



SPARK

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

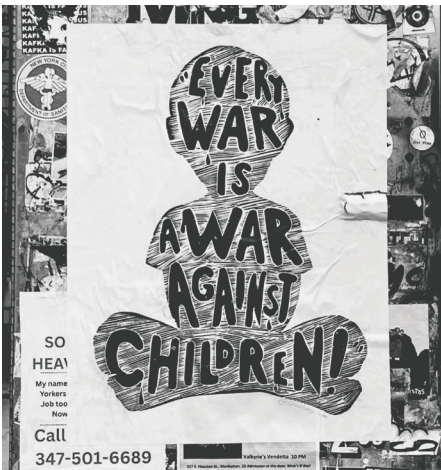
Volume 55, Number 3

15 Rutherford Place, New York, NY 10003

September 2025



Messages from Friends



"Every War is a War Against Children" by Todd Drake (AKA Quaker Pirate), in situ. Inspired by a quote from Eglantyne Jebb. More on page 5.

Quaker Dogma?

Jeffrey Aaron
New Brunswick Meeting

Some of us — perhaps many — were attracted to Quakerism in part because "Friends have no dogma." There is no prescribed statement of faith or theology in our branch of Quakerism, although Quaker history is clearly Christian in derivation. What that means to any given Friend is entirely the responsibility of the individual; it is not laid on us as dogma. There are as many spiritual paths as there are Friends; we do not tell each other what to believe.

Or so it is said. What Friends do believe, it is often said, is that there is "that-of-God" in everyone. If it is true that "this is what Friends believe," then apparently there is

continued on page 4



Corey Devon Arthur. Image credit: Sandro Ramani, *In Exchange For Flesh*.

Let Your Life Speak — A Story of Transformation

Judy Meikle
Wilton Meeting

Corey Devon Arthur is the first incarcerated person in the more than 300 year history of the New York Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends to become an At Large member.

At Large Membership of New York Yearly Meeting requires the guidance of a "clearness committee" of NYYM Friends through a process of discernment. Three Friends met with Corey in the visiting room at Otisville Correctional Facility and upon their recommendation, his membership was approved by the Yearly Meeting in July 2023.

He currently serves as the Clerk of the Otisville Prison Worship Group and is serving on the NYYM

continued on page 4

2025 White Privilege Conference

Melanie-Claire Mallison
Ithaca Meeting

In March of 2025, ten members of NYYM attended the three-day White Privilege Conference (WPC26) in Hartford Connecticut. Along with approximately 500 other participants, we examined and explored issues related to white privilege and white supremacy. WPC26 included plenary speakers and poets — Jessica Care Moore, Dr. OiYan Poon, Dr. Dante King, and Dr. Omékongo Dibinga. Along with over 40 workshops and many chances to network, there was a Sock Hop where attendees literally donated socks to a local charity and then danced together!

As Carol Mallison described the conference, "...it was an amazing experience to be with over 500 of 'my people!'" We represented all ages, all ethnicities, all levels of education and experience. And, one thing we had in common was a

continued on page 5



Messages
from Friends:
pp. 4-7

Future Sessions: p. 8

Dare to Hope!
Dare to Heal!
Dare to Witness!

New York Yearly Meeting's 2025 Epistle

Beloved Friends everywhere,
gathered in the Light —

With the theme Dare to Hope! Dare to Heal! Dare to Witness!, Friends gathered for the 331st New York Yearly Meeting Summer Sessions, beginning online and continuing as a hybrid gathering at Oakwood Friends School. In opening worship, we were called to consider:

What seeds of hope am I being called to plant?

What needs healing in me, and whose pain is Spirit calling me to tend?

Where am I being invited to witness — with Spirit's courage — in this world?

We came burdened with deep concerns, carrying grief, confusion, and rage, feeling the weight of Gaza, the dehumanization of many, and the assault on institutions and civil rights. What sustains us when we feel powerless and overwhelmed?

We Dare to Hope. Hearing about the walk from Flushing, Queens to Washington, DC with a video of the journey, a reading of the 'Walker's Remonstrance' delivered to elected officials, and an account of both how it was accomplished and its impact, was galvanizing. Our hearts opened.

Epistle continued on page 3

Notices

New Members

Alison Anthoine, Purchase
Sasha Chavchavadze, Brooklyn
Tanya Farmer, Brooklyn
Audrey Froats, Hudson
Linda Gnat-Mullin, Brooklyn
Richard Perry Mattocks,
Poughkeepsie
Peter Turay, New Brunswick

Transfers

Shannon Kincaid-Toncray,
Fort Worth (Texas) to
Manasquan
Eva Koehler, Beacon Hill
Friends (Boston) to Brooklyn

Marriages

Jack Harpster, member
Rahway and Plainfield, to
Reona Woods on May 17,
2025.
James Malchow, member
Rahway and Plainfield, to
Luis Rey Ramirez on August
2, 2025.

Deaths

Jim Atwell, Butternuts, on July
23, 2025
Peter Beck, Morningside, on
Aug. 10, 2025
Janice Bortree, Cornwall, on
July 18, 2025
Ann Stewart Burch, Poplar
Ridge, on July 3, 2025
Frank DeLeeuw, Poughkeepsie,
on May 5, 2025
Roger Dreisbach-Williams,
Rahway-Plainfield, on July 11,
2025
Dorothea Hoffman,
Rahway-Plainfield, on July 1,
2025
Margaret Lew, Fifteenth Street,
on Aug. 6, 2025
Norma Michelec, Purchase, in
January 2025
Ann Schillinger, Housatonic,
on March, 16, 2025
Elaine Sekreta, Westbury, on
March 15, 2025
Bev Thompson, Old Chatham,
on May 17, 2024
Larry Weekes, Brooklyn, on
June 8, 2025
Bob Wilber, Brooklyn and
Ohio YM, on June 15, 2025

Releases

**Melanie Parry and Ryan
Parry**, from Manasquan
Deborah Way, from New
Brunswick

Around Our Yearly Meeting

NEWS

Summer Sessions 2026 Will Be Held at Silver Bay, NY

Summer Sessions will take place **July 12-18, 2026**, which is earlier in July than usual. The Silver Bay YMCA conference center on Lake George will be our host for the first time since 2022. Registration will open in early January, and early registrations and volunteers will be needed to make this a success. **Read more on page 8.**

Sign up for the Weekly 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.

UPCOMING EVENTS

World Quaker Day is Oct. 5

Friends World Committee for Consultation invites you to join with Friends worldwide to "Love your neighbor" with the guiding Bible passage Galatians 5:14 "For the whole law can be summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." Visit fwcc.world/worldquakerday/

The Center for the Study of White American Culture, Inc.'s 3rd Annual Conference

October 17-19, 2025, Online
As racial injustice and division continue to tear at the fabric of our communities, it's time to come together to act. The 3rd Annual Conference on Building Antiracist Multiracial Community (CBAMC 2025) invites change-makers, activists, and visionaries to unite and reimagine a future where equity, justice, and belonging aren't just ideals, but living realities. Visit cswac.org/cbamac2025/

Powell House Fall Work Weekend October 31-November 2, 2025

Join us for an intergenerational weekend of working, storytelling and coming together as a community. Costumes optional. Visit powellhouse.org/event-list/

12-Step: A New Freedom Living a Post-Recovery Life December 5-7, 2025

In-Person at Powell House
This 12-Step Weekend is open to anyone who is presently working any of the many 12-Step Recovery Programs, or anyone who is consid-

ering the possibility of joining a 12-Step group. Visit powellhouse.org/event-list/

NYYM Fall Sessions is Dec. 5-7, Online

The next gathering of New York Yearly Meeting Friends for business and fellowship will be held online, December 5-7, 2025. Emails will be sent with more information; visit nyym.org/subscribe to sign up if you aren't already receiving them.

New Years Eve Celebration For Families & Friends

In-Person at Powell House
December 30, 2025 to January 1, 2026! Visit powellhouse.org/event-list.

FOR YOUNG ADULTS

Check Children, Youth and Young Adult Community Director Beth Kelly's list: nyym.org/yaf-events

Save the Date: National Adult Young Friends Retreat

February 14-16, 2026 at Powell House (Old Chatham, NY)
The adult young friends community of Friends General Conference is organizing a national adult young friends retreat at Powell House this coming February. If you have any questions or are interesting in joining the planning working group, please do reach out! Contact Lucas Meyer-Lee at lmeyerlee@gmail.com.

FOR CHILDREN & TEENS



Powell House Youth Conferences

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

Unfolding, Sharing for 7th - 9th Grade

November 14-16, 2025

You are a story unfolding, a voice worth hearing, a light worth sharing. Through hands-on creative activities, improv games, quiet moments, and meaningful guided conversations, you'll explore your identity while being grounded in care and community.

Reflections for 10th - 12th Grade November 21-23, 2025

What do you see when you look at your reflection? Is it the same person that other people see? What makes me 'me' and you 'you'? We will explore these questions and more as we delve into the mystery that is ourselves.

Eternal Exploration for 4th - 6th Grade

December 5-7, 2025 Adventurers gather! Assemble! Look within for treasure! Come with excitement and curiosity, ready to explore inside and out of doors. Together, we'll uncover the wonders of our own fictional worlds and the natural world around us.

WinterSong for 7th - 12th Grade December 12-14, 2025

The end of the year is filled with occasions for gathering, reflecting, and sharing love and warmth with those dearest to us. What traditions, big or small, do we cherish most, and why do we repeat them each year? As the days grow shorter and the temperatures brisker, we'll explore what brings us warmth and light through shared music, fireside conversation, and group games.

OPPORTUNITIES

Quaker Job Openings

Friends General Conference:
www.fgcquaker.org/work-at-fgc/
American Friends Service Committee: afsc.org/careers
Friends Committee on National

continued on next page

SPARK (ISSN 00240591)

New York Yearly Meeting News
Published four times a year:
February, May, September, and
November by
New York Yearly Meeting
Religious Society of Friends
15 Rutherford Place
New York, NY 10003
212-673-5750
info@nyym.org
www.nyym.org

Editor: Sarah Way
communications@nyym.org
Editorial Board:
NYYM Communications Committee

Spark deadlines are the first week of the month preceding the publication month. Permission is granted to reprint any article, provided *Spark* is acknowledged as the source.

Periodicals Postage Paid
at New York, New York

Postmaster: Send address changes to:
SPARK

15 Rutherford Place
New York, NY 10003

NYYM Staff

Jennifer Caban: jenc@nyym.org
Chad Giletta: web@nyym.org
Beth Kelly: bethk@nyym.org
Kevin Lovelady: arch@nyym.org
Steve Mohlke: gensc@nyym.org
Helen Garay Toppins:
office@nyym.org
Sarah Way:
communications@nyym.org

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

Grants/Funds

Earthcare Grants

NYYM's Earthcare Fund offers grants to meetings engaged in the task of transforming our relationship with Earth, including addressing the climate crisis.

Witness Activity Fund Grants

NYYM's Witness Coordinating Committee awards grants to meetings for projects such as warm gear for homeless people and expenses for a gun-buy-back.

Details: nyym.org/content/nyym-financial-resources-individuals-and-meetings



Rockland Meeting Announces Inaugural Rockland Friends Award Recipient

Rockland Friends Meeting is honored to announce the recipient of its inaugural \$500 Rockland Friends Award: Valencia Massaro, recognized for her inspiring commitment to raising awareness of kindness, justice, integrity, equality, and peace within the community. Valencia is a graduating senior from Tappan Zee High School in Orangeburg, NY. In addition to the \$500 award, Rockland Friends Meeting made a \$100 contribution in Valencia's name to the charity of her choice: Compassion Cafe.

Valencia's essay — centered on her brother Jack, the realities faced by those on the autism spectrum, and her dedication to service for those with disabilities — offered a deeply personal and moving reflection. In it, she writes, "Engaging with inspired peers solidified what waiting rooms taught me long ago, that everyone is an intricate mosaic of experiences rather than a simple sketch." Her words and actions beautifully embody the Quaker principle: Let your life speak.

After reviewing five exceptional applications and engaging in thoughtful discussion, the Award Committee felt a deep responsibility to honor all students who applied. While each submission carried notable merit, Valencia's stood out as a powerful example of lived commitment and community impact. To celebrate all contributions, the applicants were invited to a Friends Potluck at the Meeting-house on June 22 at 12:30 p.m., where entries were shared and

appreciated together.

Rockland Friends Meeting extends our heartfelt congratulations to Valencia and sincere appreciation to all applicants for their dedication to creating a more compassionate world.



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Message to the Body, Given at Worship

Omen Weaver
Powell House

Fellow Quakers, friends big and small, youth and elder alike, I stand before you this morning with a heavy heart. I stand before you with a difficult message, one that is rooted deep within spirit. I believe we are in crisis. The distance between what is said today and what is known to be true has become an abyss. Of all the things at risk, the loss of an objective reality is perhaps the most dangerous. The death of truth is the ultimate victory of evil. When truth leaves us, when we let it slip away, when it is ripped from our hands, we become vulnerable to the appetite of whatever monster screams the loudest. This Body has enabled the voices who are the loudest, yet represent barely a fraction of our number, to disallow the betterment of our community in its goal towards a more justice invested future. What is happening in Gaza is genocide. Yes, genocide! And the monster screaming the loudest, the monster who will come for us all, is the American government. An institution that has participated in the mass murder and irreparable erasure of several peoples. We CANNOT permit ourselves to be complicit, as our Quaker ancestors were with the indigenous communities that inhabited these lands first. We are called to see the light in ALL. Not simply to select who is worthy of having spirit. Friends, as we bear witness to the abject atrocities subjected to a country whose population was 47% children, I implore you to seek out these vital truths so that history is not permitted to repeat itself.



Please Support New York
Yearly Meeting:
NYYM.org/donate

Editor's Note

Hello Friends.

The next issue of *Spark* will be my last. I'm leaving the communications director role at NYYM at the end of December. I'm beyond grateful for my time — 9 years! — working for the yearly meeting. Amazing people who I wouldn't have met otherwise have become friends. I've learned a lot about Quaker belief and practices and have been transformed by them. Thank you for the support and nice words that I've received over the years.

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* theme:

November 2025:

Letters for Membership.

Friends who wish to become a member of a Quaker meeting write a letter expressing their desire to formally join the meeting community. The letters usually include the Friend's personal history of belief and are often heartfelt and moving. In this issue we will share some letters requesting membership.

Friends are encouraged to send their letters to communications@nyym.org by October 15, 2025.

Send your meeting's news to communications@nyym.org. If you'd like to join NYYM's weekly email list, visit nyym.org/subscribe.

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

—Sarah Way, NYYM

Communications Director
communications@nyym.org



NYYM 2025 Epistle

continued from page 1

We Dare to Heal. "Healing requires truth telling, demands Presence." Time together felt like communion. Informal, deep sharing among Friends inspired us. Friends found healing in open-hearted worship groups. The ministry of laughter and song arising out of the silence of worship lifted our hearts. Activities that we did together across ages were openings for healing and love. Spirit calls us toward radical welcome. Connection does not require agreement. We were all invited to both respond to change and change ourselves.

We Dare to Witness. Our faith's power, whether gathered in worship or witnessed in the streets, cannot be taken away. "To witness is to not look away, to stand in the Light even though it is costly." Spirit calls us to look to people living on the margins and act there, for what is at the margins is also at the core. Each of us knows something of standing on the outside; our differences shape us and lead us to look outwardly and act. We have engaged deeply with issues of justice, holding tenderly our concerns about genocide, dehumanization of immigrants and queer and trans people, and other injustices — wrestling honestly with our sense of powerlessness and uncertainty about how to witness effectively. For some Friends, their own sense or vision of a loving, powerful witness began to take shape as others shared.

We are called to continue daring to hope, daring to heal, and daring to witness; this gathering is one step in our shared journey. We go forward refreshed by our time together in Spirit, in companionship, in shared lament, in song, in laughter, with renewed faith, clarity, and inspiration to witness. May we continue to grow mutual support and love, both amongst ourselves and outwardly. May we draw on courage as we speak Truth. May we trust Spirit and remind Friends everywhere that none of our work is done alone — we are woven together by Love.

Written for the same Spirit who has moved among us here,

The Epistle Committee

Anne Barschall, Carol Clarke,

Matt Sunderland





Messages from Friends

Quaker Dogma?

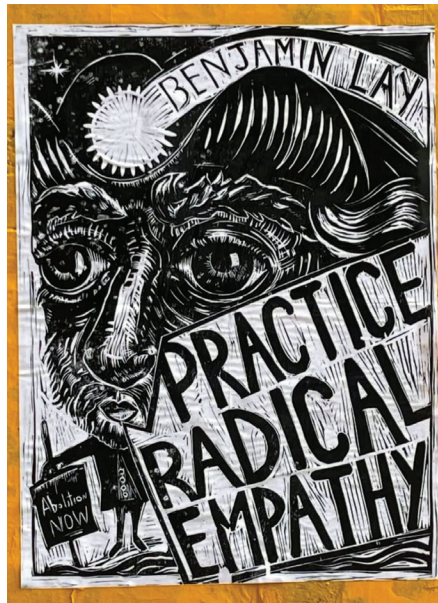
Jeffrey Aaron
New Brunswick Meeting

continued from page 1

Quaker dogma. Dogma, a concept from ancient Greek, means “a settled opinion, a principle held as firmly established,” or “a philosophical tenet*,” similar to the tenets in other religious sects such as the Holy Trinity, or kosher laws or Sharia law or bodhisattvas.

Perhaps identifying what “that-of-God” means would help. Is “that-of-God” the awareness of the “greater good,” the lifting up of all of humanity? The fact that we assume that we each know what we mean when we refer to “that-of-God” without further clarification is intellectually careless. I would suggest that the assumptions, the implications, may be that we are referring to the deep spiritual attributes of conscience, compassion, and empathy, qualities that bind humanity together for the common good of humanity and of all life. I expect that clarification would work for most: the belief that somewhere, sometimes deep and hard to reach, there is, inside every person, compassion and empathy. It is a beautiful, deeply spiritual ideal.

In her book, *The Sociopath Next Door*, Harvard faculty psychologist Martha Stout presents case histories of people who, she claims, were apparently born without a conscience, and who often rise to powerful positions in business or politics because of their ruthlessness and the absence of attributes that they perceive as foolish liabilities, such as conscience, empathy, compassion. “Imagine — if you can — not having a conscience, none at all, no feelings of guilt or remorse no matter what you do, no limiting sense of concern for the well-being of strangers, friends, or even family members...that the concept of responsibility is unknown to you, except as a burden others seem to accept without question, like gullible fools.”** Such people,



“Benjamin Lay: Practice Radical Empathy,” a print pasted on a wall in NYC, by Todd Drake (AKA Quaker Pirate). Benjamin Lay, 1682-1759, was a radical abolitionist Quaker, disowned during his lifetime but now much-celebrated by Friends. More about Todd Drake on page 5.

she claims, are true psychopaths, a minority in our world, different from those whose experiences of bad nurture led to hidden empathy and conscience that might still be salvageable through kindness and good treatment. Such psychopaths are often from otherwise totally normal families, as her case histories demonstrate.

Elon Musk recently told podcaster Joe Rogan, “The fundamental weakness of Western civilization is empathy,” referring to the emotion as a “bug” in our system. He refers to the masses that he holds in contempt as “NPCs” (Non-Playable Characters), videogame jargon for dismissible characters that have “no agency”***. Are there others in power among us and across the globe and throughout history that similarly come to mind? If you follow the news and know basic history, you can likely think of many. Is it possible that there is that-of-God only in most people, or does that qualifier undermine our ideals, our Quaker dogma? Is the idea unimaginable to Friends? Are we open to the possibility that we do not yet fully understand the nature of all of humanity, despite the claim implicit in our oft-referenced tenet?



Let Your Life Speak

Judy Meikle
Wilton Meeting

continued from page 1

Prisons Committee (class of 2028). His ministry of art, offering portraits of notable Quakers to the Yearly Meeting, was recognized in the 2024 State of the Society report as bringing “joy and s/Spirit to the meetings where it was displayed and discussed.” He mentors others inside prison and uses his voice to challenge the carceral system with his published writing.

This is how Corey describes his journey with Friends: “I attended an AVP (Alternatives to Violence Project) three-day workshop. It was a pivotal moment in my redemption. I was twenty-three. I only went to get away from the stressful and violent atmosphere of the prison. When I found out the volunteers were Quakers, I went on a rant about how the Quakers created this hell hole, called prison. They let me scream and yell until I began to cry. Cheerful Charlotte (an AVP facilitator) cried along with me and simply responded, ‘I’m sorry, Corey.’ Then she hugged me. That was the first time I had an inkling of how bad I was hurting and how bad I had hurt others.

“Becoming a Quaker allowed me to confront the pain of my inner truths within a community of love and trust. I learned how to shape out the contours of my spirit using the sources of my truth. As I became more conscious of my spirit, I also became aware of its source and its place in the spiritual community of Quakerism and God. Quakerism cracked a spiritual code that I could never break with just my humanity alone.”

Twenty nine years ago, when he was nineteen, Corey participated in a robbery and a murder and he is deeply ashamed and sorry for what he did. He believes that part of his apology to the people that he’s hurt is living a life that helps others to heal. In February 2026, he will appear before the NY Board of Parole for the fourth time. A Task Group to Support Corey Devon Arthur’s Application for Parole is now under the care of NYYM’s Witness Coordinating Committee. The members of the Task Group

are Don Badgley, Fred Dettmer, Jeannine Laverty, Solange Muller and Judy Meikle.

Don Badgley, Poughkeepsie Quakers Friends Meeting:

“‘I am not the man I was 30 years ago.’ That’s me talking and of course it’s true of everyone. Corey Devon Arthur is not who he once was, and I have been blessed to call him my friend for several years. Corey is a man of sensitivity, grace and understanding and he never shrinks from the magnitude of the crime he committed so many years ago as a teen. He will continue to have my friendship and my total support to spend the rest of his life helping others.”

Jeannine Laverty, Easton Friends Meeting:

“My friendship with Corey over the years of our correspondence and visits has taught me about the possibilities of Quaker activism and service to others and enriched my spiritual life and my time on this earth.”

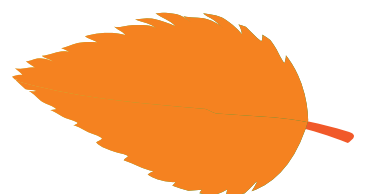
Solange Muller, Bullshead-Oswego Friends Meeting:

“Corey’s voice is powerful and I am honored to accompany him on his spiritual journey.”

Judy Meikle, Wilton Quaker Meeting, NYYM ARCH (Aging Resources, Consultation, and Help) Coordinator for Prisons:

“In the last 25 years, I have accompanied hundreds of people who have been impacted by incarceration. I believe that people have an innate capacity for change. I have witnessed how profound remorse for the worst thing a person has ever done can exist in the same space as remarkable transformation. Corey Devon Arthur is no longer a teenager. He works for change in his community both inside prison and in the world. And he has done (and continues to do) the deep personal work required for rehabilitation. I believe that he is ready for freedom.”

If you feel led, please reach out to the members of the Task Group to find out how you can support Corey. Send an email to insideoutside@nyym.org.



*Etymonline.

**Martha Stout, Ph.D., (psychologist, Harvard Medical School) *The Sociopath Next Door*, p.1.

***Michelle Goldberg, columnist, NY Times editorial “Elon Musk’s Legacy Is Disease, Starvation and Death”, NY Times, May 11, 2025, p. A23.



Quaker Pirate

Todd Drake, of Brooklyn Meeting, shares art in public spaces under the street name "Quaker Pirate."

On the Sept. 2, 2025 episode of Thee Quaker Podcast, Todd explained that "Quaker Pirate" came from "*Obadiah*," a book about a young Quaker who really wanted to be a pirate. His family said, 'if you want to be a pirate, Obadiah, be a good Quaker pirate.' Windy Cooler, a Quaker minister, told that story, and when I heard 'Quaker pirate,' I thought, 'that's it!,' and I stole it."

In the past few years, Todd's work has focused "on messages of peace and anti war and compassion for children that are the victims of

war everywhere, and (on) equality, the environment. I've expanded into other subjects that are shaped by my shared values with the Quaker community."

This spring, Todd painted a "Love All, Shelter All" mural on a highly visible building in Wilmington, Ohio, shown to the right, and received "tons of thumbs up" during the 17-hour painting process.

Todd says, "I've come to tell people that you can be a Quaker pirate too. You just have to try to do good without asking permission."

Hear more from Todd at quaker-podcast.com/quaker-graffiti-artist-todd-drake-on-doing-good-without-permission/



2025 White Privilege Conference

Melanie-Claire Mallison
Ithaca Meeting

continued from page 1

passion for equality..."

The White Privilege Conference was created in the year 2000 by Dr. Eddie Moore Jr., who serves as the Founder and Executive Director of The Privilege Institute (www.theprivilegeinstitute.com/), which now hosts the WPC. Under Dr. Moore's direction, "The White Privilege Conference has become one of the top national and international conferences for participants who want to move beyond dialogue and into action around issues of diversity, power, privilege, supremacy, and antiracism."

Helen Garay Toppins wrote in her summary, "I attended the WPC because I was motivated to do so by Friends General Conference's Ministry on Racism. Their ministry advised me that the 'Caucus for People of Color would provide a safe environment to share information, feelings, experiences, and interactions and serve as a vehicle for mutual support and collaboration.' This was certainly true for me. I was particularly nourished by the Black Women's Think Tank."

Robin Mallison Alpern offered a workshop titled "White Women Facing Truths of Complicity & Accountability" and said of her experience at the conference, "As a white person, I found both support and challenge. I learned from Black, Indigenous and People of Color as well as white people speaking difficult truths, and partnering

authentically to make change. And although the conference feels like a small city, founder Dr. Eddie Moore Jr. has a way of making participants feel personally welcomed."

Friends General Conference (FGC) is a WPC sponsor, and they say, in part, "The White Privilege Conference... provides a forum for critical discussions about diversity, multicultural education and leadership, social justice, race/racism, sexual orientation, gender relations, religion and other systems of privilege/oppression."

To summarize Melanie-Claire Mallison, "WPC26 was the very definition of a challenging, exhausting, exhilarating ... I will read and study and save up to attend the WPC27 in Seattle next April. My parents gave me the foundation [of antiracism]. Upon that, I must help build a world of equity and justice."

Deeply experiencing this conference challenges what we think we know and how we think society works. As Karen Snare wrote in her summary: "I learned two important things at the White Privilege Conference this year. I became clear that some people view racism as interpersonal interactions and some focus their attention on exploitive systems. Each group in some ways speaks its own language, and may have trouble understanding the other. And I will have a better chance of meaningful conversations if I can use the language that makes sense to the person I'm talking to. My other important

learning came from a very powerful presentation by Dr. Dante King, which made me aware of a number of laws put into place in the early years of this country that were not only centering white people and attempting to justify slavery, but were deliberately and explicitly anti Black. I had to some degree fallen into the trap of letting white settlers off the hook because they were products of their time and perhaps didn't know any better. The evidence presented in that speech made clear that those lawmakers were motivated by malice, not by ignorance."

Our full report is online at the NYYM website (in the Summer 2025 Minutes) and includes a sample list of the conference workshops and just a few of the many resources we discovered over the three days. All of us named here would be happy to chat with you about The White Privilege Conference and share our many other resources, too numerous to include in the online report.

Through this report, we hope to inspire you to join us in this vital and energizing work.

To that end, we strongly and lovingly encourage Friends to attend WPC27 being held in Seattle, WA; April 22-25, 2026. FGC offers a registration discount for Quakers attending WPC, so be sure to look for their communications regarding WPC27. (www.theprivilegeinstitute.com/wpc27)



Friends from around the United States, including many New York Yearly Meeting Friends, gathered in the "Quaker Room" at the 2025 White Privilege Conference in Hartford, CT, March 2025.



Messages from Friends

Epistle

From a Worldwide Online Meeting of Quakers Who are Black, Brown, Indigenous and People of Colour (BBIPOC)

Greetings to Friends Everywhere, Black, Brown, Indigenous and People of Colour Friends from many Yearly Meetings gathered on 31 May 2025 for our first time together. Thirty one of us came with hope, joy, and some wariness. We are from diverse backgrounds and locations including the US, Canada, South Africa, Kenya, Philippines, Zimbabwe, the UK and the Kingdom of Hawai'i. We came from Baltimore Yearly Meeting, Britain Yearly Meeting, Canadian Yearly Meeting, Intermountain Yearly Meeting, Nairobi Yearly Meeting, New York Yearly Meeting, Pacific Yearly Meeting, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, Sierra-Cascades Yearly Meeting, Southern Africa Yearly Meeting, and Southern Appalachia Yearly Meeting and Association. We may be the first worldwide online Meeting between Quakers who are Black, Brown, Indigenous and People of Colour (BBIPOC), initiated by a grassroots group of Friends of Colour. Many are involved in anti oppression/decolonization, racial justice, reparations, and community empowerment work through Quaker and other organizations.

In break-out groups and in our broader meeting, we approached key themes, which included: addressing white supremacy, supporting marginalized communities, environmental justice, and personal growth/healing.

We exchanged ideas about future initiatives, including organizing regional meetings, gatherings and having, someday, a BBIPOC Yearly Meeting. We emphasized the importance of recognizing indigenous traditions and building inclusive Quaker communities.

We touched on the visceral nature of Quakerism and the importance of grounding ourselves in somatic experiences. We voiced feelings about the global resonance of challenges faced by Quakers of colour, the need to recognize existing community efforts, and the importance of considering

diverse perspectives from different regions. Our faith came to the fore when our conversations shifted to a more worship-like format, with participants reflecting on ancestors, gratitude, and the concept of "truthability" in sustaining harmonious relationships.

A Friend emphasized the need for people of colour to come together and build their own Quaker communities rather than relying on white European people, cultures and structures. Another Friend highlighted the importance of personal growth and sustaining momentum in this work. A Friend from Kenya extended invites to the group to a gathering in Ghana in October to strengthen relationships and discuss decolonization. There was a suggestion about ways in which we could learn about decolonization efforts in different regions, including Africa, Asia, and Spanish-speaking areas, to better understand diverse perspectives.

Indigenous Peace Traditions and Diplomacy

An indigenous Canadian Friend shared a story about Papunhunk, a prominent Munsee Lenape leader and diplomat who interacted with anglo-american Quaker missionaries in the 18th century. The story highlights the sophisticated peace traditions of indigenous peoples that predated Quaker pacifism. We learned about an interaction between Papunhunk and Quaker missionary John Woolman, where Woolman recognized the spiritual depth of the indigenous community.

We left physically tired but spiritually invigorated — looking forward to our next meeting, sitting with the joy and contentment of newly acquainted f/Friendship. Hopeful that the shoots of our new bonds will grow to become strong trees that give leaves of shelter and grow deep and connected roots.

We went our separate ways, listening to birdsong and on the screen was a picture of trees, the sky, shining sun. We felt the dawn of what is to come.

In hope, in peace, in joy, in Friendship,

Gloria Simon-Gould, Clerk; Tomi Nagai-Rothe, Ass't. Clerk. Epistle Sub-Committee: SY Boland, Diego Navarro, Marghuerita Remi-Judah.

The epistle continues as a poem:

Imagine a world
Imagine a space
Imagine yourself a part of a
special human space
Celestial in nature
Spiritual in performance
International in presence
Yes we are a part
Of a future present relational
reality
We gather here
We gather there
By zoom we gathered from
everywhere
May 31, 2025
31 Friends of Colour gathered
For a called meeting
We inhaled and exhaled individually and collectively
The multiple sounds of voices
Politeness are witness
To global majority discernment everyone was
sure a stare
Staring eyes opened wide.. how did you meet
You know racism keeps you on your feet
The sounds were deep and held a space for
energy, enthusiasm, cultivating relationships and
so much more
A million ideas, thoughts, expressions, sounds
and movements around Liberation in the air
Philosophizing with care
Signifying on all we have had to bear
We are building community
We are building trust we are eliminating the
indoctrination that has kept us apart. We listened
for progress we spoke with enlightenment.
We listened for enlightenment and we spoke
for progress. Distance cannot divide us. White
comfort cannot separate us. The engagement of
each other is like an egg being birthed and crack-
ing aloud and we are all in
Ahhh
to see what we are becoming
Ahhh
to know what we are creating
Ahhh
to know the essence of who we
are caring
Ahhh
to know
we do
even in the unknowing
We know we are becoming
Completely anew
A new birth
A new vision
A new mission
I imagine, **what say you?**



Ceasefire, by Todd Drake (AKA Quaker Pirate). More on page 5.



Peace - It Takes All of Us, lino print by Todd Drake (AKA Quaker Pirate). More on page 5.



Farmington Scipio Spring Gathering June 8, 2025. Photo credit: Lizzie Leykin

Farmington-Scipio Friends Wear Orange Against Gun Violence

The first weekend in June is Wear Orange Weekend, part of the annual National Gun Violence Awareness movement to raise awareness and to honor victims and survivors of gun violence. In 2025, this week again coincided with Farmington-Scipio Region's Spring Gathering. Peter Murchinson from NYYM's Gun Violence Prevention Task Group asked Friends to participate by wearing something orange to meeting on June 8 and taking a

photo of those participating. At the Spring Gathering, about 50 Friends gathered together in support of the Quaker Peace Testimony as it applies to deadly violence in our own communities.

Why Wear Orange?

On January 21, 2013, Hadiya Pendleton marched in President Obama's second inaugural parade. One week later, Hadiya was shot and killed on a playground in Chicago. Soon after this tragedy, Hadiya's friends commemorated her life by wearing orange, the color hunters wear in the woods to protect themselves and others. See wearorange.org for more info.



Friends at Fifteenth Street Meeting in New York City also wore orange for Gun Violence Awareness on June 8, 2025.

Photo credit: Tracy Motz



Rockland Meeting Marches in Nyack, NY Pride Parade

Eric Jiménez
Rockland Meeting

Rockland Friends Meeting proudly joined Hudson Valley organizations, businesses, and allies in the Nyack Pride Parade on June 8, 2025. Their participation reaffirmed a deep

commitment to LGBTQ+ inclusion and human dignity.

Standing in solidarity with the LGBTQ+ community, Rockland Meeting Friends carried banners reading "Let your life speak" and "We are the ones we've been waiting for." Rockland Friends Meeting has long embraced full inclusion of LGBTQ+ individuals in its worship and community life.

By marching in the Pride Parade, Rockland continued the Quaker tradition of public witness and social justice advocacy, amplifying the voices of those who have been marginalized and excluded. The meeting supports LGBTQ+ rights, along with broader commitments to racial justice, peace, and environmental stewardship.



A New Remonstrance

The Quaker Walkers of New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Maryland

In May 2025, a group of Quakers completed a historic 300-mile journey from Flushing, Queens to Washington, DC. The walk brought attention to American civil liberties and rights under threat, using as an example the 1657 Flushing Remonstrance, a pillar of U.S. religious freedom that argued for the right of Quakers to worship. During the walk the group wrote a new Remonstrance for 2025, below, which they delivered to several members of Congress in DC. Visit www.quakerwalk2025.org for more.

To our representatives,

Through your action or inaction, you have permitted the intrusion of federal officers into our houses of worship to abduct our friends and neighbors. We cannot accept this transgression of the sacred; both the sacred stillness of our worship, and the divine human rights of our persecuted friends. While the voice of power slanders them, calling non-citizens criminals, stirring fears of displacement and hatred of the newcomer, we know the truth: that we are all children of God, deserving of equal opportunity and safe harbor. We know that our rights are endowed freely by Heaven, not conferred by the paperwork of citizenship.

Being ourselves immigrants, or their descendants, delivered to this land by a violent history, we cannot judge anyone else seeking freedom and shelter here today. We are bound instead by a sacred obligation to do good to one another in all circumstances. While the politics of the moment may be set against such hospitality, when forced to choose between the laws of man and the Law of God, between the politics of the moment and the politics of eternity, we will always choose to follow The Light.

As to those who say undocumented immigrants are destructive to our nation and its values, they themselves misunderstand our nation and its values. American

nationhood is not an ethnicity nor a mundane coincidence of culture. It is a set of sacred principles, including equality before the law, due process, and free expression. We are an exceptional nation because we are forged from the lineages of the world, yet unified in the centuries-long pursuit of a free and just society. Our founding experiment is a state intended to provide liberty to all, protecting the inalienable rights of all people within its territories and subject to its power. Every human being that our government detains has a right to due process and a jury of their peers. No matter how often it is ignored, this is the highest civil law of our land — enshrined in the bill of rights. If this administration can defile that law by making ICE the judge, jury and executioner for any class of people, we are in deep peril of losing our democratic republic.

Civic history teaches that assaults on the rights of any group imperil the rights of the entire nation. As all people are created equal by God, which we hold to be self-evident, we condemn the cruel and arbitrary subjugation of any person. Our faith teaches us compassion for all forms of humanity, with no exceptions for human beings under the judgment of the law. The golden rule which guides us flows from the witness of That Of God in all people. It is the underlying law of all religions, the core of true morality. Therefore, whoever may come to us in fear and in need, we are compelled by conscience to aid them, giving them free access to our homes and churches. This is according to our traditions, both civic and religious, as Americans, and as Quakers. We have a responsibility we refuse to neglect: to steward the utopian projects of our ancestors, for this nation, and for the kingdom of God. In the protection of faith, in God and in our constitution, we will hold to our moral convictions as ministers, citizens, and patriots. So long as you represent us, we demand that you do the same.

Your faithful constituents,
American Friends (Quakers) among
the New York, Philadelphia, and
Baltimore Yearly Meetings





Upcoming NYYM Sessions

New York Yearly Meeting (NYYM) is an organization that gathers together, nurtures, and connects the Quaker congregations in New York State, northern New Jersey, and southwestern Connecticut. The yearly meeting gathers together for business meetings three times a year: for a weekend in spring and in fall, and for a week in summer. This annual "Summer Sessions" is what gives us the name "yearly meeting." In addition to conducting business, the gathered Friends also worship, share experiences, connect and collaborate, and create a Friendly community together.

Fall Sessions Will be Online, Dec. 5-7, 2025

The next gathering of the New York Yearly Meeting community for business, worship, and fellowship will be Fall Sessions. Find out what's happening with other Quakers in our region, and hear about the good works of our committees and other Quaker groups. There will be items that require discernment from the "body" of the yearly meeting (those gathered for business meeting),

decisions to be made under direction from the "inner Light." If you care about Quakers, Quakerism, or the Quaker community in the NYYM region, you are warmly invited and encouraged to attend these sessions.

In addition to meetings for worship and business, there will almost certainly be a plenary presentation and further opportunities to get to

know other NYYM Friends.

All events will be online, making these sessions accessible (and interactive!) to anyone with a computer, tablet, smartphone, or regular audio-only phone.

More information, once available, will be posted at nyym.org/fall-sessions-2025 and in the Weekly Update email. Visit nyym.org/subscribe.

Summer Sessions Will be Hybrid: in Person at Silver Bay, NY, and Online, July 12-18, 2026

All Friends are invited to attend Summer Sessions. At Summer Sessions Friends gather together and create a community where we can worship, play, and work with each other. It will again be hybrid, with many in-person events available for participation via Zoom. Please note that the date, July 12-18, is earlier in the month than in the past, and is right after Friends General Conference's Gathering in Burlington, VT.

Our in-person host will be Silver Bay YMCA conference center on Lake George in the Adirondacks. Silver Bay is where New York Yearly Meeting had held its Summer Sessions for decades, before the COVID pandemic, and is beloved by many Friends. Check it out if it's new to you! Silver Bay has a campus of buildings with different levels of accommodations at a range of prices. Overnight guests receive a full meal plan at the cafeteria and access to Silver Bay amenities including swimming areas, boat house, craft shop, gymnasium, archery, etc. Please note that Summer Sessions is PAY AS LED.



What is Pay as Led?

After registering you will receive a follow-up email or letter with your suggested Pay as Led rate options. The three options are: **the standard rate**, which covers the cost of room and board; **the full rate**, which helps others attend; and **the minimum rate**, which is the lowest suggested amount. The Pay as Led plan relies on generosity from those who can afford to pay more.

Activities and Events

- **Worship Sharing Groups.** 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 throughout the week.



- **Intergenerational Activities.** The youth in Junior Yearly Meeting host Cafe Night, an all-ages talent show that anyone, in person or online, can perform in; and produce the on-campus Fun(d) Fair, where kids offer fun activities and treats in exchange for tickets. Both are fundraisers for the Sharing Fund and Powell House. There's also a contra dance with live accompaniment from NYYM Friends.
- **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 area.
- **Plenary presentation.** A plenary — a session attended by all participants at a conference — will be offered on a topic important to Friends.

Junior Yearly Meeting (JYM)

Children and youth at Silver Bay attend a fun, Spirit-led program each morning, grouped by age and led by Quaker volunteers. JYM gives children the opportunity to experience being in a community with other Quaker kids, living in Quaker

Early Registration is Critical

Registration will open in early January 2026. It is essential that you register as soon as possible once we open registration. There are somewhat fewer beds available in 2026 than in previous years, so register quickly. NYYM needs to receive a certain number of registrations, financial commitments, and promises of volunteer help **by the end of January**. If it looks like NYYM may not receive enough money or assistance to make Summer Sessions at Silver Bay successful, we may have to pull out of our contract with Silver Bay.

Your early registration and volunteer commitment are necessary to make Summer Sessions at Silver Bay possible. For now, please save July 12-18, 2026 on your calendar and consider ways you can contribute to help create a Light-filled community at Summer Sessions for everyone.

values and making lasting friendships. Consider volunteering as a JYM group leader.

REGISTRATION

Registration will open in early January. Expect more information to appear in the November issue of *Spark*, online at nyym.org/summer-sessions-2026, and sent via email to the NYYM list. Join the email announcement list at nyym.org/subscribe.

