

SPARK

News, Events,
& Reflections

New York Yearly Meeting

THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS (QUAKERS)

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Stepping into Quaker Religious Education

Exploring Quaker Testimonies with Children

~ Melinda Wenner Bradley,
West Chester Meeting, PhYM,
sojourning in NYYM ~

Living and Teaching Quaker Values in Friends Schools

~ John Scardina,
Purchase Meeting ~

Religious Education In Action

~ Gabrielle Savory Bailey,
Chatham-Summit Meeting ~

Going Beyond Testimonies in Quaker Religious Education

~ Noah Pomerselig,
Ithaca Meeting ~

The question of how to teach our children about Quaker testimonies is often lifted up in religious education. And this leads me to wonder about the verb in that question. Teach? We could also ask how we model, lead by example, and show the way through lives that speak. But there is another element for me that “teach” does get at, a further step: to discuss and be in relationship around a concept. How can we use dialog as we teach children about the testimonies?

Rich dialog can occur outside the First Day School setting in the home and within the context of the larger multi-generational meeting community. In any context, it’s always my hope that we’ll ground the

continued on p. 6



There are stories of Native American individuals coming into a meeting for worship in progress with European American Friends along the USA frontier and sitting down in silence with the worshippers. They seemed to sense that “something special” was happening. . . .

Six of us who were in Machu Picchu three years ago decided to have an impromptu meeting for worship in one of the rooms. People who were walking through the ruins came upon us sitting in silence and knew “something special” was happening. One person even sat down and joined us.

continued on page 9

I used to envision Quaker Religious Education as First Day School, with the occasional Quakerism 101 thrown in for adults every

once in a while. And the idea of studying Quakerism in First Day School was largely dominated in my mind by

images of bonneted women and wide-brim-hatted men reenacted in a thrown-together skit by the kids and a few adults. Having yet another dry discussion about William Penn and slavery. Repeating our commitment to the SPICES (Simplicity, Peace, Integrity, Community, Equality, and Stewardship).

However, I am coming to think about Religious Education a little differently through my work as the Young Adult Field Secretary.

continued on p. 8

Navigating the role of a Quaker teacher, a Quaker parent, a Quaker mentor, is a challenge. It raises a lot of questions, many of which require that we look deeply into ourselves. How do we teach peace while immersed in violence? How do we discipline our children without being inherently violent and coercive? Or more generally, what does equality look like in the child-parent relationship? How do we help our children grow up to be “good Quakers”? How do we get our kids to stay in our meetings? These questions may leave you uncomfortable, some because they challenge something in you, some because they miss the core of Quakerism. For instance, we miss the core of Quakerism when we over-emphasize the testimonies in our First Day Schools.

When parenting or educating, it is important to keep

continued on p. 9

Welcome to Fall Sessions 2014
See pages 11-12

Around Our Yearly Meeting

Eric Garner march

On Saturday, August 23, Quakers from three NYC meetings marched with thousands of others to honor Eric Garner and to say No More to NYC police abuses. Garner, an African American, died as a result of a policeman's choke hold while being arrested. A middle-aged black minister came up to us and said, "Thank you for being here. Seeing you here gives me hope. If you weren't here, I would have less hope." He was referring to us as Quakers and also as part of the human rainbow.

One of our group was quoted by Associated Press reporter Jonathan Lemire in a news piece that appeared in many publications. Here are a few lines from his August 23 AP piece: "The crowd included representatives of the United Federation of Teachers and members of the Society of Friends, also known as Quakers.

City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito and Democratic gubernatorial candidate Zephyr Teachout marched, too. Diana Smith-Baker, a white Manhattan resident and Quaker, said it was important for people of all races and religions to bring attention to "the inequities toward black people and Hispanic people by the police department."

Ticonderoga Worship Group laid down

On Sunday, June 8, Old Chatham Meeting minuted the laying down of Ticonderoga Worship Group, at the Worship Group's request. The Worship Group has been struggling with membership for some time.

Quaker E-Resources

QuakerSpeak—www.QuakerSpeak.com

QuakerSpeak is a video project of *Friends Journal* in collaboration with Friends General Conference and Quaker Voluntary Service in which Friends are interviewed on various topics. The videos are entertaining, informative, inspiring, challenging, unifying, and collaborative. Here are some ways your meeting can use the videos from *QuakerSpeak*:

- Add it to your website to make your website more dynamic.
- Watch and discuss videos as part of First-day School or adult RE programs.
- Share with friends as a way to introduce Quakerism via email, Facebook, etc.

Quaker Cloud

Quaker Cloud is a web toolkit offered by Friends General Conference that provides three kinds of web-based services to local meetings. See www.fgcquaker.org/services/quaker-cloud. The three components are:

- Hosting and development of your meeting website; easy to build and maintain; great customer service.
- A minute manager that allows you to archive, search, and share minutes with your meeting . . . and whomever.
- A secure meeting directory for managing your member information.

Peace Tree Ceremony at Brooklyn Friends School

Brooklyn Friends School

Middle School students contemplate the peace testimony every year as they prepare for the Peace Tree Ceremony, held the first Friday of December. Over a period of several weeks students and teachers work together exploring the relationship between the Quaker tenet of "that of God in every person" and the importance of peace in the world. Each advisory group chooses one aspect of peace as a focus, then creates a presentation for the ceremony and ornaments for the evergreen tree. The presentations are always thoughtful and unique, reflecting a wide range of global, national, regional, community, and personal peace concerns. Here are some examples from past years: a skit featuring early Quakers writing the seminal statement of the peace testimony in 1660; a slide show of teens around the world who have started non-profit organizations devoted to peace making; recitations of quotes from famous peace builders; personal wishes for peace;



Brooklyn Friends School Peace Tree

honoring organizations, such as Doctors Without Borders, that work to bring peace in the world.

Nightingales—Come Sing!

Dates: October 3-5, 2014
Place: Quaker Intentional Village, near East Chatham, NY.

If you love to sing, come join with others who love it too! Nightingales is an a cappella singing group that meets twice a year. We will meet the weekend of October 3–5 at the Quaker Intentional Village near East Chatham, New York. That time should offer peak autumn colors, so come sing with us around a campfire in a lovely rural setting. You do not have to be a great, or even a good, singer to participate. We

continued on page 10

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Letter to the Editor

August 28, 2014

I doubt I am the only Friend who left the Business Sessions at Silver Bay distressed and disappointed. When unity [about the Priorities Working Group's recommendations] was not immediately apparent, many Friends forsook silent worship and contemplative ministry and instead argued, attacked, belittled and accused. During these sessions I experienced a marked absence of kindness, trust and attentiveness to the Spirit. Friends accused other Friends of bad faith, ignorance, and pursuing hidden agendas. I was screamed at (yes, literally SCREAMED AT) by a Friend. When I approached her afterwards, the Friend explained "sometimes you have to yell to be heard."

That is not our state in my Monthly Meeting and, I hope, it is not our state when we convene at yearly sessions.

So profound have been my past experiences of the beauty, Light, and power of our ministry when we have met as a Yearly Meeting, that I write to remind Friends of our better natures; to invite honest assessment of our recent treatment of each other at Silver Bay; and to remind us of certain fundamental precepts:

When we offer ministry, do we do so in order to testify to our portion of the Truth, or do we speak to persuade the body of the rightness of our view?

Do we feel entitled? If we are not recognized by the Clerk, do we feel frustrated? Do we recognize the root of

that frustration?

Do we speak in anger, with the intention to reprimand or rebuke others?

Do we speak only when we are sufficiently informed of the topic under consideration? Is our ministry truly seasoned if we have not made the effort seriously to master the facts at issue?

Do we speak in order to respond to a prior speaker's ministry? Or do we speak the Truth as led, offering a gift to the body as a whole?

Do we speak even though another Friend has already offered the ministry we were given?

Do we listen to other Friends' ministry and allow it to season in our hearts? Do we attend vocal ministry in an effort to find unity among us? Or do we listen guardedly, challenging, seeking to detect perceived error in the speaker's message?

Our Book of Discipline (p. 88) expresses the goal that, in Business Sessions, "partisanship and self-interest are subordinated to the authority of God's will." Are we open to such subordination?

Having once offered ministry, are we prompted to speak a second time?

Do we recognize what that prompting might portend?

Having offered ministry, do we still cling to it as ours or do we let it go unencumbered into the prayer of the body?

Advice 16 instructs that speakers in business meeting "not be unduly persistent in advocacy and opposition, but, after having fully expressed their views, to recognize the generally expressed sense of the meeting." Even if we harbor lingering misgivings, are we

Notices

New Members

Carl Blumenthal
– Brooklyn

Aurora Cayer –
Genesee Valley

Kodah J. Cayer –
Genesee Valley

Lilyanna W.E. Cayer – Genesee
Valley

Sarah Cayer –
Genesee Valley

**Samuel Burr
Eckstut** –
Morningside

**Carol Anne
Ferlauto** –
Chatham-
Summit

**Elizabeth
Bronwyn
Foulke** – Poplar
Ridge

**Fiona Cathleen
Foulke** – Poplar
Ridge

**Maeve Beatrix
Foulke** – Poplar
Ridge

**Rhys Owen
Foulke** – Poplar
Ridge

**Teagan Aibhinn
Foulke** – Poplar
Ridge

Matthew Ganster
– Quaker Street

**Caroline
Hartling** -
Brooklyn

**Michele Ann
Jaquays** –
Mohawk Valley

Owen H. Mayer –
Genesee Valley

Milton B. Merts
– Montclair

Adam Rashid –
Brooklyn

Richard Shadick
– Fifteenth Street

Alice Vaughan -
Cornwall

Marriage/Covenant Relationship

Mary Grace Larsen, member of Montclair Meeting, to John Mineka, on January 11, 2014, under the care of Montclair Meeting

Connie Frank Williams, member of Chatham-Summit, to Lee McKean Adams, on July 26, 2014, under the care of Chatham-Summit Meeting

John F. Mears, IV, member of Dover-Randolph, to Kimberley Diane Snook, on July 12, 2014

CORRECTION: **Mary Edgerton**, member of Saratoga, to Reva Pallone on February 14, 2014

Birth/Adoption

Lucas Labatut Pronto, born on June 23, 2014, to Jennifer Pronto, member of Adirondack, and Rodrigo Labatut

Transfers

George Fisher, to Conscience Bay from Fifteenth Street

Deaths

Thomas Glynn, member of Brooklyn, on May 3, 2014

Marion Irving, member of Dover-Randolph, on June 11, 2014

Katherine Nicklin, member of Shelter Island, on August 19, 2014

Frank Oakes, member of Manasquan, on March 24, 2014

Woody Schempp, member of Wilton, on May 21, 2014

Nicholas Sugar, member of Chatham-Summit, on August 30, 2014

open to the will of the Spirit, as revealed by the corporate discernment of the body, and are we willing to accept it as a member of the body?

Our Book of Discipline (p. 102) teaches that "the yearly meeting exists primarily to worship together." The next time we convene, let each of us make that our central and most important task.

In Friendship,
Peter Phillips, Cornwall
Friends Meeting

Upcoming Spark Themes

November 2014

Reactions to the
People's Climate March

January 2015

NYYM Priorities—Next
Steps

March 2014

Friends and Other
Faiths

Statement of Leadings & Priorities

Approved at Summer Sessions 2014

See Introduction on page 5

In approving this Statement of Leadings and Priorities, we commit to focus the energy and resources of our Yearly Meeting for the coming five years on achieving a vision of growing and vital monthly meetings that are open and loving communities, effective in their outreach, active in the world, and skillful in nurturing the spiritual lives of Friends of all ages. We envision a yearly meeting structure that is devoted to furthering this vision, is an effective focal point for organizing our collective work in the world, and that communicates that work broadly. We envision a yearly meeting structure that is accountable to these priorities, transparent in its finances, and integrally connected to the monthly meetings it represents and supports. We envision a yearly meeting where there will no longer be “yearly meeting Friends” and “monthly meeting Friends,” but rather one, whole yearly meeting devoted to faithfully living out the leadings of the Spirit. We reaffirm our commitment to utilize these Leadings and Priorities in “preparing budgets, staff work plans, and other services and initiatives of the Yearly Meeting and its committees and constituent parts.” (Minute 2011-4-33.)

We Envision a Yearly Meeting Deeply Grounded in the Practice of Our Faith

We hear a clear sense from Friends that the core of all they do centers in their meeting for worship and their life as a community. In support of this, their primary focus, Friends seek help in spiritual deepening, in developing clerking skills, in understanding principles of meetings for business, in understanding the role of vocal ministry and afterthoughts, in practicing pastoral care and conflict transformation, in participation in first day school and adult religious education programs. We, the Body of Friends gathered through our New York Yearly Meeting, recognize as a Priority for the Yearly Meeting the development of programs to teach and share our spiritual skills with each other, and to help meetings to revitalize themselves.

We Envision a Yearly Meeting Made Up of Strong, Vital Monthly Meetings

Meetings and Friends seek information and assistance with the necessities of operating a meeting, such as insurance, cemetery maintenance, fund-raising, and advancement. We, the Body of Friends gathered through our New York Yearly Meeting, recognize as a Priority for the Yearly Meeting the development of programs to help sustain our monthly meetings financially and to increase membership.

We Envision a Yearly Meeting Gathered Together into One Body

Friends express a deep yearning for increased contact and connection with each other. Regular interaction among Friends throughout New York Yearly Meeting helps sustain and deepen our Society. We, the Body of Friends gathered through our New York Yearly Meeting, recognize as a Priority for the Yearly Meeting the pursuit of greater contact and spiritual relationship among Friends.

We Envision a Yearly Meeting that Nurtures Our Children, Youth, and Young Adults

We hear Friends’ call to focus attention on integrating our children, youth, and young adults into the fabric of our community and to provide opportunities for them to experience and reflect on our spiritual practices. We seek to offer abundant opportunities and welcoming spaces for exploring and growing into the Light. We seek to make our monthly meetings a place where they can develop loving relationships with peers and adults, where youth are supported as they transition to adulthood, and where young adults are recognized for their gifts and encouraged in their participation in their monthly meetings and beyond. We, the Body of Friends gathered through our New York Yearly Meeting, recognize as a Priority for the Yearly Meeting the nurturing of our children, youth, and young adults.

We Envision a Yearly Meeting that Supports and Amplifies Our Witness

Meetings and Friends look to the Yearly Meeting to be an active presence in the broader society for Friends’ faith, values, ministry, and witness. Through the Yearly Meeting, Friends can magnify our impact on our communities, nation, and the world. Our collective voice speaks more loudly than those of individual Friends or monthly meetings. The Yearly Meeting affords the opportunity for Friends carrying common concerns to act in concert. We, the Body of Friends gathered through our New York Yearly Meeting, recognize as a Priority for the Yearly Meeting the responsibility to be an active voice for Friends’ faith, values, ministry, and witness in the world, and to support Friends active witness.

We Envision a Yearly Meeting that Is Accountable and Transparent

Meetings and Friends express concern that the Yearly Meeting organization has not been fully accountable and transparent in its operations. We envision a yearly meeting whose structure and operations are well understood by all Friends, and that is a faithful expression of the leadings of those Friends that make up the Yearly Meeting. In approving this Statement to guide our activities in the immediate future, we also bear a duty to assure that these Leadings and Priorities are faithfully implemented. We, the Body of Friends gathered through our New York Yearly Meeting, recognize as a Priority for the Yearly Meeting the responsibility to hold itself accountable to the above priorities, ensuring their faithful fruition.

While particular committees may be well-suited for pursuing parts of this vision, these are the Priorities of the Yearly Meeting as a whole. We are all responsible for all the aspects of this work. The Priorities arise from considerable and consistent input from Friends across the Yearly Meeting. Their realization will require the worshipful and focused dedication of everyone within the Yearly Meeting, including all our committees and working groups, all our staff, and all concerned Friends and meetings. We are called to work together to make this vision a reality.

NYYM Priorities

An Introduction

At Summer Sessions this year, the gathered body of the Yearly Meeting adopted the priorities described in the Statement of Leadings & Priorities printed to the left on page four. The Priorities Working Group gleaned these priorities from its visits with all the meetings and worship groups in the Yearly Meeting. These six visionary statements will guide the work of local meetings and Yearly Meeting staff and committees for the next five years.

We are publishing the Statement so that local Friends can see the fruits of this labor and begin to think about how they can support these new directions for our Yearly Meeting. In the columns to the right, we describe some of the efforts already underway to implement the priorities, and we invite Friends, committees, and meetings to share your own efforts with others in the Yearly Meeting by posting them in our Priorities Action Hub:

www.nyym.org/?q=PrioritiesActionHub

Yearly Meeting in Summer Sessions 2014, in the Auditorium of Silver Bay YMCA



The Priorities ... Already Under Way

Committees and meetings around the Yearly Meeting have begun to respond to the Priorities. Here are the efforts we know about at the time of printing:

Meetings

- **Chatham Summit Meeting:** Looking at how to respond to the Statement.
- **Old Chatham Meeting:** Exploring new ways to engage children in worship.
- **Purchase Quarter:** Began a visitation initiative.

YM Committees

- **Communications Committee:** Assessing its role in implementing the priorities.
- **Conflict Transformation Committee:** Distributing its video to all meetings and YM committees.
- **Development Committee:** Raising funds to support the new vision and our growing edges.
- **Earthcare Working Group:** Organizing to enact the priorities in their area of concern.
- **Liaison Committee:** Exploring how to move implementation forward, asking each of their constituent committees to explore how ALL the priorities might be implemented in their work.

- **Liaison Committee:** Continuing to clarify the role of the clerk and general secretary speaking on behalf of the Yearly Meeting between sessions.
- **Personnel and Youth Committees:** Working on a job description for a Children and Youth Secretary.
- **Prisons Committee:** Traveling to share the power of going inside as a member of a prison worship group.
- **Spiritual Nurture Working Group:** Designing five or more retreats held regionally and at Powell House.
- **Task Group on Racism:** Traveling to local meetings to share their concern.
- **Meeting of representatives from Trustees, General Services, Personnel, and Staff:** Looking at how the Statement should impact staffing and staff work plans.

YM Staff

- **Associate Secretary:** Leading Quaker Quest events.
- **Communications Director:** Set up "Make my Garden Grow" blogsite on implementing the priorities.
- **General Secretary:** Produced a revised Programmatic Interpretation of the Budget as part of implementing the priority on transparency.
- **General Secretary:** Already leading retreats on Opening to Deeper Worship.
- **Powell House:** Holding retreats on Eldering and Pastoral Care.

- **Staff:** General Secretary and Young Adult Field Secretary increasing visitation. Associate Secretary especially available for advancement support for local meetings.
- **Communications Director:** Created the Priorities Action Hub, a home for sharing what we are all doing to implement the Priorities. See below.

Priorities Action Hub

What we are doing to implement the Priorities . . .

- As individuals
- As meetings
- As Yearly Meeting committees

! Share your efforts

on our new
Priorities Action Hub:
www.nyym.org/?q=PrioritiesActionHub

Summer Sessions Highlights

To read the Epistle and other highlights from Summer Sessions, visit our website, nyym.org.

InfoShare

Share your news in our digital newsletter, published between *Sparks* in even-numbered months.

Resources for Quaker Religious Education

Friends have developed so many resources for religious education of both adults and young people that it would be impossible to list them all here. Below is an annotated guide to some of what is available online. See especially www.nyym.org/?q=Resources.

First Day School

NYYM.org—Resources menu tab

Teacher aids (pdf files)

Dealing with Sporadic Attendance in First Day School

Bridging the Absentee Gap

Supporting and Nurturing the Quaker Parent

Philadelphia Yearly Meeting

Curricula: pym.org/religious-education/curricula

Their resources can be sorted alphabetically, or by age (as below) or by topic:

- 5 guides for adults working with kids
- 4 early elementary
- 7 elementary
- 8 elementary thru middle school
- 2 middle school
- 5 middle & high school
- . . . and more

First Day School Thread-letter Archive

Threadletters are PhYM digital newsletters published occasionally around an area of meeting life. Visit: pym.org/online-newsletters/threadletter-archives/first-day-school/

Friends General Conference

Faith & Play™: fgcquaker.org/faithandplay/

A joint project of FGC and PhYM, this Montessori-inspired resource helps children find words and images for expressing

their experiences of holy mystery and wonder in their lives.

Godly Play® is an experiential and open-ended approach to teaching the Bible to children.

Both programs involve fairly intensive training and some costs.

QuakerBooks.org

Click on Children & Young Adults (left sidebar), then First Day School for Young People. Resources are organized in five sections:

- Teaching Quakerism
- Preparing Young People for Worship
- Teaching the Bible
- Teaching our Testimonies & Values
- Books for Teachers and Youth Workers

Adult RE

NYYM—Resources menu tab

Teacher aids (pdf files)

Suggestions for Organizing and Facilitating Quaker Adult Religious Education Programs

Adult Religious Education Format

Guidelines for Wondering with Adults

Philadelphia Yearly Meeting

Quakerism 101

No longer supported by PhYM. Google for lots of versions online.

Friends General Conference

Quaker History Series (videos)

Five-part video series by Ben Pink Dandelion at Canadian Yearly Meeting: fgcquaker.org/resources/quaker-history-series-ben-pink-dandelion-canadian-yearly-meeting.

Books

Contemporary Quaker Classics, Ronald Sellick; \$3.

Discovering Our Faith through Worship Sharing, compiled by Mary Snyder; \$10.

Exploring Quakerism, Leader's Edition and Participant's Edition, Marsha Holliday; \$5 ea.

The Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies, Ben Pink Dandelion & Stephen Angell, eds.; \$175 (not a typo!).
William Penn Curriculum: For Adults and High School Students, Janet Horton; \$14.

QuakerBooks.org

Click on Categories (left sidebar), then Adult Religious Education. Resources are organized in three sections:

- Quakerism Studies
- Studying Prayer & Discernment
- Bible Study

(continued from page 1)

testimonies in Spirit. In our homes and meeting communities we have an opportunity to model for our children (and one another) how worship and work go hand in hand. Fox enjoined us, "I do charge you all in the presence of the living God to dwell in what you speak and profess. None to profess what he does not dwell in and none to profess what he is not; a sayer, and not a doer." In exploring Friends testimonies with children, how can we both ground the testimonies in the Spirit and our religious society's history and make them part of our living faith?

**Let us ground
exploration of the
testimonies in Spirit**

I recently heard a statistic about faith formation that, while not surprising, certainly speaks to the need to support parents and families: the vast majority of faith formation happens not in religious education classes, but in our homes. What does this mean for busy households, where prayer or discussion about faith may not be daily practices? How can we support young families who may be new to the life of the meeting? (And asking them to teach First Day School doesn't count!)

It is common in most households to read to our children. Whether as a bedtime practice or in other parts of the day, it's a gift to curl up with a child and a book, to explore the story and images together.

More Resources on the NYYM website

www.nyym.org/?q=Resources-ReligiousEducation

Quaker Testimonies with Children

~ Melinda Wenner Bradley ~



Certainly, exploring Friends testimonies in our religious education programs, First Day School, and youth programs is an important task. What role can the wider community and the committees of our meetings play beyond the service of the adults who lead and support these programs?

A few years ago in my meeting we crafted a year-long exploration of the testimonies, covering about one a month during that school year. On the third Sunday of each month, we invited members of a committee of the meeting who had care of a parallel concern to gather with the First Day School and be interviewed by the children.

During our month-long exploration of peace, the Peace and Social Concerns committee sent representatives to First Day School. The Outreach and Visitation Committee addressed community. We had male and female co-clerks of the meeting at that time, and we invited them to speak

The vast majority of faith formation happens not in religious education classes, but in our homes.

with us about business in the manner of Friends and equality. After each visit, the children created a colorful book with reports and illustrations that captured the discussions (and wonderful portraits of our meeting members!).

The fact that these adults were willing to miss worship the week of their visit was an unspoken message of commitment to, and community with, our children. And they found ways to encourage the kids to do their own work to live the testimonies. In time, there were children asking to serve on committees.

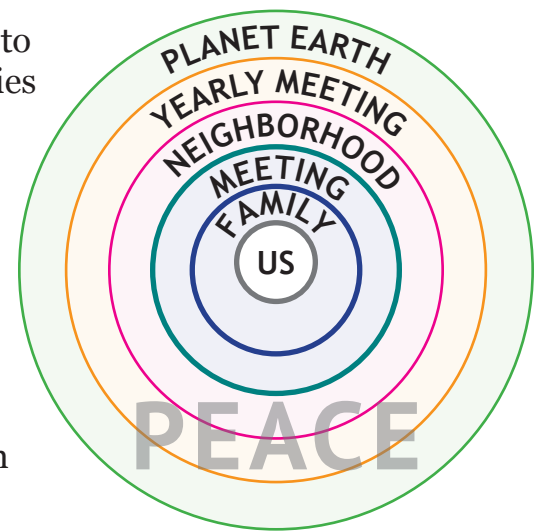
When we explore Friends testimonies in First Day School, topics might include their grounding in the Bible, historical examples of how Friends have let their lives speak in ways that illustrate the testimonies, and connections to our lives today, particularly the lives of our youth themselves. One year, our meeting's Youth RE committee started its curriculum planning by deciding to take a year to cover Friends testimonies. Once the planning began, we followed a leading to focus entirely on peace.


Imagine a series of concentric circles, beginning at the center with peace in ourselves and then growing outward to include our communities of family and monthly meeting, neighborhoods and Yearly Meeting, and, finally, our home planet Earth. This was the image we worked with, and we created a year-long exploration of how prayer, service, respect for differences, care, and love can help grow peace. We were able to link together worship and meditation practices (inner peace), a tour of the art in our social room (images of peace), stories from the Bible and Quaker history (people facing differences and working for peace), and hands-on work in service to our meeting and wider communities. Our children

NYYM Logo

Communications Committee wants to develop a logo for the Yearly Meeting to use in *Spark* and our other communications. Please send us your ideas, your sketches, or even full-blown images. Send to steven@nyym.org. Then we'll figure out the next step.

conducted their own youth meeting for business to plan a coffee hour for the meeting, made valentines for meeting members, and discerned how we could support the children's priority presented at yearly meeting sessions. A combination of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting curricula, wonderful children's literature, Godly Play® and Faith & Play™ stories provided the resources for every circle of peace we explored. Starting at the center, we found peace, nurtured peace, and experienced the many places it lives in our witness as Friends today.



Whether the vehicle is the story in a good book, a traditional lesson, or a conversation among Friends, let us ground exploration of the testimonies in Spirit, and seek to create community through dialog that asks children what is revealed to them. They are our teachers, too. What can they tell us about living lives that dwell in what we profess? 

Religious Education in Action

~ Gabrielle Savory Bailey ~

(continued from page 1)

I have had a few experiences of late that are changing my ideas about what Religious Education looks like for Quakers of all ages.

Last year, I was contacted by a Young Adult Friend (YAF) whom I used to have more contact with, but with whom I had fallen out of touch over the years. He asked to have lunch with me and talk about Quaker things—membership, worship, Young Adults, all sorts of things. That lunch, the time I took to talk with him, and he with me, was

Simply talking about my spiritual journey and listening to the journeys of others is maybe the most profound example of Religious Education.

Religious Education. We talked about the terms that had always confounded him as a youth growing up in meeting. We talked about how Quakerism is alive today, and how it works in both of our lives. It was a really nice lunch. I was encouraged that he had reached out. As life went on, I didn't hear from him again. But as I reviewed the list of registrants for an upcoming YAF mini retreat, I saw his name. Over a year has passed, and I thought that perhaps it had been in vain, but NO. A seed had been planted. And who knows how and when it will grow, but it lives on. Religious Education gives us information, examples, choices, and context.

Another time I experienced Religious Education in action was at the last

YAF mini retreat. A name appeared on the participants list that I did not know. I was thrilled! It turned out to be a very new attender at a meeting in the area. He had been on the fence about attending, given his busy schedule and demanding workload. Another Friend encouraged him to come and they came together. At the end of the retreat about Discernment, he seemed more alive than when he arrived. He was excited for having experienced a mini clearness committee, having worshiped and worked with other Friends on this spiritual tool. I mentioned Summer Sessions and he immediately said that there was no way he could get a week away. But it sounded nice. Fast-forward a few months to my arrival at Summer Sessions. As I stood in line, I saw a familiar face. It was this same Friend! The one who waffled on even taking a day off to retreat. He was an active participant in Summer Sessions and has been very involved in his new home meeting. Another seed planted, simply in faith. This too is Religious Education.

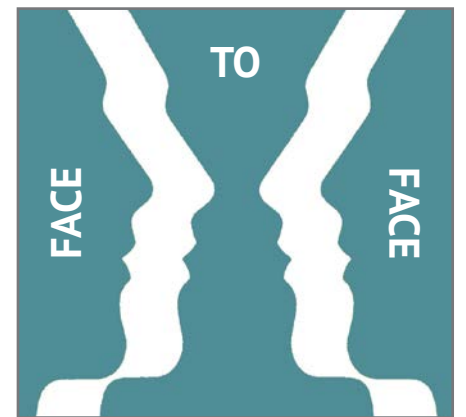
I often hear from Young Adult Friends, even and especially from those who grew up as Quakers, that business meetings and committees are intimidating. There is a lot of jargon and a lot of presupposed knowledge. One Young Adult Friend recently asked me if "Quakers go out of their way to make business meeting confusing and hard to understand even what they are saying?"

I have begun accompanying Young Adult Friends to business worship and committee meetings. I act as an interpreter. I decode the acronyms and the terminology. I provide background. I give context. I explain process. I find that this is welcome. This work is done one Friend at a time. It is personal. This does not look like First Day School, but it is Quaker Religious Education. What is more important than the spiritual practices we have and how we do business? In my experience, Friends are grateful for this accompaniment, not bored or resentful. My question is, why wait until someone is in their 20s or 30s to offer this gift of information?

At summer sessions the Young Adult Concerns Committee hosted a Business Meeting 101 session, (which was way too short for the number of questions that Friends had.) As we were talking, *Faith and Practice* came up. A number of Friends there did not know what that was. I offered my own copy to one of the Friends present. I had no confidence that it would be read. A couple days later, that same Friend came to me and said that he had started reading *Faith and Practice* and he said, "There is some really good stuff in there! It's actually pretty interesting." I told him that I would be happy to talk it through with him and answer any questions he

had. He seemed genuinely appreciative. This was Religious Education, not forced, but offered based on what

I saw as an opening and an Opportunity. Where will it lead? I don't know, but



his name is on the mini retreat list for the practice of discernment in the fall.

I have found that simply talking about my spiritual journey and listening to the journeys of others is maybe the most profound example of Religious Education. How are we, as living individuals, experiencing God, or Spirit, or the Light? What do our stories have in common with those faithful Friends that came before us? This is slow, person to person, connection by connection.

Recently we had to put my cat to sleep. This was hard for my family. A short while later, my husband and I were talking about multi-age Religious Education and whether that was a viable concept. I ventured a guess that people of all ages could share times when they experienced Spirit, God, Christ, whatever you call the divine. I spontaneously turned to my 3-5-year-old, and I asked her if she could share a time when she had felt God or experienced God. She thought for a short second and said, "When Pippa (our late cat) was sick and I had to say good bye to her. I think God was there. I think God was comforting me." This was all that I needed to hear in that moment. She educated me. We shared a moment of communion. Was this religious education? Dunno. Will she grow up to be a Quaker? Dunno. It does not really matter to me. That is between her and God.

continued on page 9

convener
sense of the meeting
discernment
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FUM

Living and Teaching Quaker Values in Friends Schools

~ John Scardina ~

(continued from page 1)

Visiting a Friends school, I realize that my soul is embraced by the hum of Quaker education: walls adorned with projects and artwork that speak to our testimonies; classroom discussions where it would be hard to locate the teacher in the circle of chairs and the chorus of voices; active listening, joyful moments of silence, and respectful dialogs taking place instead of rote learning of facts. “Something special” is happening here. . . .


**Be patterns,
be examples.**

Many of our Friends schools have religious education classes, and these classes can be valuable and rich parts of our curricula. But for me, the true value of a Friends school education is in the “unwritten” curriculum that infuses everything we do. As George Fox asked us: (continued in next column)

RE in Action

~ Gabrielle Savory Bailey ~


(continued from page 8)

What I do know is that these interactions, these personal moments when I pick up the phone to check in with someone, or share stories, or take time for lunch, or share a truth I have heard, to provide information, these are powerful moments of Religious Education, for me and for the person I am with. In these Opportunities, there is God, and unseen doors are opened. 

Be patterns, be examples in all countries, places, islands, nations, wherever you come, that your carriage and life may preach among all sorts of people, and to them; then you will come to walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in every one.

If you walk into my classroom in a Friends school, how would you know you were in a Friends school? Besides the titles (or lack of titles) for the teachers (as in “Teacher John”), the Quaker-inspired items hanging on the walls, and the (perhaps) less formal dress and demeanor, what would stand out for you? Would my “carriage and life” preach my mission as a Quaker educator?

Early Quakers spoke of a “guarded education” that insulated children from the societal influences that would violate our practices. Might we still have societal influences to guard against? Affluence for the sake of affluence, wastefulness, energy overconsumption, an emphasis on achievement rather than character—might we also guard against these?

I have spent my career with the blessed opportunity to work in Quaker education. I struggle with the classism inherent in the financial strain of attending a Quaker school, yet I still believe that Friends schools ought to exist as exemplars of the ongoing “Holy Experiment” of Quaker education. Hopefully our Quaker values are indeed “caught and not taught” in everything we do. 

Going Beyond Testimonies in Quaker Religious Education

~ Noah Pomerselig ~

(continued from page 1)

in mind that what matters is not what we think we are doing but how our children experience what we are doing. My experience of First Day School was not an experience of mentors striving to help us develop our faith and spirituality. My experience with First Day School was about adults working to make us look like good Quakers.

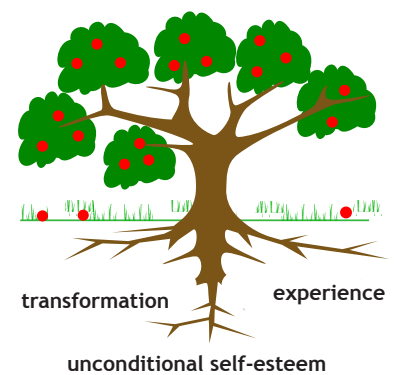
**We miss the core of
Quakerism when we
over-emphasize the
testimonies in our
First Day Schools.**

The huge emphasis on Quaker testimonies contributed to this sense. Usually, about half the curriculum each year of my home meeting’s First Day School would be dedicated to projects surrounding the testimonies. Unfortunately, just living by these testimonies is not what it means to be a Quaker, nor is it a requirement to be a Quaker. The testimonies are similar to a bird identification guide. They give us a guide to help determine if someone (including ourselves) seems particularly Quakerly. The bird identification guide does not tell us how the bird feels or how we can strive to be a bird. Similarly, our testimonies fail to capture our inner lives and the inner life of our community and faith tradition.

As I said earlier, Quaker teaching and parenting is really hard. So it is easy for us to fall back to the safety of something more tangible like the testimonies when

we are trying to explain our faith and spiritual experience or help cultivate the development of other peoples’ inner lives. My point in raising this issue is not to blame anyone or say that anyone is a bad parent or teacher. I want to bring awareness to this issue so that we can begin to experiment with new practices in Quaker education.

I want to propose a new image to assist in the development of our inner lives and the inner lives of younger friends. The image is of a tree. It is the tree of our faith and spirituality. The tree I see has three roots: experience, transformation, and unconditional self-esteem.



Experience. Central to our faith is the direct individual relationship with God. Our worship is built on the idea that there need be nothing between us and the Divine. Our wisdom and our love come from our connection to a higher power. We experience this in our meetings and we can experience it every moment of our lives. The Divine is always present. All of our experiences, whether mundane or profound, are images and material to be composted into wisdom. The direct knowing of the Divine presence feeds our faith, (continued on page 10)

Going Beyond Testimonies in Quaker Religious Education

~ Noah Pomerselig ~

(continued from page 9)

and our faith stands upon it.

We are transformed by our experience of the Divine.

The Spirit burns bright. The Spirit burns hot. The Spirit burns us away until we are all flame, all oneness, all God. Transformation is what urges us to live in new ways.

Unconditional self-esteem also comes from direct experience with the Divine. The experience of being held in a love so much bigger than our selves is humbling and liberating. It is not dependent on what we do; if we show up it is there. Unconditional self-esteem is knowing the Divine in yourself and trusting it.

These three roots are braided together and together reach down into the Divine. The Divine runs through us and is what nourishes us. From our solid planting in the Divine, life grows; our trunk, our leaves, our branches. This is our faith, this is our practice, our relationships with other people, our work in the world, our presence, all of it unique to each person. The leaves are each one of our breaths. The twigs on the branches are each one of our choices. Each branch a part of the way we live. Always growing, always changing.

Here I see the testimonies having a place—strong branches that grow out of the trunk. They are part of our life but not the extent of it. They help remind us who we are but they are not who we are. We are a people on



The spirit burns hot

fire with the spirit and hopefully our children will be too.

So what does this look like

in practice? First of all, it means a change of curriculum, either the explicit curriculum of First Day School or the less formal curriculum in the home. Why is groundedness not one of the testimonies? Why is centering not one of the testimonies?

The biggest hole I have seen in Quaker education (and I have clearly not seen every instance of it) is in the lack of training and mentoring in contemplative practices. In our attempt to not indoctrinate our children we leave them out to dry when we bring them into the meeting room. Why wouldn't they be bored when nobody has told them what to do in this hour of silence except to not disturb the silence? This is not saying that there is only one practice that we should be teaching our children. Contemplative practices should be served as a buffet. Try different things and see if they work for you. If they do not work for you, try something else.

This may also mean that we want to move First Day School to before or after meeting for worship. This would give weighty and grounded Friends who feel like they cannot and do not want to skip meeting the opportunity to share their wisdom and experience with the younger people of the meeting, an important

intergenerational connection. Usually the people who know most about Quaker process and experience are not at all involved in the First Day School, not out of lack of desire but because of the conflict of time.

Also, centering is a skill and like every other skill it takes time to learn. In the meeting I grew up in, when I was in First Day School, we would sit in worship for the first fifteen minutes and leave for the First Day School lesson. In my experience and the experience of people I have talked to, it often takes longer than this to center when you are first learning how to center.

Often because of this, children do not have a real opportunity to experience the transformative power of

The biggest hole I have seen in Quaker education is the lack of training and mentoring in contemplative practices.

directly knowing the Divine before they are whisked out of the meeting room. Maybe we should not be wondering why so many of our kids leave our meetings but wonder instead why they stay at all.

The other thing it would mean is that we have to really engage with our own inner lives. This is more important than being a "good teacher." Teaching inner growth is not something you can fake. If you have not done some work, you do not have much to teach. If you are actively engaged in inner work, all your experience can be a well to be drawn on to help share about growth and the inner life. The outer qualities as expressed in the testimonies will grow naturally

out of the inner life.

If we help our children touch the Divine, we will not have to teach about the testimonies at all. They will organically start asking questions about why we are not living more simply. Or why is there so much violence in the world. Or what it means to live in community.

Let's let the Spirit blossom out of our children. 

Around the Yearly Meeting

(continued from page 2)

Nightingales (cont'd)

gather not to perform, but to share the joy of fellowship and the love of singing.

You can come for just part of the weekend. We will sing Friday evening, Saturday morning, Saturday late afternoon, Saturday after dinner, and warm up the Old Chatham meetinghouse with song before worship on Sunday. You can sleep in tents, on a bedroll on the farmhouse floor, in some beds in nearby homes.

Bring a pot-luck offering, something to sit on at the campfire, a flashlight, and copies of *Worship in Song* and/or *Rise Up Singing*.

Shuttle service from the Hudson or Albany Amtrak stations is a possibility. Children are most welcome, though those not wanting to sing are their parents' responsibility. We can accommodate you as a camper or staying in a bed.

For registration or more information: contact Christopher Sammond, nyym.gensec@gmail.com, 917-613-6314.

We need to know how many to plan for, who needs a bed, and what food you plan to share!

Suggested fee: \$10. 

Welcome to Fall Sessions 2014!

New York Quarterly Meeting welcomes everyone to Fall Sessions, to do the Yearly Meeting's business and expand the life and witness of our Society. We encourage Friends to come and share the worship and the fellowship of the gathered Yearly Meeting, to bring your meeting's concerns to the Yearly Meeting's attention and report back the decisions of the sessions. All activities will take place at 15 Rutherford Place, New York, NY 10003. 

Fall Sessions Agenda Items

As of this printing, we will consider the following items:

- Report from Development Committee
- 2015 Operating Budget
- Minute on NYYM interim actions, second reading
- Report from the General Secretary
- Report from Priorities Working Group


Travel to Fall Sessions

15 Rutherford Place is located on a short street between Second and Third Avenues, between 15th and 17th Streets in Manhattan. The entrance faces Stuyvesant Park. Friends can walk three blocks east from the subway station at Union Square and 14th Street, or from uptown buses on Third and Fourth Avenues or downtown buses on Second Avenue. All buses stop at 14th and 16th Streets. Public transportation is also available from rail and out-of-town bus terminals. Shuttle van service into Manhattan from Kennedy, LaGuardia, and Newark Airports is available approximately every 30 minutes. Most shuttles run daily from 5:00 am until 11:00 pm. Check with the airport terminal that you will be arriving at for details.


By subway: Take a 4,5,6, L,N,Q, or R, train to 14th Street–Union Square and walk 3 blocks east and 1 block uptown. A closer subway station at 3rd Avenue (on 14th Street) is served by the line L.

By bus: Take an up/downtown bus to 16th or 14th Street OR a 23rd or 14th Street crosstown bus to Third Ave.

By car: From the West Side Highway, exit at 14th Street and go east. From the FDR you must exit at 23rd Street or Houston. The 15th Street exits on the FDR Drive have been closed. For more detailed directions visit Google Maps or MapQuest for directions to 15 Rutherford Place, New York, NY 10003. Parking garages can be found on 15th and 18th Streets and on Third Avenue.

Public transportation information is available on-line at www.mta.info, or by phone. If calling from outside of New York City, dial 718-330-1234. If calling from within New York City, just dial 511. 

Hospitality

Hospitality is available with local Friends for Friday and/or Saturday nights by request on a first-to-ask, first-assigned basis. Arrangements must be made in advance. Indicate your needs on the registration form and please register as early as possible. You must register by November 1 for overnight hospitality, meals, or childcare. Coffee, tea, and bagels will be available Saturday and Sunday mornings. Friends Seminary is providing meals on Friday and Saturday free of charge to attendees. Thank you, Friends Seminary! 

Friday Evening Program

Celebrate the gathering of Friends and rejoice in the presence of Spirit among us! Meet new friends and reconnect with old ones through small-group discussions, favorite songs, and gentle movement. Friends of all ages invited and treasured.

Youth Programming at Fall Sessions!

Teen Program, Grades 7-12: *Green in the City*


The teens will visit Yearly Meeting committees attend a meeting for business in worship, and take a field trip, walking High Line Park, an aerial greenway at 20th Street looking downtown, and visiting green buildings. On Friday and Saturday nights, a sleepover at the 15 Street Meeting-house. Plus community building throughout the weekend.

Youth Program, Grades 1-6

This group will have a Saturday morning and afternoon program, exploring and participating in a business meeting topic, plus play, music, and yoga.

Childcare, Infants through kindergarten:

Childcare will be provided Saturday evening and Sunday morning with advance registration.

Release Form — A special Release Form, available on the NYYM website (see the Fall Sessions page), must be submitted by all who will participate in the youth program, all ages and grades, in addition to the registration. 

Attention Committee Clerks

Committees may meet on Saturday from 1:00-2:15 pm and from 2:30-4:00 pm. To request a room assignment, contact Margaret Lew (mlew1022@aol.com). To request display space, contact Beverly Archibald (barchiboo@citymail.cuny.edu). Send copies of meeting space and display requests to office@nyym.org.

Schedule for Fall Sessions

Friday, November 14	Sunday, November 16
5:00 p.m. Fellowship	9:00 am Coffee, tea, bagels
6:00-7:00 Supper	9:30-10:30 Mtg for worship
7:00-8:30 Music & fellowship for all ages	10:30-12:30 Mtg for business in worship

Saturday, November 15

8:00 a.m. Registration, coffee, tea & bagels	1:00-2:15 Mtg for business in worship
8:30-9:15 Mtg for worship	2:30-4:00 Committees - 1
9:30-11:30 Mtg for business in worship	4:05-5:30 Committees - 2
11:45-12:45 Lunch	5:45-6:45 Dinner
	7:00-9:00 Coordinating committees

Vanderbilt YMCA 224 East 47th St. NY NY 10017 212 756-9600 ymcanyc.org	The Penington Friends House 215 East 15th St. NY NY 10003 212 673-1730 Seafarers & International House 123 East 15th St 212 677-4800 sihnyc.org	Hostel International–New York 891 Amsterdam Ave., NY NY, 10025 212 932-2300 hinewyork.org
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Places to Stay

Registration for Fall Sessions 2014

Friday–Sunday, November 14–16, 2014

15 Rutherford Place, New York, NY 10003

REGISTRATION DEADLINE 11/1/2014

You may mail this form to Helen Garay Toppins, NYYM, 15 Rutherford Place, New York, NY 10003. Make checks payable to New York Yearly Meeting or pay electronically via our online credit card payment service at: <https://secure.acceptiva.com/?cst=7bb2f5>. To register electronically, download the registration forms (Word documents) from our website, fill them out, and email them to office@nyym.org. The web addresses for these forms are:

<http://www.nyym.org/sites/default/files/FallSessions2014-AdultRegistration.doc> &

<http://www.nyym.org/sites/default/files/FallSessions2014-YouthRegistration.doc>.

ADULT REGISTRATION

Name	
Address	
Phone & Cell Phone	
Email Address	
Meeting	

YOUTH REGISTRATION (0–17 yrs)

Name	
Address	
Phone & Cell Phone	
Email Address	
Meeting	

REGISTRATION	Amount Enclosed
Adult Registration Fee (\$20 per adult until 11/1/14)	
Late Registration Fee (additional \$10 per adult)	
Youth Registration Fee (\$10 per child)	
Donation for Sunday lunch	
Assistance requested from NYYM Equalization Fund	
Contribution to NYYM Equalization Fund	
Total	

MEALS	<input type="checkbox"/> Vegetarian	<input type="checkbox"/> Gluten Free	
I will be eating the following meals:			Friday Supper *
			Saturday Lunch *
			Saturday Dinner *
			Sunday Lunch (donation)

* Friends Seminary is providing the Friday and Saturday meals free of charge. Thank you, Friends Seminary!

HOSPITALITY

Would like home hospitality	<input type="checkbox"/> Fri. night	<input type="checkbox"/> Sat. night	<input type="checkbox"/> Can bring sleeping bag if needed
I would like to room with:			
Traveling with & would like to be housed near:			
<input type="checkbox"/> Stairs a problem <input type="checkbox"/> Allergies <input type="checkbox"/> Smoker	Special needs:		

CHILDCARE—Grades 0–K

Name	Age	Sat am	Sat pm	Sat eve	Sun am

Please provide my children with **childcare** for these times.

YOUTH PROGRAM—Grades 1–6

Name	Age	Grade	Sat am	Sat pm	Sat eve	Sun am

Please provide my children with **program** for these times.

TEEN PROGRAM—Grades 7–12 (includes Meetinghouse sleepover)

Name	Age	Grade	Fri sleepover	Sat am	Sat pm	Sat eve	Sat sleepover	Sun am

My parent/guardian at Fall Sessions is: _____