudson. Stay in the far right lane of the upper deck and take the exit immediately after reaching New York. Head towards the Henry Hudson Parkway North, and proceed as above. Alternatively, cross the Hudson on the Tappan Zee bridge (I-87, I-287). Where the two diverge, bear left towards White Plains on I-287, then follow the directions above for I-287 E.

From Long Island, take the Whitestone Bridge into the Bronx, and immediately across the bridge, stay left to get onto the Hutchinson River Parkway. Proceed as in the first paragraph.

DIRECTIONS TO SCARSDALE MEETINGHOUSE: 133 Popham Road, Scarsdale, NY 10583

By train: Harlem Division line from Grand Central Station to Scarsdale. Meetinghouse is 0.5 miles east, an easy walk, on Popham Road. At the evening rush hour a commuter bus goes east on Popham Road and will stop at the meetinghouse.

From Bronx River Parkway: Get off at Crane Road (Exit 12). Do not follow signs to Crane Road, but go straight south 0.2 mile to traffic light. Turn left onto Popham Road. Meeting House is 0.5 miles on left.

From Hutchinson River Parkway: Get off at Weaver Street (Exit 20). Turn right on Weaver Street (Route 125) and go 1.0 mile to Heathcote Five Corners. Bear slightly left on Heathcote Road and go 1.5 miles to Post Road (Route 22). Bear left on Post Road for one short block and turn right onto Popham Road. Meetinghouse is 0.1 mile on right.

Registration for Fall Sessions 2016 • Friday–Sunday, November 11-13, 2016

**Scarsdale Friends Meeting, Scarsdale, NY, on Friday and Sunday
Ethical Culture Society of White Plains on Saturday**

REGISTRATION DEADLINE October 28

Please return this form by email to office@nyym.org or send by postal mail to Helen Garay Toppins, NYYM, 15 Rutherford Place, New York, NY 10003. Make checks payable to New York Yearly Meeting; write “Fall Sessions 2016” on the memo line. You may also pay electronically on our website; look for a link on www.nyym.org.

ADULT REGISTRATION

NAME	
Address	
Home & cell phone	
Email address	
Meeting	

HOSPITALITY

I would like home hospitality		Fri. night		Sat. night		Can bring sleeping bag
I would like to be housed with:						
Stairs a problem		Allergies		Smoker		
Special Needs:						
MEALS		Vegetarian		Gluten Free		
Saturday lunch		\$12, include payment with registration				
Saturday dinner		\$18, include payment with registration				
Sunday lunch		Donation as led				

TRANSPORTATION

Please meet me as follows:	
Plane arrival	
Bus arrival	
Train arrival	
Departure day, time, location	

REGISTRATION FEES

Registration	Amount Enclosed
Adult Registration Fee (\$25 per adult until 10/28/16)	
Late Registration Fee (additional \$10 per adult)	
Meal Costs	
Contribution to NYYM Equalization Fund	
Assistance requested from NYYM Equalization Fund	
Total	

Fall Sessions Schedule

Friday—Scarsdale Meeting

6:30 pm Light refreshments
7:30-8:30 pm Storytelling

**Saturday—Ethical Culture Society
White Plains, NY**

8:00 am Registration with coffee, tea, and snacks
8:30–9:15 a.m. Meeting for Worship
9:30–11:45 Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business
12:00–1:00 p.m. Lunch
1:00–2:15 Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business
2:30–4:00 Committee meetings*
4:05–5:30 Committee meetings*
5:45–6:45 Dinner
7:00–8:45 Coordinating committee meetings

Sunday—Scarsdale Meeting

9:00–10:45 a.m. Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business
11:00–12:00 Community Meeting for Worship (adults joined by young Friends at 11:30)
12:30–1:30 p.m. Lunch

**Committee meeting space to be reserved by committee clerks*

YOUTH REGISTRATION (0-18 YEARS)

NAME		TEEN PROGRAM—Ages 14-18 (includes Meetinghouse sleepovers)					
Address		Name:		Age:	Grade:		
Home & cell phone		Fri sleepover	Sat AM	Sat PM	Sat eve	Sat sleepover	Sun AM
Email address							
MEALS		Vegetarian		Gluten Free			
Will be eating the following meals:		Sat lunch \$12 (under 12: \$6)		Sat dinner \$18 (under 12: \$9)		Sun lunch (by donation)	
CHILDCARE—Ages 0-4 Please provide my children with childcare for these times:							
Name	Age	Sat AM	Sat PM	Sat eve	Sun AM		
YOUTH PROGRAM—Ages 5-13 Please register my children for these times:							
Name	Age	Grade	Sat AM	Sat PM	Sat eve	Sun AM	
						My parent/guardian at Fall Sessions is:	
						REGISTRATION FEES	
						Amount	
						Youth Registration Rate (\$15 per child)	
						Meal fees plus Donation for Sun. lunch	
						TOTAL	