



SPARK

New York Yearly Meeting

The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

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February 2024

In the Footsteps of Fox Leadings of Young Adults

George Fox left home at 18 in search of true religious experiences. At age 25, George Fox began to preach publicly, traveling on foot around England and attracting a growing group of followers — the “Friends of the Truth.” Quakerism has listened to the leadings from young adults since the beginning. In this issue we lift up the voices of some of the young adults (and soon-to-be young adults) in our yearly meeting to learn how they have been led by the Spirit.



George Fox painting by Violet Oakley

The Presence of Listening

Calliope George
NYYM Sojourner

If you'd believe it, the closest I felt to silence in 2023 was standing underneath Washington Square Arch and facing the wrath of 5th Avenue. It was there, for a little over an hour, that 20 some Quakers stood collectively for Peace. One of my favorite things about Quakerism is the variety of SPICES. Each testimony as unique and flavorful as the individuals and communities seeking them. The taste of Peace on this Autumn day was bitter. War seemed to have been the answer on the standardized tests of time for a while, and this moment felt no different. Another corner, the same simple loud silence.

I tried following shadows, staring at a sliver of sky, closing my eyes... anything to settle tart frustrations. I thought if somehow I could be at peace, then the world would be called to do the same. A rolling LED truck billboard started honking in traffic. An advertisement for Netflix's 'Pain Hustlers'. Salty. The glow of pink and blue inched and

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The Spirit of Kwanzaa Compels You

Chase Salazar
Southgate
Cenhesse (Friends)
Meeting

The tradition of American Friends is inextricably tied to the legacy of colonization. This cannot be presumed to have zero effect upon the social norms of Friends, which begs the question: How do you decolonize a culture? Certainly it cannot be done in one generation.

What drives a people to change? What allows for change in cultural practices and norms? Many well-known examples of these changes in the past have been brought about by violence or coercion. Some insight might be found in language: Recent research in linguistic development reveals that it takes approximately 3 cohort generations to create (Kuumba, Day 6) a full and distinct language. Less recent research also shows that language is deeply entwined with

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Revolution in Syria and Quakerism

Nicole Fite
Brooklyn Meeting

In the spirit of faith in action, I recently spent two years working and living with the women-led revolution in northeast Syria, also known as Rojava. I'm writing to let fellow Quakers know about it and some similarities with Quaker values and structures.

Perhaps surprisingly to some, within the chaos of the Syrian civil war, the northern third of Syria has operated autonomously since 2011. The people there have built a decentralized, grassroots, and multi-ethnic democratic experiment based on a pillar of gender equality. It is called the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria and now governs all of the former ISIS territory in Syria. In my opinion, it is the most exciting and inspiring thing happening on Earth, though few people are aware of it.

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Spring
Sessions
April 5-7, 2024

Spring Sessions 2023 will be a hybrid gathering, accessible both online and in person at Oakwood Friends School in Poughkeepsie, NY.

A Welcome From the Clerk

Friends, Attenders and Seekers, welcome to Spring Sessions, 2024. As we gather together, to journey

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I Will Hold You in the Light: Brooklyn Meeting's Email Light List

Linda Gnat-Mullin
Brooklyn Meeting

The Quaker practice of holding people and situations in the Light has been described as imagining those named enveloped or bathed in Light and Divine Love, without seeking a specific outcome. Each of us may have a different approach to “holding in the Light.” We are trusting the Light with those we care for and love.

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YAFs in
Footsteps of
Fox: pp. 4-6



Spring Sessions:
pp. 7-8

Notices

New Members

Matthew Ciske — Albany

Deaths

Jim Morgan, member of Brooklyn, on November 2, 2023.

Paul Weaver, member of Consistence Bay, on October 23, 2023.

NEWS

Query for State of Meeting Reports

The State of Society query is intended for all meetings, worship groups (unprogrammed, pastoral, prison etc.) and at-large members of the yearly meeting. By responding to this query you help us to reflect on how Spirit moves among us.

What is shaping your spiritual life and how are you being led to respond?

Meetings and individuals are asked to return responses by **April 15, 2024**, to state-of-society@nyym.org.

Faith and Practice Available

Copies of *Faith and Practice*, the NYYM book of discipline, are available from the NYYM office. \$10.00 per copy suggested. Contact office@nyym.org or write to New York Yearly Meeting, 15 Rutherford Place, New York, NY 10003.

NYYM's Weekly Update Email

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.

UPCOMING EVENTS

The next gathering of New York Yearly Meeting for business will be **Spring Sessions**, held on site at Oakwood Friends School and online **April 5-7, 2024**. See page 7-8.

Winter Meeting for Discernment March 2, 2024

Meetings for Discernment are periods of extended, waiting worship and deep listening to discern leadings and strengthen connections in our yearly meeting. The 2024 Winter Meeting for Discernment will be held in three sessions online via Zoom on Saturday, March 2. There will be a Zoom meeting on the evening of Friday, March 1 beginning at 7 p.m. for anyone new to the Meeting for Discernment or interested in holding space as an elder.

Around Our Yearly Meeting

The query for our worship:
How do we nurture the practice of discernment as we embrace the diversity of belief, experience and spiritual vocabulary among us?

To register, visit nyym.org/event/winter-meeting-discernment-2024

SAVE THE DATE! Summer Sessions 2024 will be held at Oakwood School and online, **Friday, July 26 (dinnertime) to Wednesday, July 31 (lunchtime)**. Contact sessions-clerk@nyym.org to help with Summer 2024, especially if you're interested in working with children.



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.

Creativity & Spirituality March 15-17, 2024

If art leads you to a deeper spiritual journey or your spiritual journey leads you to be more creative or if you just want to explore the relationship between creativity and spirituality, this retreat is for you. In a creative community we will delve into the interrelationship between creativity and spirituality through a variety of art forms—possibilities include: quilting, weaving, sculpting with clay, painting with watercolors, knitting, crochet, cooking/baking, origami, music.

Spring Work Weekend April 26-28, 2024

Indoor and outdoor work projects on Powell House's campus, with evening recreation and fellowship activities.

From FGC: Virtual Retreat for Parents of Interracial Families March 16-17, 2024. Registration deadline is March 11.

The Ministry on Racism at Friends General Conference is excited to share about our upcoming virtual interracial retreat. White and BIPOC parents of interracial families will be the focus and are invited to attend. This retreat aims to center Spirit in the creation of a space for meaningful conversations, shared experiences, and valuable insights on navigating the unique dynamics of interracial families within our Quaker community. To

register, go to www.tfaforms.com/5106988

Friends General Conference's 2024 Gathering: *Rooted in Story*

June 30-July 6 in Haverford, PA
Friends come together from across the US and Canada to deepen their worship, explore something new in a workshop, benefit from a Spirit-led plenary, share meals with a Friend, dance and sing, and more. There will be designated activities for Junior Gathering (infants to 9th grade), Young Friends in High School, and Young Adult Friends. www.fgcquaker.org/the-gathering

Friends World Committee on Consultation – World Plenary Meeting

SAVE THE DATE: August 5-12, 2024
In 2024, the first Quaker World Plenary Meeting in almost a decade will take place in South Africa, hosted by Southern Africa Yearly Meeting, and online. The theme is "Living the Spirit of Ubuntu: Responding with Hope to God's Call to Cherish Creation and One Another." Visit fwcc.world/wpm

FOR YOUNG ADULTS

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

Powell House YAF Conference: Ghosts and Grief June 14-16, 2024

Stories of ghosts swim around the walls of Powell House. Maybe you are carrying one of your own! How does the past influence the present? What happens when we pass beyond the physical world? What spaces do you think you would inhabit as a ghost? Visit powellhouse.org/event-list/ to register.

FOR CHILDREN & TEENS

Powell House Youth Conferences
Visit powellhouse.org/event-list/ to register, or call 518-794-8811.

Sensing, Listening, Deciding: 11th-12th Grade and Young Adults March 22- 24, 2024

Quakers believe that everyone should get a voice when decisions are made for a community. In Quaker meetings, the clerk takes on the role of listening to the members of the meeting and helping everyone come to consensus on any

decision that gets made for the meeting. At this conference we will talk about the role of the clerk as well as how the skills of clerking can be applied to different areas of life.

Turning the Page: 6th-8th Grade April 19-21, 2024

Changing schools, moving to a new town, becoming a teenager... There are many moments in life that can make you feel like you are entering a new chapter. Turning the page into that new chapter can feel exciting, but it can also feel challenging. At this conference we will talk about how big changes have affected our personal story.

EarthSong 2024: 7th-12th Grade May 24-26, 2024

EarthSong is a time of celebration and care for our community. It includes our annual send-off ceremony for our seniors as they enter a new phase of life. You can expect deep conversation, fun activities, and joyful games.

OPPORTUNITIES

Job Openings

These Quaker organizations often have job openings posted online:

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Editor's Note

I received news about the death of an old Powell House youth program friend of mine recently. A community of Friends from that time — 30 years ago — has joined together in a Facebook chat to share our grief, stories about Justin, and offers of help. Chatting together has helped us feel less alone. The bonds we formed as teenagers remain strong. I'm feeling very grateful for my time at Powell House.

Spark accepts article submissions of **400-600 words**, artwork, photos, poetry, shorter news items and announcements, and letters to the editor.

Upcoming *Spark* themes: **May 2024: Why We Gather.**

Why do Quakers find it important to gather together? From the 2020 edition of *Faith and Practice*: "The yearly meeting exists principally to worship together," and, though our worship focuses on business, we "can engage in any activity or foster any work that the membership considers appropriate." What does that mean, or what should it mean? Is gathering for worship and business enough to create a faith community? When, how, and why do we gather?

Submissions are due by **April 1** to communications@nyym.org.

Please send your meeting's news and upcoming events for the NYYM weekly email update or *Spark* to **communications@nyym.org**. Join NYYM's weekly email list at nyym.org/subscribe.

NYYM is on **Facebook** (NewYorkYearlyMeeting), **X** (NYYMtweets), and **Instagram** (newyorkyearlymeeting).

Choosing love anyway,
*Sarah Way, NYYM
Communications Director
communications@nyym.org*

NYYM.org/donate

Brooklyn's Email Light List

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At Brooklyn Meeting we have an email Light List that has evolved over time. Right now, we have 125 members and attenders who receive a weekly list of the latest requests for Light, and the prior three weeks' requests as well.

Our Light List was founded by our beloved Friend Lucy Sikes, who, years ago, stationed willing volunteers around the Meetinghouse to listen to the requests for Light during the service. Afterwards, during Social Hour, we would meet to compare notes, spellings, and identification of the people who might say, for example, "Please hold my mother in the Light." We had a lovely time putting the list together, and Lucy posted it weekly. Those of you who knew Lucy also knew that she was an artist and an activist of the first order, and so important to our meeting.

Lucy rendered such prodigies of service. She passed away several years ago minutes after having just completed playing piano for a holiday rehearsal of an interfaith choir here in Brooklyn. Her absence was keenly felt. There were many pieces for the meeting to pick up. Several of us believed that the Light List needed to go on. So, we found an old email list that had not been bcc'd, and invited everyone to consider joining the new list. We added members. In time, this membership evolved into a Google group of 125 people.

Although we are not an official committee, a core group of about six of us, some of whom had originally been listening with Lucy, are now known as Lucy's Light Listers. I knew this was a good name when a young attender asked me if there really was a Lucy, and I could tell her a little of Lucy's story.

And, because of privacy issues, COVID, and tricky handwriting, the gathering of names evolved from listening in the meeting room to a sign-up sheet in our vestibule to an email-only arrangement.

Google groups do offer the option of allowing members to email one another, but we stayed with Lucy's tradition of sending the requests from an administrator to the list once a week. That seemed to be the simplest method, and created more likelihood that our email would be noticed.

As of now, as we solicit requests for Light once a week, we ask all with a request, whether they've mentioned it in the meeting or not, to email lightlist@brooklynmeeting.org by 4 p.m. on Sunday.

We send out a reminder to our Google group on Friday evening or Saturday morning, and it always begins with a Quaker quotation of some kind. While this was originally done to keep our reminders from sliding into spam folders, we have received compliments on the quotations themselves. Our reminder also appears in our meeting's e-newsletter, and someone in the meeting will also announce the Light List and how to access it, because we often have newcomers.

Our core group of Lucy's Light Listers will also render a special service for emergency situations, in which we will immediately hold people and situations in the Light, and invite others to do so as well.

A member of Toronto Monthly Meeting, intrigued with our Light List, started one as well. And, in March of 2022, we had a Brooklyn-Toronto Joint Light List Meeting, a grand name for what was a wonderful time on Zoom, in which friends in Brooklyn and Toronto compared notes on how they held people in the Light and what it meant to them to do so.

Our Light List, organized and delivered regularly to in-boxes, is just a present-day iteration of an ancient and beautiful practice. Patricia Loring wrote, "Part of the experiential wisdom of the Quaker practice of holding people and situations in the Light consists precisely in the Gethsemane ("Nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done." Matthew 26:39) spirit in which we hold people and things in the Light. We offer what is painful to us, what is patently in need of healing, cleansing or reconciling to the Divine Healer in confidence that—although the solution is beyond us—good may be brought out of evil, solutions beyond our capacity to imagine or realize may evolve and—if we are open and willing—our participation may be radically different than we imagine."

Does the Light List work? God works in mysterious ways. We can't always know what is "working" and what is not. But here is a quotation from an individual, diagnosed with cancer, who has been on the Light List for a number of weeks: "Thank you for continuing to keep me in your thoughts and prayers! My update is that I'm still here, baby!

I was given weeks to live in June and it is now October. I am in the land of miracles. I am able to get outside for a walk in the woods most days and to enjoy the changing leaves, the forest floor covered in fungi, the geese honking from their chevron pattern in the skies above. I lift my face to the sun and glory in the light, the life, the moment. I don't know what tomorrow brings. But I am in awe of and so grateful for today. Sending much love your way. Xxoo."

Holding you in the Light as well, reader.



We Weep with the Willow

Kathy Czekaj
Manasquan Meeting

When a whole city drowns
When a forest is in flames
We still hang on to hope
As we weep with the willow.

When nature breathes so hard
Choking on its own pollution
When the lakes dry up from drought
We pray while our earth cries out.

In the storms of destruction on a gusty summer's day
For those forced to migrate as their homes are washed away
We lament our actions, or lack of such
As our earth cries out, how much?
How much?

For the dried-up crops, sown never to reap
For hungry children, our promises to keep
We pray, change our hearts from stone into flesh
And please, won't you guide our feet as we step?

We weep with the willow
But what do we know?
Our tears water fields
Where hope may grow.



In the Footsteps of Fox: Leadings of Young Adults



Young Adult Friends and their families spent a day enjoying music and nature at the Ashokan Center's Hot Chocolate Fest in February 2023. Photo by Alanna Badgley


The Presence of Listening

Calliope George
NYYM Sojourner

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strobed along, distracting the tungsten tone of sunset. I felt dizzy. Found a bench. It's a precious thing, to be part of something and also see it from afar. The group looked smaller from my bench spot. I thought about the opioid epidemic, global pandemics, anti-academic rhetoric...Here we were, calling on New Yorkers to align with peace and claiming it was simple. As if anything in 2023 was simple.

I guess I should spoil the ending now. I didn't "clear my head." Rejoined the group feeling overwhelmed with our world. Simultaneously grateful for growing in this little group called Quakers and wondering if there was actually method to our madness. Sometimes it seems like success is measured by talking points. So how do we balance the weight of routine silence with incredible worldly noise? That scale would probably break. Over pigeon coos, bike bells, and unhappy horns I recognized the weight was not all mine to carry. There is a rich comfort in finding community, however small, that stands in light. Old leather breeches and shaggy locks do a lot of walking in New York City. Standing in the light and breathing through uncertainty together is one way to rest our soles and feel heard in the noise.

As we simmer into 2024, it's clear finding complete stillness will not be simple. Silence, however, might be within reach. For perhaps silence is less the absence of noise, rather, the presence of listening. 

The Spirit of Kwanzaa Compels You

Chase Salazar Southgate
Cenhesse (Friends) Meeting

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culture and the manner of living in community (Umoja, Day 1) with others.

My parents were born in 1961 and 1964. Kwanzaa was established toward the end of the same decade. My parents are reverse migrants of the late 1980s; they both were raised in the Midwest in post-Great Migration communities and they both moved south to Atlanta, Georgia, where they met and I was born. Frugal (Ujamaa, Day 4), bookish, and subtly pious, my parents are very Quaker in manner, though not in name. I often stood out for my lack of branded clothing of any sort, and our household's flat disavowal of alcohol, cable television, and video game consoles. The internet, being a vehicle of knowledge and the economic stability of specialized skill sets, was wholeheartedly embraced exclusively for educational purposes.

In hindsight, it becomes very clear to me that my parents engaged very deliberately (Nia, Day 5) in building the world in which they wished me to grow. In doing so, they also conveyed to me their own experiences in what is called the 'Black Mecca'. Celebrating Kwanzaa and Black life itself was central to this. I never had pale-complexion dolls or action figures growing up; my mother was quick to lecture my elementary school friends' parents on the subject at any time, because how could Black children self-determine (Kujichagulia, Day 2) their place in tomorrow's world if they never saw themselves represented in it?

I have observed Kwanzaa in full or in part every year of my own life; my parents' friend Arthur Cole hosted the 27th, my mother the 28th, her friend Binta the 29th, and another friend Janet the 30th, and we would inevitably attend one public Kwanzaa or another on the 26th and the 1st. The 31st we stayed at home to ring in the New Year.

Hosting it for the first time myself, I feel a strange kind of fluency which cuts through the signs and forms to the very spirit in which Kwanzaa is enacted. The past and the present must be taken together to build for the future. This futurity is not the obligation of any one person, but the collective work (Ujima, Day 3) of all of us as ancestors, as relatives and as descendants.

I have spent the last week fomenting Kwanzaa at my local community hub, a coffee shop/bar. And in that time I have had the most heartwrenching and heartwarming conversations with my neighbors. One of the many gifts of Kwanzaa is to provoke one another into conversations with our neighbors who are still strangers. They are now all my Friends. It is my plan to seed Kwanzaa Club at my old school, Eagle Academy for Young Men of Color II. And after that to every Friends School in New York City.

Rejecting ritual for the sake of ritual is Quakerly and in keeping with Early Friends' disdain of "signs and forms". With all due respect, my rituals are not empty; they are full with the ujima that lies before us. And I invite you to them, for the work of a new world is before us. It is time for Quakers to take the leap of faith (Imani, Day 7) required to adopt intentional and meaningful forms, using signs, and I cannot think of a better holiday to become an American Friends Holiday than Kwanzaa. Seven unifying principles that Black America directed us all towards the moment they had achieved emancipation and 'equal protection' under the law. Quakers should celebrate Kwanzaa not because it is fun, though it is; and not because it is full of meaning, though it is, but because they have been invited and asked to help preserve the legacy of intentional Black community building—which is, after all, one of the most redeemable parts of the American Legacy.

You can find Chase and Daniela on Instagram: [@nyc.quakers](#). 



Revolution in Syria and Quakerism

Nicole Fite
Brooklyn Meeting

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In northern Syria/Rojava there is an autonomous women's militia and police force. At every level of the government structures, men and women govern together in a "co-chair" system. All ethnic groups—Kurds, Arabs, Christians, and others—are represented. In Raqqa, the former capital of the Islamic State, an autonomous women's police unit enforces women's rights on streets that used to be sex slave markets. I know—it seems like we all should have heard of this—but as we see, good news hardly makes the cycle. I can confirm it's very real and unfolding daily.

This revolution has only been possible on the bedrock of a deep faith in the possibility of change. My relationship with Quakerism primed me to experience the deep spiritualism at the heart of the revolution over my two years there. It also primed me to appreciate the political and social project being built, as there are many parallels with Quaker structure and philosophy. The democratic structure of the Autonomous Administration closely mirrors the ladder-up ladder-down structure of yearly meetings. Philosophically, there is an intense focus on equality among friends (they use the word friend to refer to others) and a commitment to putting the sense of the community above individual needs when making decisions.

To help trace these similarities and others, I advised on the writing of a document called "Of Kurds and Quakers," which can be found online. It provides much more background than I have been able to in this short article and makes a brief comparison between the Kurdish freedom movement, which forms the backbone of the revolution in Syria/Rojava, and Quakerism. I would love to be in dialogue with anyone who is interested enough to check it out!

I hope this has sparked (pun intended) an interest for some friends. I am more than happy


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to speak to any Quaker meeting or community group about the situation in Syria and the Kurdish freedom movement, the spiritualism of revolution and social change, and how to keep hope alive!

It is my hope that this article will alert a few more Quakers to this incredible spark of hope in the world. It is also my hope that some may be moved to act in solidarity, as it is actively being attacked. But first, know that all the former ISIS territory in Syria is now controlled by a truly progressive, gender-equal, decentralized, democratic experiment. Now you know, if you didn't before.

Have a great day.
Nicole would love to hear from interested Friends; please email her via communications@nyym.org. 

A Note of Appreciation for NYYM and Thoughts on Moving Forward

Greg Koziol

Young Adult NYYM Friend

My past year with NYYM has deepened my understanding of the possibilities of Quaker community. Upon moving back to the East Coast and connecting with Quakers here, I was so impressed by the programming offered for Young Adult Friends and the rich, meaningful relationships that Friends of all ages cultivated across hundreds or thousands of miles. Though I have heard the sentiment expressed implicitly or explicitly that NYYM's "heyday" is behind us, I see NYYM as a vital community of beautiful souls, and I believe Spirit is calling us toward a very bright future.

Witnessing NYYM navigate conflict in the business meetings of Spring, Summer, and Fall Sessions has fostered in me a conviction in the value of the Quaker process. Even when a particular discussion has not ended in a satisfying way, I left those meetings believing in the importance of the work we do to find unity among the many messages of our hearts. I am still discerning what membership means to me, but watching NYYM



Analea Blackburn, Nicole Bennett-Fite and Greg Koziol present the Young Adult Friends epistle at NYYM Summer Sessions 2023. *photo by S. Way*

undertake this work has clarified for me that I am a Quaker, and proud to say so.

There is much I appreciate about the structure of Quakerism—namely, the personal commitment and vulnerability required to participate in our processes. Rather than receiving theological truths from a faraway body we have no say in, we as Quakers are required to pay close attention to the way Spirit moves in our lives and take responsibility for sharing messages with the wider community. However, one challenge I see with this decentralized structure is the difficulty in ensuring aligned understandings of Quaker vocabulary and process. Over the past year, I have seen such misalignments distract from meaningful discussions and interfere with our capacity to engage with the spiritual heart of issues.

To address this challenge, I wonder if we might consider developing a formal path for "onboarding" new attendees of NYYM into a shared Quaker understanding, something akin to confirmation classes common in other denominations. I imagine such a path not as a barrier of any kind, but rather an invitation to learn about the roles, terms, and guiding principles of Quaker process. Creating this path could support our efforts to find unity on matters of business and give new attendees the confidence to participate more fully. Of course, there is no single way to be Quaker, and the variety of perspectives we can hold is part of what makes our community so rich. Taking steps toward clarifying the frameworks we do have in common could go a long way in creating space for the future that Spirit is inviting us toward.



Children's Peace Festival

Anna Whitely

Chatham-Summit Meeting

Children sang. Kids played. And art was created.

On November 4, 2023, we transformed the Chatham-Summit Quaker Meetinghouse into the Children's Peace Festival.

There were tents full of activities, from stringing beads to creating a tile mosaic. Inside the Meetinghouse, there were kid-friendly meditations, experiences, and The Empanada Lady food truck. It was inspiring to see the community, not just Quakers, come together and enjoy a fun-filled afternoon.

I founded the Children's Peace Festival with the guidance and support of all the members of the Chatham-Summit Quaker Meeting. Arlene Johnson served as our advisor, steering us along the way to a successful event.

The festival was originally thought of in 2022, when we were brainstorming ideas to bring the youth and young families the opportunity to experience Quaker ideals. We also wanted the community to know us as a hub for peace.

Through the help and kindness of many volunteers we were able to plan the festival for November 2023. We knew that we wanted the festival to have activities centered around the themes of peace, sustainability, social justice and other Quaker themes. So we considered everything from the backdrops in the booths, which were made of recycled items (such as CDs,) to the games led by Beth Kelly, where cooperation and fun were the winners.

We integrated these themes into activities such as painting peace rocks, writing postcards for social



Peace festival schedule. *Photo by Beth Kelly.*

justice, music, and other meditative activities. The festival offered high energy activities with also reflective activities such as forest bathing and meditation. One of the most special parts of the festival was music coming from the Kent Place School choir. It was amazing to watch everyone listen to the music. Afterward the performers were able to step back and enjoy themselves at the festival.

I especially appreciated how the members of the meeting came together. Each one brought a different skill to the festival, from leadership to logistics to craft making. Every single person played a hand in the success of the event. I am so grateful.


The date of the festival (which had been postponed to avoid a conflict with another event in town) ended up working out in our favor. It ended up being held just as the conflict between Israel and Palestine was in full force. Our Festival became not just a celebration for peace, it shed light on the importance of peaceful resolutions in global conflicts. And while not the answer to such a complicated scenario in the Middle East, it was a glimmer of hope that peace can live within us and can be fostered.

This event was built beyond our meetinghouse with the support of local businesses including The Farm in Chatham, who supplied mums that we shaped into a peace sign on the lawn; Fusco Brothers, who contributed the rocks for painting; and GCI Outdoor, who supplied two of the tents.

In fact, it was inspiring to see how many people wanted to help and be part of a peaceful activity. They just had to be asked.

The event has inspired me to move forward with the notion of peace and how one individual can inspire many on the path of peace.

I saw how it was creating change. I could tell the children were learning lessons of peace through the activities. We could create change—even a small amount of change—for these kids and their families. Even this local event could be the spark of global change in the future.

Anna Whitely is a sophomore at Summit High School. 



In the Footsteps of Fox: Leadings of Young Adults

The Little Red (Quaker) Hen

by an Uneasy Friend

Once upon a time, there was a Little Red Hen. The Little Red Hen attended a Meeting and was F/ friends with... a lazy dog, a sleepy cat, and a noisy duck. One day the Little Red Hen felt spirit move.

“Who will gather and worship with me on this query?”

the Little Red Hen asked.

“Not I,” barked the lazy dog.

“Not I,” purred the sleepy cat.

“Not I,” quacked the noisy duck.

“Then I will do it myself,” said the Little Red Hen. So she listened and nurtured a message all by herself.

When the leading was discerned, the Little Red Hen asked, “Who will help me serve on this committee?”

“Not I,” barked the lazy dog.

“Not I,” purred the sleepy cat.

“Not I,” quacked the noisy duck.

“Then I will do it myself,” said the Little Red Hen. So she called and clerked the committee all by herself.

When the committee was done drafting the minute and it was approved by the Meeting, the Little Red Hen asked, “Who will volunteer and help me do this work?”

“Not I,” barked the lazy dog.

“Not I,” purred the sleepy cat.

“Not I,” quacked the noisy duck.

“Then I will do it myself,” said the Little Red Hen. So she organized and facilitated everything all by herself.

When the work was done, the Little Red Hen asked, “Who will enjoy the fruits of the labor?”

“I will,” barked the lazy dog.

“I will,” purred the sleepy cat.

“I will,” quacked the noisy duck.

“Yes,” said the Little Red Hen, “but now I must be released. For my spirit has worn thin and this calling has become a burden I cannot carry alone. The bright light that once shone from within me is but an ember.”

So the Little Red Hen resigned her membership and the Meeting shrank.

Little Red Hen illustration above by Jane Dyer.



Epistle on Integrity

11th-12th grade and Young Adults

This epistle was written by young adults at a recent Powell House conference for 11th-12th grade and young adults. The conference was called SPICES: Integrity, and was held December 1-3, 2023

This was a weekend about integrity. We had good food and played games. Here are the queries we talked about:

Friends have been concerned to communicate with integrity, to make our words and actions fit the truth of our lives. We endeavor to speak the truth as we know it, honestly and forthrightly, speaking plainly from our own lives. Sometimes this practice has been difficult, sometimes the results surprise and delight us. (New York Yearly Meeting *Faith and Practice*, 2001)

- What does integrity mean to you?
- How does integrity differ from honesty?
- What is difficult about integrity?
- How do kindness and tact relate to integrity?

The choice by early friends of the term “society” gives a clear indication of their attitude towards organization. To them, the word society meant a body held together by spiritual forces freshly operating through each individual without creed, ritual, or sacramental admiration. (New York Yearly Meeting *Faith and Practice*, 1974)

- Do you feel that integrity can guide community?
- What is needed to nurture a community created by everyone speaking their truth?
- How do you support others in speaking their truth?
- Do you need to be honest to have integrity?
- What does it mean to act with integrity when there are conflicting values you hold?
- What determines the metric by which you can say whether you are acting with integrity?
- What does integrity mean in a community?

Read the full list of queries online at nnyym.org/content/integrity-queries



Pacing Poetry

Nichole Nettleton, Ithaca Meeting

To the ghostly midnight rambler

Pacing poetry

Into the lines you've worn on your heart's floor,

Walking the beat of a dryer's reverberating metallic tone

While others sleep.

While they wait for the sun

You stride patience down an emotional street,

Graffitiing your story on history's canvas.

Or, the journal kept hidden beneath your socks.

Any surface capable of holding reflections will do.

Good deeds shine through a cracked mirror of violence and mistrust.

You forget there is ink in your pen.

Green is in the corner under the dust.

I know some people drift away.

Some are wrenched from your broken grasp.

And we keen as others disappear as though they never were

Brilliant minds struggling to toe the line.

Stride patience.

What I am today, tomorrow I will never be.

Today I sit in sorrow, but that sorrow isn't me.

Who are you?

Winter eventually returns to summer.

Remember there is green

And that happiness may stalk in the shadows of night

As frequently as it hitchhikes on sun rays, easily seen.

Remember ink is in your pen and a voice within.

Be at rest midnight rambler. Sleep.

Tomorrow is a big day. You'll pace your poetry

Into the lines of the world

Walking to your own beat.

Others will join you as they wake

To a new day no one has known...

Just as soon as they wake,

as soon as the sun has shone.

Hi, I'm Nichole Nettleton. I hope you enjoyed the poem. I'm currently pursuing a Master of Fine Arts in creative writing at Southern New Hampshire University online. At NYYM, I run the Differently Abled Friends and Allies group (DAFA). You may have seen the QuakerSpeak interview on it. If you haven't yet, I encourage you to check it out. While the group is centered on disabilities, the purpose is connection. People are welcome to participate whether or not they have a "disability." I feel it's important for individuals to know they have this regular weekly meeting as a safe space. Unfortunately, the group has been on pause for far too long. I can't run DAFA alone. I am searching for volunteer facilitators. If interested in helping, please contact me at dafa@nyym.org.



continued from page 1

through this new year, let's uphold each other in the spirit of "Faith, Hope and Love." Allow these virtues to form the essential ingredients that will characterize our lives and lived experiences from now and beyond.

Please come and join our hybrid Sessions from April 5-7, 2024, at Oakwood Friends School, Poughkeepsie. Since this will be our first meeting together as a Faith Community, we will encourage each other in prayers and thanksgiving, with the hope of being covered in unfathomable peace.

Again, in the spirit of unwavering faith, hope and love, we welcome everyone to 2024 Spring Sessions!

Gloria Thompson,
Clerk, New York Yearly Meeting

What is Spring Sessions?

Spring Sessions is one of the three times a year that members of the New York Yearly Meeting community gather to worship, conduct business, and have fellowship together. These gatherings are open to anyone who is interested in Quakerism or the Quaker meetings in New York State and parts of Connecticut and New Jersey. The business meeting agenda, reports to read in advance of business meetings, and more will be posted at nyym.org/spring-sessions-2024.

Schedule

The event begins with dinner at Oakwood on Friday, followed by a program (to be announced, but will probably be hybrid.) It ends with lunch

on Sunday. In addition to meetings for worship and business, there will be a Meeting for Remembrance and time set aside for Coordinating Committees to meet. See the full schedule elsewhere on this page, and more information about attending in person on page 8.

Meetings for Worship and Business

At Sessions we gather in meetings for worship with a concern for business. Business meetings are preceded by an hour of worship to help us spiritually center and gather ourselves together. This worship is mostly unprogrammed (silent, unless someone is moved to speak) but can also include readings, singing and music. At business meetings the clerk leads us through an agenda of items, including the hearing of reports and the discernment of issues that require an action on the behalf of the gathered body of Friends.

Meeting for Remembrance

Beginning with Spring 2024, the yearly meeting will hold a hybrid Meeting for Remembrance at each Sessions to recognize and hold in the Light Friends we have recently lost. Because there was no Meeting for Remembrance at Summer Sessions 2023, we will attempt to "catch up" at Spring 2024 by focusing on Friends who passed between Summer 2022 and Summer 2023. Friends who have died since Summer 2023 will be remembered this summer. At the meeting, names will be read, along with their meeting affiliation. For those who were active in the yearly meeting we will read brief excerpts from their memorial minute (if it has been transmitted to the NYM office). There will be time for Friends to speak in remembrance as they are led.

Coordinating Committee Meetings

NYM coordinating committees (CCs) serve to coordinate and season the work and functions of their member committees, all of which share a related mission. Ministry CC coordinates the work of the committees concerned with various aspects of the yearly meeting's spiritual life. General Services CC coordinates the administrative functions and activities of the yearly meeting organization. And Witness CC coordinates the work of the committees concerned with the yearly meeting's social witness in the world. Attending a meeting of one of these coordinating committees is a good way to learn about the work of NYM committees and to see where Spirit is moving among us.

How do I register?

Registration will be posted soon at nyym.org/spring-sessions-2024. The opening of registration will be announced to the NYM email list—visit nyym.org/subscribe to join this list. You can also call the NYM office at 212-673-5750 for more information and for help with registration. You must register, even if you are attending online. We hope to see you there!!

nyym.org/spring-sessions-2024

Want to attend in person? See page 8.

Spring Sessions Schedule

April 5-7, 2023
Oakwood and Online

Bolded events will take place both in person and online (hybrid)

Friday evening, April 5

5:30-7:00 p.m. Dinner at Oakwood

7:00-9:00 p.m. Friday evening program

Saturday, April 6

7:30-9:00 a.m. Breakfast at Oakwood

8:30-9:30 a.m. Meeting for Worship

9:45-11:45 a.m. Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business

12:00-1:30 p.m. Lunch at Oakwood

1:15-2:45 p.m. Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business

3:00-4:00 p.m. Meeting for Remembrance

4:15-5:45 p.m. Coordinating Committee Meetings

5:30-7:00 p.m. Dinner at Oakwood

7:00-9:00 p.m. Fellowship, Singing, Conversation, Games

Sunday, April 7

7:30-9:00 a.m. Breakfast at Oakwood

10:00-11:00 a.m. Meeting for Worship

11:15-12:30 a.m. Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business

12:00-1:30 p.m. Lunch at Oakwood

2:00 p.m. Departure

The Theme for NYM's Sessions in 2024



The Sessions Program Subcommittee has determined the theme for New York Yearly Meeting's Sessions in 2024: **Where is the Love?** We are living through a time of increased national and international conflict. Where, at this time, do we find love? Where is it in ourselves and in our communities? How can we center love and encourage it to grow?

The theme was inspired by the song of the same name by the Black Eyed Peas. The chorus:

People killin', people dyin'
Children hurtin', hear them cryin'
Can you practice what you preach?
And would you turn the other cheek?
Father, father, father, help us
Send some guidance from above
'Cause people got me, got me questioning
Where is the love?



Save the Date for Summer Sessions

July 26-31, 2024

(Fri. dinner to Wed. lunch)

At Oakwood School & Online

Information for Attending Spring Sessions in Person at Oakwood Friends School

Oakwood Friends School is in Poughkeepsie, NY, at the end of the Metro North Line (also served by Amtrak) and just off Rt. 9 on the east side of the Hudson River.

The areas on campus that we will use during Spring Sessions are largely accessible. There is no accessible bathroom at the dining hall. If you have mobility concerns, please contact registration@nny.org or call the NYYM office at 212-673-5750. One way to help our community is to offer assistance to Friends who may need help getting around campus or getting food in the cafeteria. Childcare available on request; please indicate your interest on your registration form.

Please check in at Collins Library when you arrive. There is a partial map of the campus below, or you can view an online map at www.oakwoodfriendsmap.com.

Friday & Saturday Evenings

The weekend begins with check-in starting at 4:00 p.m. and dinner at Oakwood Dining Hall, 5:30-7:00 p.m. Afterward, a program will take place; details are still being planned. On Saturday evening, Friends are welcome to gather informally in Collins Library to socialize. You are invited to organize group activities with those present. Games and snacks will be available.

COVID Concerns

Masks will be optional. Friends are encouraged to take a COVID test at home before coming to Oakwood. If you feel unwell, please stay home,

regardless of COVID test results. If you feel ill at Oakwood you will be asked to take a test.

Meals

Meals at Oakwood's cafeteria will be available for purchase when registering for Sessions. Our first meal will be dinner on Friday and our last meal will be lunch on Sunday. Meal costs are as follow:

Breakfast	\$9
Lunch	\$12
Dinners	\$15
Children under 12:	\$15/day

Overnight Accommodations

On campus— There are limited rooms available on campus in the Craig Dormitory near the Dining Hall. Each room has two twin beds. The charge will be \$60 a night for the room, regardless of how many Friends stay in the room. Linens (sheets, pillow, blanket, towel) are included in the room price. Note that on-campus housing is "first come, first served," and will probably sell out; please register early if you want to stay on campus.

With Friends— There is also a limited number of home hospitality offers from Friends in the area. You can indicate your interest in either of these options — staying on campus or with local Friends — on the registration form.

Off campus— A block of rooms has been reserved for us at the Hampton Inn and Suites at 2361 South Road, Poughkeepsie, at the reduced nightly rate of \$129+tax per room. To reserve a room, call the hotel at 845-463-7500 and mention you are

part of the NYYM group. There are many hotels close to Oakwood. No matter where you stay, you must make your own reservations separate from your Sessions registration.

Transportation

The address for Oakwood School is 22 Spackenkill Rd, Poughkeepsie, NY. 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. Amtrak trains also stop at Poughkeepsie. Shuttle service may be available between Oakwood and the train station at certain times; details will be posted at nny.org/spring-sessions-2024. Taxis are also available.

Costs

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 this event, staff time associated with preparing for sessions, and making it possible to hold sessions in a hybrid format. The suggested registration contribution of \$50 helps offset some of these costs.

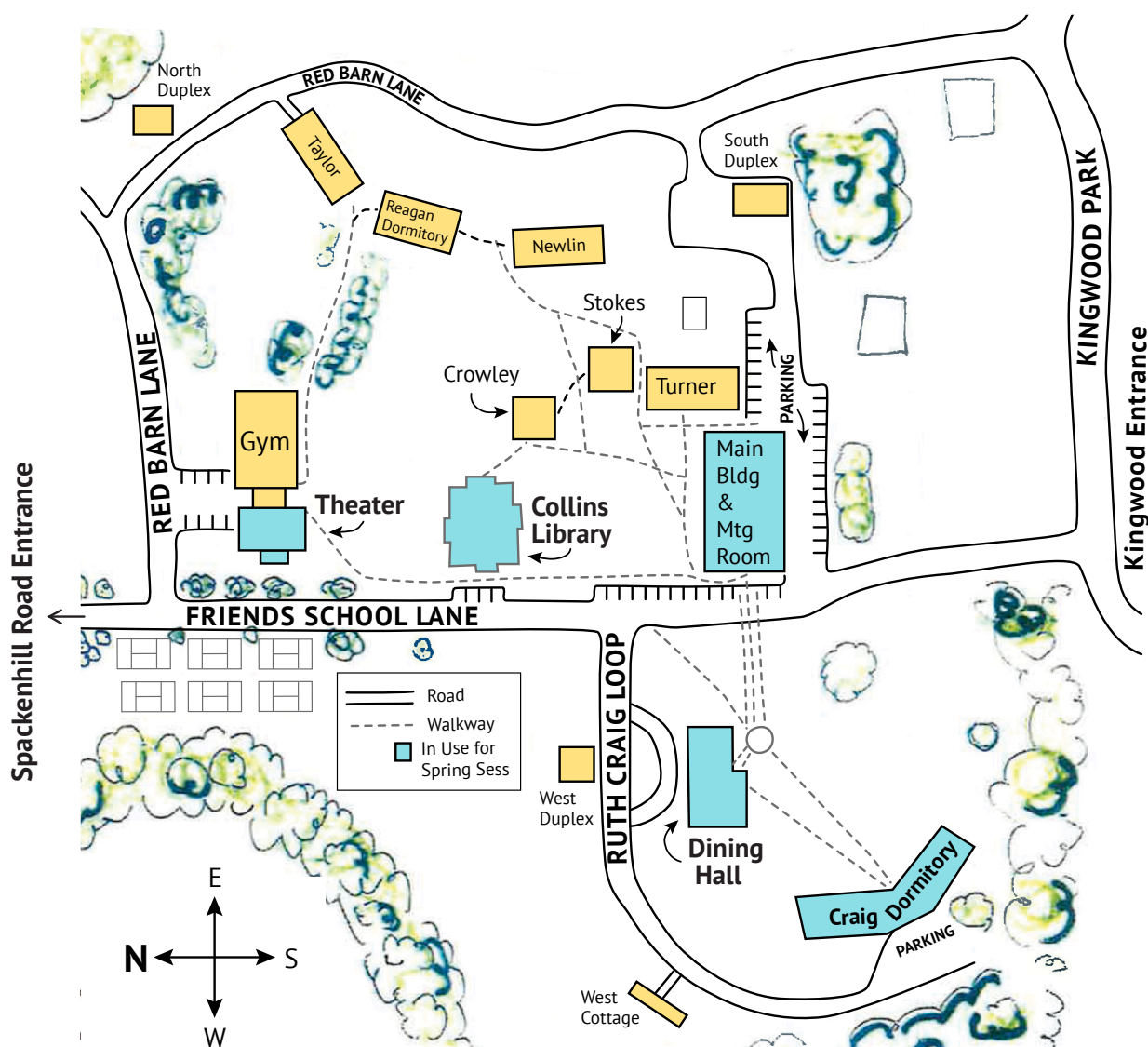
Paying less: Please keep in mind that your presence is more important than your ability to pay these costs. You don't need to pay anything. If you underpay NYYM for meals or housing at Oakwood, the balance will automatically be covered by the Equalization Fund. The suggested registration amount of \$50 is voluntary.

If you need help paying for your transportation or off campus housing costs please contact registration@nny.org or call the NYYM office at 212-673-5750.

Paying more: Anything you contribute beyond the costs NYYM incurs for your meals and housing will be part of the Sessions Income that NYYM receives to offset the cost of sessions. This will be acknowledged as a contribution to NYYM at the end of the year.

Please Register by March 20

Registration will open soon, if it is not open already; to register, please visit www.nny.org/spring-sessions-2024. Please complete your registration by **March 20** so we can give Oakwood time to be prepared for our group.



Friends playing Quiddler at last year's Spring Sessions.