



SPARK

New York Yearly Meeting

The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

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May 2023



Listening Beyond Words

How Do We Talk About God?

Listening in Tongues

Beth Kelly
Brooklyn Meeting

In late December, 2022, I hosted a "Meeting for Worship with Singing" for the Young Adult Friends community in New York Yearly Meeting. I solicited song suggestions from the YAF community. "They don't have to be Christmas/Hanukkah/Solstice songs....We will share the songs of our hearts."

Offering these songs was ministry, Friends. The songs of our hearts distill the leadings of their writers and live in our personal interpretations. When we share them, we introduce the feelings and words into the lives of other folks, who interpret them through the lens of their experiences.

It's not that different from other forms of vocal ministry. And in this Meeting for Worship with singing, the songs felt really different from one another! There was unbridled joy, contemplation, honoring of the earth and the life cycle, Jesus-talk, and reinterpretation of "what's really important" in a relationship with God and the world. These song-messages didn't hang together easily; they showed how our Young Adult community is grounded together and differently.

In NYYM's community of young

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Who Are You, God?

Gay Edelman
Shrewsbury Meeting

When talking with folks about matters spiritual, I often use the word "God" because it's familiar and easy. But "God" is just a placeholder for the mystery that can be too slippery to hold for long. For that ineffable something, I have heard, and used: higher power; universe; universal consciousness; source energy; truth; great spirit; mother nature; the infinite; the eternal; adoring all; spirit; Allah; inner GPS; Atman; true self; Yahweh; loving presence; Yeshua; Jesus; Buddha; goddess; the light.

But before I could begin to call God anything, I needed to clarify who I was talking about. A friend I'll call Joanne shared how she deleted the cruel deity of her upbringing, a force unfortunately modeled on a brutal home life, and a harsh childhood religion. Her shift came at a retreat. The leader asked everyone to list all the higher powers they'd had in their lives—parents, teachers, coaches, doctors, pastors or priests, older siblings and the like.

Next, each person was asked to list the negative qualities of those higher powers. I wasn't at the retreat, so here's my list: hyper-critical; negative; controlling;

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Quaker Indigenous Boarding Schools

Liseli Haines
Mohawk Valley Meeting

The Skä•noñh Great Law of Peace Center is a Haudenosaunee Cultural Center in Syracuse focused on telling the story of the native peoples of central New York. I attended a conference there several years ago focused on the Indigenous Boarding Schools and their legacy. One researcher tried to tell the audience of European descendants and Indigenous people that the letters written home by the students from Carlisle, the infamous Federally run Boarding School, proved Carlisle wasn't all bad. After he had finished his presentation an Indigenous man stood up and gave powerful testimony of the abuse he was subjected to as a child at boarding school. Not something that anyone could argue with. I have been holding this dichotomy ever since.

In subsequent years I spent many hours researching the Tunesassa Boarding School, the only fully Quaker run Indigenous Boarding School in the NYYM area. It was in Allegheny Seneca territory near what is now Salamanca NY. I spent several hours at Haverford Library photographing the student ledger of Tunesassa. Tunesassa was a boarding school from 1852 to 1938 and the ledger covered all but the first 12 years. I transcribed that ledger line by line, and felt that I got to know those children just a little bit. I learned who their parents were, where they lived, how old they were and sometimes, what happened to them. The notes in the last section sometimes told of their marriages, their deaths, or if

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Re-Building

FAITH

in

Changing

Times



SUMMER SESSIONS

JULY 22-27, 2023

Saturday to Thursday

At Oakwood Friends School and Online

An invitation from the clerk of NYYM:

Dear Friends,
Please come to Oakwood Friends School for NYYM's 328th Summer Sessions. We'll be exploring the theme *Re-Building Faith in Changing Times*.

Though the most visible change for us initially will be the new venue, other new things are likely to mean more to us: we have shortened our time by a day and incorporated two weekend days at the beginning of our "week," in hopes that makes it easier for working folks to come; we will have intergenerational programs and activities several afternoons; we will be creating new activities for

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Listening Beyond

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Notices

Births/Adoptions

Magdalena Rose, to Erica Jackofsky, member of Conscience Bay, and Rick Ruggiero, on March 20, 2023

Deaths

Michael Black, member of Brooklyn, in March 10, 2023

Rose Lynn, member of New Brunswick, on March 31, 2023.

Valentine Titus, member of Westbury, on April 19, 2023.

Linda Weiser, member of Cornwall, on February 17, 2023.

NEWS

Do You Receive the Weekly NYYM Email Update?

An email newsletter is sent to NYYM Friends each Friday. Past editions are available at nyym.org/weekly-updates. To subscribe, fill out the brief form at nyym.org/subscribe. If you've subscribed but haven't received any emails, please check your spam folder.

Task Group on Gun Violence Prevention

A Task Group on Gun Violence Prevention is being formed by the Witness Coordinating Committee of New York Yearly Meeting to support and expand the work of Peter Murchison, the Gun Violence Prevention Coordinator of the yearly meeting. The focus of the group will be to determine ways yearly meeting Friends can further make our witness regarding gun violence prevention visible and effective. Please email your interest and questions to Margery Cornwell at cheetahcm@netscape.net.

Fellowship of Quakers in the Arts

FQA is a national organization; an art ministry for Quakers. They publish a quarterly newsletter, *Types and Shadows*, and provide a Quaker Arts presence at the FGC Gathering and other Quaker events, offer small grants to support members' creative work and learning, and serve as a communications center for Quaker artists. Visit them at fqaquaker.org.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Summer Sessions 2023
July 22-27 (Sat. to Thurs.), Hybrid: Online and at Oakwood Friends

Around Our Yearly Meeting

School

Summer Sessions 2023 will be at Oakwood Friends School (not at Silver Bay) and online from the morning of Sat., July 22, to lunch-time on Thurs. July 27. See pages 5-8 of this issue for more and visit nyym.org/summer-sessions-2023 for up-to-date information.

Powell House Workshops



Powell House is the retreat and conference center for NYYM. Visit powellhouse.org/event-list/ to register or call 518-794-8811.

HOSPITALITY, the final session of the Testimonies to Mercy Series June 2-4, 2023, in person

Our keynote speaker is Rhiannon Grant, who will be joining us online from the UK. Her remarks will be about moving, in our communal homes, beyond more chairs and a bigger table to a new menu: embracing deep hospitality and exploring our changing Quaker community as we welcome different forms of theological and social diversity. Susan Wilson will join Windy Cooler as the co-leader for this retreat, exploring this message in embodied, curious ways. Expect this to be a time of discernment and exploration. Visit www.powellhouse.org/event-list/hospitality

Opening to the Wisdom of Our Elders

June 16-18, 2023, in person
Who has been a spiritual mentor to you in your Quaker journey? Who nurtured, instructed, and encouraged you along the Way? During this retreat, we will gather in worship, naming those living and dead who have served as mentors to us, both personally and collectively. We will take time alone, in solitude, to imagine intimate conversations with them. In worship and in sharing, we will remember and give thanks, opening ourselves to their wisdom and guidance. To register, click on the event name at www.powellhouse.org/event-list/. *Facilitated by Linda Chidsey and Michael Wajda*

Friends General Conference (FGC) Gathering

The 2023 FGC Gathering, "Listen So That We May Live", will be held at **Western Oregon University in Monmouth, OR, from July 2-July**

8, 2023. The Gathering is a week of Quaker worship, workshops, and community for all ages. About 1000 Quakers (mostly from the unprogrammed, liberal tradition) come together from across the US and Canada to deepen our connection to one another and the Spirit. Attenders range from newborns to elders in their 90s, and include both long-time Friends and those newer to Quakerism. In structure, it's part conference and part family camp. In content, it provides an abundance of opportunities to learn about Quakerism and to foster your spiritual life— and to have fun together.

Workshops and financial assistance will be available on a first-come, first-served basis. Beginning June 1, there is a late fee for all full-time and half-Gathering registrations. Visit www.fgcquaker.org/the-gathering/

SAVE THE DATE for World Quaker Day

World Quaker Day — October 1, 2023 — will be an opportunity to learn, reflect, and act in preparation for Friends World Committee on Consultation's 2024 World Plenary Meeting in South Africa and online. The theme of the meeting is **Living the Spirit of Ubuntu: Responding with Hope to God's Call to Cherish Creation and one-another**. For more on *ubuntu* and World Quaker Day, visit fwcc.world/worldquakerday

FOR YOUNG ADULTS

Children, Youth and Young Adult Community Director Beth Kelly maintains a list of upcoming YAF events at nyym.org/yaf-events.

Does it Nurture Myself?

A Young Adult Conference (older than high school age) at Powell House, June 9-11, 2023

Care for oneself can take on many forms. While one person may unwind with a bubble bath, another may prefer a wilderness hike. Others may find it difficult to make time for self-care at all. Join us as we discuss different ways to give ourselves care as well as challenges that can stand in the way of good self-care. We will play games and make art to help us navigate this tricky and important topic. Visit poho.org to register.

Continuing Revolution 2023: Nurturing Experiments in Spiritu-

ally Grounded Abolition

June 2-6, 2023, on-campus at Pendle Hill and online via Zoom

Continuing Revolution, Pendle Hill's annual conference for young adults (ages 18-35), is a space of collective exploration and learning for the spiritually curious who are striving to live in ways that reflect their values. Join other young adult Friends and seekers exploring abolition of police and policing. Building on themes and feedback from 2022's Experiments in Spiritually Grounded Abolition, we will focus this year on the relationship between individual and structural transformation. Visit pendlehill.org/learn/continuing-revolution-2023/

Powell House Youth Program Reunion for '19, '20, '21, '22

July 1, 8:00 a.m. - July 2, 4:00 p.m. Folks who graduated in the range of 2019 to 2022 are invited to come to Powell House for a reunion! You can expect time to celebrate and enjoy being in community. We will have Cabaret, a hike to Dorson's, and plenty of time to swim in the pond. Register at poho.org.

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MENTORSHIP Reimagined



Exploring the
Transformative
Power of Quakerism

NYYM's Mentoring Program for 2023-24

The Mentoring Program is excited to announce its 2023-2024 program: **Mentoring Reimagined: Exploring the Transformative Power of Quakerism**. We envision a year of Friends growing together in community and seeking spiritual nurture with each other, with EVERYBODY'S GIFTS acknowledged and honored. The program

will include small group discernment, retreats, worship, and opportunities to explore topics of interest. And, as always, you have the opportunity to go deep with a partner or consistent small group. To learn more, please see nyym.org/Mentoring-2023. Registration is available at nyym.org/Mentoring-2023-Registration.

FOR CHILDREN & TEENS

Powell House Youth Conferences

Visit powellhouse.org/event-list/ to register or call 518-794-8811.

EARTHSONG 2023 for 7th-12th Grade

May 27-29, 2023

Join us for our annual celebration of our loving, strong community.

Camping In The Maze for 6th-8th Grade

June 23-25, 2023

Let's get in touch with nature! This conference we will pitch tents and camp in the Powell House grounds. We will explore our maze-like trails, learn wilderness survival techniques, and roast marshmallows by the fire. We are happy to provide tents and sleeping bags; let us know what you might need.

Young Peacemakers Week August 14-18 in Albany, NY

Young Peacemakers Week will again take place in 2023, from August 14-18, 1:30 to 6:30 in the afternoon, at the Albany Friends Meetinghouse. Our goal is to bear witness to the Quaker Peace Testimony, and all our activities and events are infused with that purpose. We welcome children going into grades 2 to grades 8. We are also actively looking for volunteers, paid interns, and paid teachers. Interns are generally high school age and assist the teachers, who are college age and up. For more information, please visit our website, www.youngpeacemakersweek.weebly.com, or contact Anita Stanley at 518-441-7722 or meridiancomm@earthlink.net.

OPPORTUNITIES

Apply to the Stevens Fund for Friends in Need by June 1

The Stevens Fund is a small fund held by NYYM Trustees to assist Friends who, through age or disability, may be in need. These Friends may be pastors, ministers, or other Friends who have been of service to our yearly meeting.

The next list of distributions will be decided by the Ministry and Pastoral Care Committee in mid-June. Decisions are based on need. Please note the income guidelines are \$25,000 for a single individual, and \$32,000 for couples. Applications can be accessed online at nyym.org. Please apply by June 1.

For additional information contact David Herendeen, 518-836-7209, herendeendavid8@gmail.com.

Job Openings

These Quaker organizations often have job openings. Check their websites for current opportunities:

Friends General Conference:

www.fgcquaker.org/work-at-fgc/

American Friends Service

Committee: afsc.org/careers

Friends Committee on National

Legislation: www.fcnl.org/about/work-fcni

NYYM Grants for Earthcare and Climate Justice Projects

NYYM Friends and meetings are invited to apply for grants of \$50 to \$500 from NYYM's Earthcare Fund to support their projects related to Earthcare and Climate Justice.

Visit nyym.org/content/nyym-financial-resources-individuals-and-meetings#earthcare to find out more and to apply.

Editor's Note

I apologize for the lateness of this issue. Summer Sessions is being held in a new location this year, and extra time is needed to work out all the details. I will be sad not to be at Silver Bay but I'm truly excited to see what we can do at Oakwood. Time to relax, play, worship, and create with each other will be plentiful. We will have a comfortable, air conditioned theater in which to worship and hold business — and also perhaps to watch movies and perform karaoke(!). There will be snacky treats in the evening, kids playing games on the lawn, and singing after dinner. Summer Sessions will be as deep as the energy that is brought to it. Many wonderful Friends have already committed their time and spirit to making this Sessions an incredible experience. I hope you will take a chance and join us.

Spark accepts article submissions of 400-600 words, artwork, poetry, shorter news items and announcements, and letters to the editor. Please share your gifts with the rest of NYYM. Email submissions to communications@nyym.org.

Upcoming *Spark* themes:

September 2023: Open

Theme. Please share what you're thinking about now — how is your meeting? How is your spiritual condition? Consider responding to the Sessions theme, "Rebuilding Faith in Changing Times," or to your experience at Summer Sessions 2023. **Submissions due August 15.**

Send in your meeting's news so it can be shared in the next NYYM weekly email update or in *Spark*. If you'd like to join NYYM's weekly email list visit nyym.org/subscribe.

NYYM is on **Facebook** (NewYorkYearlyMeeting), **Twitter** (NYYMTweets), and **Insta** (newyorkyearlymeeting).

—Sarah Way, NYYM

Communications Director
communications@nyym.org

[NYYM.org/donate](http://nyym.org/donate)

Quaker Indigenous Boarding Schools

Liseli Haines

Mohawk Valley Meeting

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they ran away from the school. But it was all in the words of the Quaker teachers. I longed for the words of the children, and then I discovered a book of reminiscences of Seneca elders, recorded in 1986 and read it cover to cover. There were many references to the "Quaker School". I heard that the food was pretty good, that if the children spoke Seneca, their native language, they were made to stand or sit out in the hall. Not too bad, I thought to myself. I found myself trying to create the fiction that this school was different. That it did not have abusive teachers, that the children were treated well, that their memories were not of the horrors of the "Quaker school."

It was in a weekly discussion of Friends doing research on Quaker Indigenous Boarding Schools that clarity came to me. One person said that as far as she could tell the Quaker Boarding Schools were the "unintentional handmaidens of Empire" and Quakers, in running these schools, changing gender roles, Christianizing and squashing language and native culture were "the best of the worst." Faint praise indeed. It was here that I realized that it was not a dichotomy I was holding. I realized that while individual students might not have been abused, might have acquired skills that helped them support their families and in the short run benefitted from their Quaker education. In the long run their lives and the lives of their children may have suffered. These individuals lost their identity, lost their culture, lost their community. The educational system of the Indigenous Boarding Schools was Cultural Genocide.

Perhaps Tunesassa was the "best of the worst," but it has left a legacy behind. A legacy of lost language and culture, of children who ran away or were noted to be "unsatisfactory." I wonder what made them unsatisfactory in the eyes of their teachers. I wonder why so many children "ran away" from school. I wonder how the children, grandchildren and great grandchildren of those students are doing today? Do they speak their language? Do they know their stories? Have they heard the cultural and spiritual teachings of their grandparents? Do they treasure who they are? Do we?



Listening in Tongues

Beth Kelly
Brooklyn Meeting

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adults, Friends speak about “listening in tongues.” Often, Friends new to the term will ask us to explain it. I respond: “Friends have a rich diversity of spiritual, religious, and meaning-making experiences. When we speak of ‘listening in tongues,’ we allow Friends to speak with their authentic voices and look for the seed in their words that can blossom in the ground of our community.”

The practice is vital, not just for young adult Friends, but generally in NYYM. Over the summer, I heard both non-theist YAF’s and Christian YAF’s express a sense of alienation, of not “fitting in with Quakers.” And at Fall Sessions there were concerns from both non-theist and theist Friends that their beliefs weren’t being represented in a particular minute. It was difficult to witness—this common feeling of “if it’s not worded to include my spiritual or non-spiritual grounding, then it is not from all of us.” Though Friends were in unity with the substance of the minute, the committee bringing it was asked to redraft it with attention to Friends’ common spiritual ground.

Wrangling together shared language is one of the gifts and difficulties of being part of a “unity meeting” (a meeting that is intentionally inclusive of two or more branches of the Religious Society of Friends—usually liberal/FGC Friends and orthodox/FUM Friends). However, in the words of Maya Angelou, “we are more alike, my friends,/than we are unlike.”

I believe God/the Bigness/Spirit/our consciences speak to us in words we understand—and that we can only use the words we understand to try to communicate with others. Sometimes this means the words/actions/images won’t be familiar to everyone who encounters them, or won’t have the exact same meaning. Like a published book or exhibited painting, once our reflections and ministry are offered, they are not ours alone to interpret. The way the seed takes root and blossoms may be surprising to the person who found it and

planted it—the descendents of the seed may take on new characteristics when it encounters new soil or its flower cross-pollinates.

But the cross-pollinated plant is often stronger. Our community and its work in the world are stronger for its inclusion of a variety of languages and belief-soils. We can sing different songs and be strengthened by learning each other’s songs, even/especially when they feel foreign. We can have different soils that nurture our seeds and appreciate how other soils are also rich. We can love each other in unity that doesn’t require uniformity.

We have among us Christian Quakers, Jewish Quakers, Buddhist Quakers, Quaker Pagans. Evangelicals and non-theists. Friends who feel grounded in something that has no name or is only known as “That which is Eternal.”

Among all of us comes the question, “But what canst *thou* say?” We answer it in our own words, authentic to what Light shows us.

We interpret together and separately. We listen as best we can. We have the opportunity to explore what we’ve learned in different languages and show the world (and yes, New York Yearly Meeting) what love can do.



God is a Stove

Lu Harper
Rochester Meeting

I wrote this poem around age 3-5. I think it shows I was already a Quaker at heart:

O God who art a kitchen stove
Please keep me warm and bright.
Keep me very warm and bright
with thy stovely light.



Who Are You, God?


Gay Edelman
Shrewsbury Meeting

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intrusive; boundary-violating, relentless; cruel; unsympathetic; needy; demanding; unjust; disrespectful; unavailable; capricious; wildly impatient; opaque; uncommunicative; explosive; violent. The leader then held up his hand in a stop-traffic gesture and said, “Fire that God of your misunderstanding!” He suggested creating a new, loving higher power of your choosing. Here’s mine: always available; unconditionally loving; totally kind; totally strong; not one little bit cruel; totally patient; full of love; excellent, kind teacher and guide; always respectful; wiser than I can know; empowering; life-giving; healing; energizing; inspiring; joy-giving; infinitely forgiving and generous; endlessly nurturing; beautiful beyond measure; peace-making; supportive of free will; collaborative.

Knowing the qualities of my higher power helps me commune with it, say, in my morning scribbles. I like to dialog in writing with God to see what support and guidance will come through. I often start with the lovely prayer (attributed to St. Francis of Assisi), “Who are you, Oh, my God, and who am?” and move into what my friend Suzanne calls a Dear God letter—with answers. This chumminess means that on any given day I use what deity name feels right that day. It’s almost like good old HP (higher power) says, “I don’t care what you call me. Just call me!” Similarly, when I talk with others about matters spiritual, I listen—in that lovely way Friends can have—for what language works for them. That’s just good listening, and kindness in the manner of Friends. Who cares what we call our inner guide? We’re connecting in and around spirit!

And then there’s the glorious spaciousness beneath talk. The best part of Quaker practice for many of us in the spaces below words. You know those moments when Friends go together to the still place? All our words, as lovely and thoughtful as they are, are just the prelude for that gathering. Talking about God for me is a tool for going to that

mysterious, ineffable connection that can happen in the silence. As in, the silence of meeting for worship. The silence called for when a business meeting is falling out of worship. The silence that begins and ends each conversation I have with my Quaker and other soul friends. The silence that calls us home, wherever we are, whoever we’re with, and gathers us as One. 



Perspective of a Nontheist

Mary Pagurelias
Brooklyn Meeting

How one nontheist friend encounters Love rather than a belief in a traditional God.

There are “traditional” ideas in the Religious Society of Friends of God and/or Christ and how one ought to conform to those ideas. I’ve been inspired by this question from George Fox: “... but what canst thou say?”

I’ve not always found it easy to put into words that which I experience and yet, I have always known who I am, what lives in my heart, and what is at the core of my being.

Love. Love flows through all of humankind. Love is always seeking to be shared. Love is always seeking Love. Love is “that which is eternal.”

What most intrigued me about Quakerism was the simplicity of the meeting room. Absent were icons. No stations of the cross, no crucifix, no pulpit, no sermon, no sit, stand, kneel. In other words, there was nothing to distract me, nothing to tell me what I was supposed to believe. Like many convinced Friends, I found home in this community.

Captured by the notion that there is Seed within every human being in the world, I realized Love is Seed. Love links us all. Love answers Love. Love is Seed that connects me

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to the Love within you.

You might call that God, Christ, or Jesus of Nazareth. I don't feel or know God, Christ, or Jesus of Nazareth. I do feel and know Love. Love is Love for me. Love is not another word instead of... Love is the word.

When Friends speak of the Divine, or the Spirit, I don't know or feel what is meant. Based on my intellect I can guess at what is meant by Divine and Spirit. I think it is very close to Love that I felt as I witnessed my grandson enter this world as he left my daughter's womb. Love. I know Love. I feel Love.

It would be so much easier to be "traditional"— however, that would not be my Truth. To say that I believe in the existence of an all-knowing supernatural being would be akin to ascribing to the belief that the world is flat when I know, in fact and experience, that it is round.

To be a True Welcoming Beloved Community we must begin to embrace all in equal measure.

In Search of Silence

Helen Blohm
Buffalo Meeting

I feel I have held my silence for too long. It seemed fortuitous that the March issue of SPARK had a front page article by a member of the Buffalo meeting and later an editor's note saying "let's talk about it".

That is precisely the problem. Quoting from the article, "meeting for worship is described as silent waiting, where we expect to come into the presence of God. In this living silence, we listen for the still, small voice that comes from God".

A still, small voice cannot be heard above all of the cacophony I have found in today's meetings.

I grew up in the Buffalo meeting in the 50's. Back then it was extremely rare for someone to speak in meeting. This seemed only appropriate given that God has never seemed to me to be very chatty. All religions are based on God sharing with only a few.

Somewhere in the mid-1970's, I noticed things changing. One instance I still remember vividly. I

was attending meeting at the old meeting house in Philadelphia. I had gone to find some quiet time in the midst of a hectic and pressure filled schedule getting my MBA from Wharton.

A number of messages had already been given when one young woman urgently began speaking. She continued on and on (and could have been under the influence of some substance) when she was vocally cut off by a male member ending the meeting.

Since then I have attended numerous meetings in search of sharing silence with others. As soon as the 10 minute required period of silence is over, the "messages" begin unabated until the hour is done. With the introduction of social media, I can only imagine the "need" to share has only intensified.

These Sunday mornings I enjoy my solitude in the beauty of nature. I've kinda given up on going to meeting any more, though I do try to practice Quaker values in my everyday life.

Maybe, instead of us talking about God, we should let God talk to us. What would happen if one entire meeting a month were held in complete silence?

You will say, Christ saith this, and the apostles say this; but what canst thou say? Art thou a child of Light and hast walked in the Light, and what thou speakest is it inwardly from God?

—George Fox (as described by Margaret Fell, 1694)



An Invitation from the Clerk

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JYM because we are in a new place; we will have fewer meetings for business; and mostly, we are prioritizing time together for worship, fellowship, play, and rest, finding out what is important to do together in person, and why we gather.

Opening to one another and to Spirit, as always, we will seek guidance for our rebuilding.

We will have queries and proposals to discern together and spending time in worship and fun helps ground us for that. Of course, there will be Bible Study and worship-sharing, plenary speakers, singing, meals together, and more (where will the jigsaw puzzle be?).

Please come — your help is needed to create a new way to do Summer Sessions — a way that holds much that we love from the past, rebuilds our faith as we try new things, and renews our pleasure in being together.

I am hoping I will see you there.
Love, Elaine

(Elaine Learnard, Clerk of NYYM)

Summer Sessions 2023 A New Location

For the first time in many decades, New York Yearly Meeting is gathering for Summer Sessions in a new physical location. Due to a number of factors the Sessions Committee and other NYYM officers were unable to negotiate a workable contract with Silver Bay this year. Many people who have experienced Summer Sessions at Silver Bay are upset and disappointed. The planning team, which tried hard to avoid this outcome, shares these feelings. Additionally, the planning team apologizes that the initial announcement was made in a form and language that some found hurtful.

This year, NYYM will be meeting at Oakwood Friends School for Summer Sessions. Oakwood School, which is a part of NYYM, is excited to host us, and is offering their creativity, energy, flexibility, and help. NYYM will be the only group on campus, so we can use all the available spaces and fully immerse ourselves in our Quaker community. There will be new experiences, and new traditions will be formed. At the same time, many of Friends' favorite Summer Sessions events will still be happening, like the intergenerational Fun(d) Fair and tag sale, singing after dinner, the Café Night talent show, and the contra dance. Like last year, many Summer Sessions events will be hybrid—available to attend

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Inspiration for the 2023
Sessions Theme:
**Re-Building Faith in
Changing Times**



"There is no generation of young minds that finds the truths and realities of religion easy of apprehension. Faith is never ready made; it must always be built. The building process is easier in some epochs than in others, but the structure of the spirit must be reared in every case in the face of real difficulties." — Rufus Jones, *The Trail of Life in College*, in *Faith & Practice*, p. 42

"Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands." — 2 Corinthians 5:1 (NIV)

"So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." — Isaiah 41:10 (NIV)



A Friend walks to Craig Dormitory.

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on campus or online via Zoom—like worship sharing, bible study, meetings for worship and for business, and meetings for discernment. Check out the "Week-at-a-glance" schedule on page 8.

Sunday Night Plenary

Quakers and the Indian Boarding Schools

Paula Palmer will be the Sunday night plenary speaker, giving a presentation on Quakers and the Indian Boarding Schools. The presentation will begin with a video, followed by a time for small and large group reflection.

Paula Palmer is a member of Boulder Monthly Meeting, part of Intermountain Yearly Meeting. Her ministry, Toward Right Relationship with Native Peoples, is a program of Friends Peace Teams. Throughout her adult life, Paula has collaborated with Indigenous peoples as an ally. In Costa Rica, where she lived for 20 years, she helped the Bribri Indigenous people write and publish their own histories. For 17 years as executive director of the environmental organization Global Response, she organized more than 70 international campaigns to help Indigenous communities defend their rights and prevent environmental destruction on their lands. Eleven years ago she experienced a leading to join with Native Americans in their efforts to educate North Americans about the ongoing impacts of the Doctrine of Discovery, colonization, and the forced assimilation of Indigenous people. Through the Toward Right Relationship with Native Peoples program, Native and non-Native people come together to build relationships based on truth, respect, justice, and our shared humanity.

Worship Sharing Groups

Groups will meet either online or in person. At worship sharing, participants are given a query and a chance to explore the query in a sacred, worshipful space with a small group of Friends. Friends attend the same worship group all week.

Worship at Summer Sessions

NYYM Summer Sessions provides many opportunities to worship and share with the Peaceable Community. Everyone is invited to attend opening worship on Saturday evening, meeting for discernment on Sunday, meetings for worship before business, and closing worship on Thursday, all of which will take place in person at Oakwood; the planning team intends to livestream or hold these as hybrid events as circumstances allow. In addition, your worship and your discernment are needed at hybrid meetings for worship with a concern for business. The more Friends who participate, the better.

You are Invited to Attend NYYM's Summer Sessions 2023

Online and In Person at Oakwood Friends School, Poughkeepsie, NY

Saturday lunch, July 22 to Thursday lunch, July 27

Business Meetings

At business meetings our Quaker practice is put into action. Everyone present is part of the decision-making body and goes through discernment and the finding of the way forward together. Reports on the recent activities of committees and individuals are also heard. Business meeting is a great way to find out how Spirit is moving around the New York Yearly Meeting. Business meetings will be hybrid, both in person and online via Zoom.

Special Events

On Tuesday evening, the senior high school group produces Café Night, an all-ages talent show during which hats are passed to collect donations. Café Night will be streamed online, and it may be possible to have online performers participate. Bring your instruments and props and join the fun! On campus on Wednesday afternoon, the Junior Yearly Meeting presents the Fun(d) Fair, a fundraising fair that includes games, crafts, and refreshments. At the same time, there is the "Tagless" Tag Sale, at which you can "pay what you wish" for items donated by Friends. Please consider bringing used items in good condition to Oakwood so they may be sold at the tag sale. All of these events raise money for the NYYM Sharing Fund and Powell House. In addition, there will be a live-called—and lively!—contra dance for all ages on Monday evening.

Attending Online

Like last Summer Sessions, meetings for worship, business, and discernment will take place online as well as in person. The plenary and other events like Café Night will be available online as well. There will be online-only worship sharing groups. Registration will open soon at nyym.org/summer-sessions-2023.

Attending In Person

COVID Concerns

Sessions Committee agreed to the following suggestions about COVID safety: Masks will be optional. Friends are encouraged to take a COVID test at home before coming to Oakwood.



A grassy slope with one of Oakwood's dormitories to the right.



Friends playing "Quiddler" in the library at Spring Sessions 2023.

If you feel unwell, please stay home, regardless of COVID test results. If you feel ill at Oakwood, there will be test kits available and you will be asked to take a test.

Overnight Accommodations

On campus—There are dorm rooms available for Friends who'd like to stay on campus. Each room has two twin beds. The charge will be \$65/night for a double-occupancy room and \$10/week for an extra person in the room. Sheets, towels, pillows, and blankets will be provided for each bed. You may want to bring a fan for the room.

Clusters—When you register for a room on campus you can choose to join a housing cluster with other young adult Friends or with other families with young children.

With Friends (possibly)—There may be a very limited number of home hospitality offers from local Friends. If this is an option it will appear on the registration form.

Off campus—There are many hotels near campus. NYYM has reserved a block of rooms at a reduced rate of \$130 at the Holiday Inn Express Poughkeepsie at 2750 South Road, near Oakwood: call 845-473-1151 and ask to reserve a room in the NYYM group using the booking code NYY. Friends are asked to make their own off-campus arrangements.

Meals

Meals at Oakwood's cafeteria will be available for purchase when registering for Sessions. Our first meal together will be lunch on Saturday and our last meal will be lunch on Thursday. Please indicate food allergies and preferences on your registration form. Meal costs are as follow:

Breakfast	\$8
Lunch	\$10
Dinners	\$12

Note that if you're staying in a hotel, your stay may include breakfast.

In-person Support

Accessibility Concerns. All the areas on campus that we will use during Summer Sessions are

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accessible, including the first floors of the dormitories. You will be able to request an accessible room and other accommodations on the registration form. Buildings are fairly close together. Golf carts will be available to assist movement around campus. One way to help our community is to offer assistance to Friends who may need help getting around or getting food in the dining hall. **12-Step Meetings.** 12-Step Meetings will be held every day in person during Summer Sessions. Meetings will be coordinated by John Scardina. Please contact John at 12-step-coordinators@nny.org if you are able and willing to facilitate a meeting or two.

The Healing Center. As in years past, the Healing Center will be a sacred space for Friends during Summer Sessions. The Healing Center operates on a temple model, not on a spa model. Seekers cannot expect to come for an appointment as if they were paying for services. Rather, seekers enter a sacred space where everyone present contributes prayerfully to the spiritual energy. Seekers can hold space, receive work, or join a meeting for healing — whatever is offered at the time.

Intergenerational Community Events

Friends are planning opportunities to create and play together during Summer Sessions. Ideas include playing with water with sprinklers, a kiddie pool, or a slip-n-slide; an art-creation space full of supplies and activities; a "library" with games and puzzles to borrow; movies and karaoke in the evening; and active group games and sports in the gymnasium and on the lawns. Field trips in the afternoons will be self-or-

ganized, with sign-up sheets to help Friends arrange carpools; options include nature trails at the Locust Grove Estate, the Walkway Across the Hudson, swimming at Minnewaska State Park, or a visit to the FDR National Historic Site at Hyde Park. Families with children may want to coordinate an afternoon visit to the Mid-Hudson Discovery Museum or Splashdown Water Park. Additional ticket prices may apply.

Children's Programs

Children Under Five will be cared for by experienced childcare providers, supervised by JYM coordinators, during the morning JYM time.

Junior Yearly Meeting is the program for children ages 5-18 attending Summer Sessions in person. Groups are arranged according to grade, and meet every morning, Sunday through Wednesday, from **9:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.** JYM volunteers plan a community-building week of activities for the children, including games, discussions, art projects, and more. JYM is a time for young people to experience a community based on Friends' testimonies and practices. Age-appropriate, experiential Quaker content is part of the program, and groups will spend some time in quiet worship or worship sharing every day. The all-JYM communal sing will take place on Wednesday morning, and JYM groups will present their epistles to the rest of NYM on Wednesday evening.

High School Group: The High School program may be different this year! Updates will be posted at nny.org/HS-Program-2023.

Can my child go to Summer Sessions without me? Yes! If your child is under 18,



Diane Keefe presents a report at a business meeting in Oakwood's theater, Spring Sessions 2023.

they may attend Summer Sessions with an adult chaperone. They must room with the chaperone if possible. The chaperone must be designated by the parent/guardian on their registration forms, must be at least 10 years older than the Friend they are chaperoning, and must bring a note signed by the parent/guardian to JYM check-in.

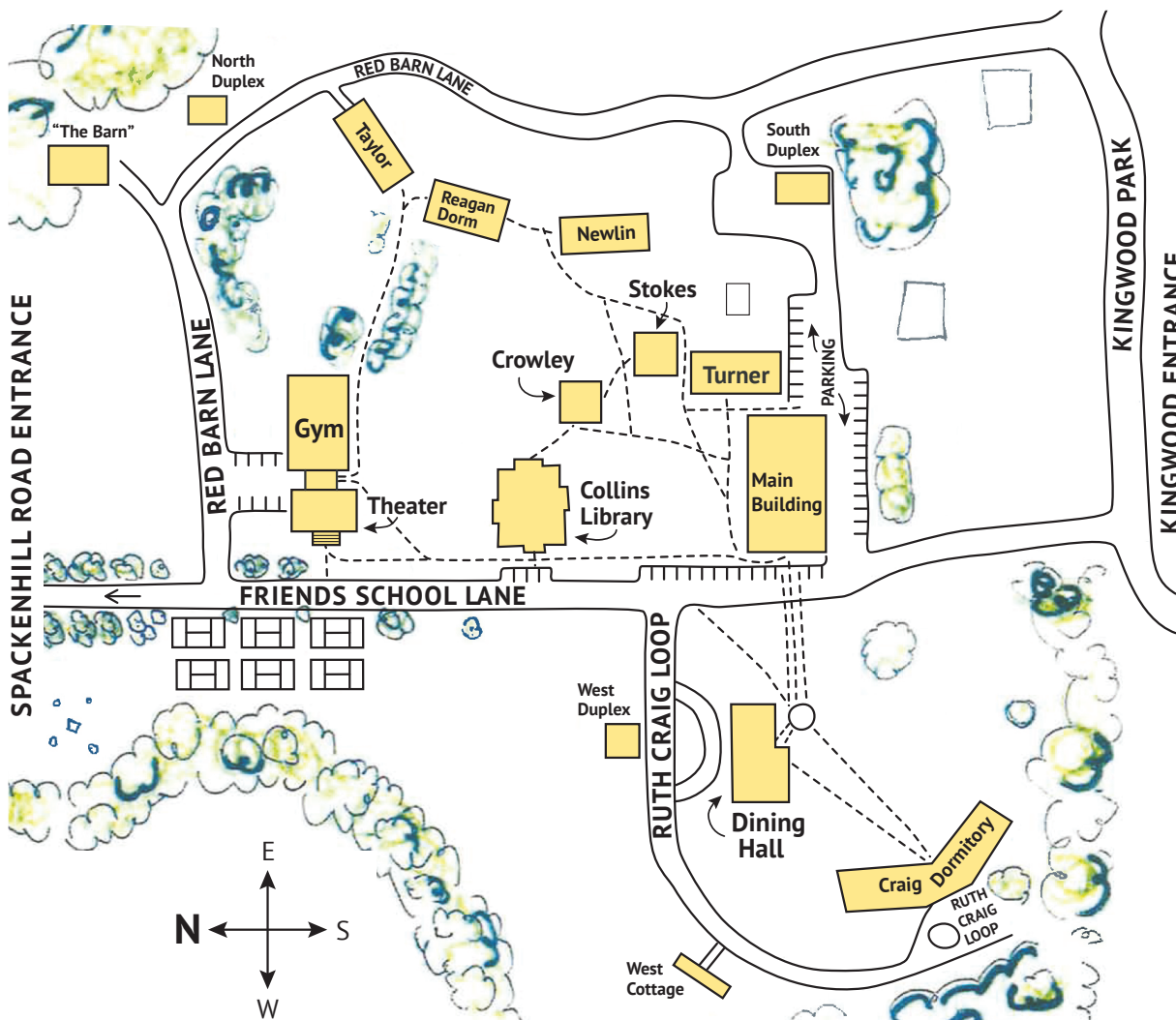
Young Adult Friends

Young adult Friends (YAFs) can choose to join a YAF housing cluster if staying on campus—be sure to select that option on your registration form. In addition, young adults will gather on Saturday to get to know each other and make plans for the rest of Summer Sessions. Possibilities include YAF-organized field-trips, learning opportunities, and check-ins about discernment happening at Sessions.

Things to Consider Bringing

- clothes for warm days and cool nights
- refillable water bottle
- sunblock, hats, sunglasses
- bug spray
- umbrella and rain gear
- swimsuits & towels if you want to play with water
- musical instruments or other props for the Café Night talent show
- athletic or hiking shoes
- if staying on campus, a fan for your room
- wifi is available throughout the campus; you may want a laptop or smart device to access documents during business meetings.
- money (small bills or checks) to spend at Cafe Night and at the Fun(d) Fair and Tag Sale

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The path to Oakwood's dining hall.



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Transportation

The address for Oakwood School is 22 Spackenkill Rd, Poughkeepsie, NY (see campus map on page 7). Poughkeepsie is the last stop on Metro-North's Hudson train line, which leaves from Grand Central in NYC. You can find train schedules at new.mta.info/schedules. A shuttle bus will be available to pick up Friends from the train station at certain times; visit the Summer Sessions page for details.

ON ARRIVAL: Please check in at the Library when you arrive on Saturday. You will receive a name tag, your dorm room key if staying on campus, and a detailed program schedule.

Pay as Led

There are multiple costs associated with sessions. Direct costs are paid through NYYM for on-campus meals and dormitory housing. Indirect costs are incurred by NYYM more generally, such as the contribution NYYM makes to Oakwood for hosting, staff time preparing sessions, and making the hybrid meeting format possible. Sessions are funded through a spiritual experiment that relies on each of us to do our part to support the wider community: "Pay as Led."

With Pay as Led, people who can afford to pay more can do so, enabling those who need to pay

less to do so. We trust that Friends will be both generous and honest in their discernment on what they are led to pay.

After you register, you will be sent three suggested Pay as Led amounts to choose from:

Standard rate, which covers your meals (and housing costs if you're staying at Oakwood), plus general hosting and registration costs.

Minimum rate, which is substantially reduced from the standard rate.

Full rate, which includes funds for NYYM programming costs and support for those paying less than the standard rate. Any amount above the standard rate will be recognized as a donation to NYYM.

If you need help paying for your transportation or off campus housing costs, please contact registration@nyym.org or call the NYYM office at 212-257-5750.

How Can I Help?

Work with children. If your gifts lead you to contribute to the work of the yearly meeting through guiding the children, consider this your opportunity. We need resource people and group leaders; art people, games people, experienced old hands and newcomers. What we will have in common is delight in sharing time with children each morning during our time at Summer



Friends enjoy lunch on the dining hall patio, Spring Sessions 2023.

Sessions. We expect to share much joy together. Contact Susan Stillman and Ellie Rosenberg at jym-coordinators@nyym.org.

You can indicate on your registration form if you'd like to help in one of these ways:

- Help Friends get around campus. If you are at least 21 years old with a valid driver's license, you can sign up as golf cart driver and make it possible for people with limited mobility to attend Sessions.
Staff the Healing Center. Are you skilled in the healing arts? Modalities offered may include energy work (healing touch, Reiki), massage, craniosacral therapy, and spiritual counseling. The type of services offered depends on the skills of those who volunteer.
Carry a microphone. Friends are needed to serve as a microphone carrier during meetings for worship, including those with a concern for business. Microphones enable Friends in person and online to hear each other.
Provide technical help. Friends experienced with Zoom meetings are needed to provide assistance to Friends who might need it, both at home and on site at Oakwood.
Build community by sharing your gifts. Friends are needed to share their gifts during a welcoming gathering on Saturday afternoon. Play is an important way to build the community we need. Some ideas: teaching a craft, like knitting; leading a session of yoga; starting a singing or percussion circle; coordinating a game for all ages, outside or inside; reading stories to children; facilitating a get-to-know-you circle; face painting and temporary tattoos; answering questions about NYYM or Quakerism; playing with bubbles.

REGISTRATION

The opening of registration will be announced via email. Registration is completely online. If you are unable to register online, please ask someone you know to assist you, or call the NYYM office at 212-673-5750 and provide your name, phone number, and a good time to contact you. Volunteers are ready, willing, and able to provide online registration assistance.

Updates and additional information will be emailed to the NYYM list and posted at nyym.org/summer-sessions-2023. Not on the NYYM email list? Sign up at nyym.org/subscribe.

2023 NYYM SUMMER SESSIONS WEEK-AT-A-GLANCE July 22 - July 27 subject to change. Table with columns for days (Saturday 7/22 to Thursday 7/27) and times (6:00 AM to 11:00 PM). Activities include Breakfast, Meetings for Discernment, Business, and Worship, Lunch, Dinner, Bible Study, and various social events.