



SPARK

New York Yearly Meeting

The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

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January 2017

Witness and Faith



Photos from the Oceti Sakowin camp at Standing Rock, North Dakota, late November 2016. From left: camp horses by Christine Japely; Nation and Ajly Bhardwaj and John Faloon at the Mess Hall by Christine Japely; Christine Japely and Leonard Peltier artwork by John Faloon.

Witness as a Result of Faith

Liseli Haines

Mohawk Valley Meeting

Part I

How does Faith play out in my life? By far the strongest connection between Faith and Witness is my unwavering belief that there is that of God in everyone. In these days of political change, I still believe and act on that belief. I met many people while we were snowed in at the Day's Inn in Bismarck, North Dakota, on our way home from Standing Rock: dreadlocked young men and blue-haired women who had been working and living at one of the camps on the Indian Reservation; retired teachers and grandmothers in Bismarck for doctors' appointments; truckers waiting for the interstate to reopen; a former banker turned consultant. It was this last with whom I had the longest conversation. He knew we had come from Standing Rock but

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Visiting Oceti Sakowin

Christine Japely

Fifteenth Street Meeting

Moved to "stand with Standing Rock," my adult son John and I flew into Bismarck, North Dakota from NYC on Thanksgiving Day 2016. We went immediately to dinner at Bismarck's Unitarian Universalist meeting house (shared by Bismarck Friends) where we were given practical details about Standing Rock Reservation and the camp at Oceti Sakowin, and where we met Indigenous folks and activists. The Unitarians told us that most faith groups in Bismarck had been brainwashed to ignore the issue and/or to remain on the side of Big Oil, lured by the bogus promise of jobs. This is Lutheran country, and the presiding US national bishop of one of the most populous Lutheran sects had just come out against the Dakota Access Pipe Line (DAPL), but Bismarck's local prominent

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Spirituality and Witness

Mary Eagleson

Scarsdale Meeting

John McKnight and Peter Block, in their book *The Abundant Community*, contrast a system and a community. A system is impersonal and essentially about the movement of money and provision of goods and services. A community, on the other hand, is personal and about those of our qualities and capacities which are never for sale. Systems are rational and efficient, but treat people as interchangeable parts. Communities are idiosyncratic and what they are depends on who is in them. One type of community they write about is an association. They write:

To choose to participate in associational life means you choose to be in a more formal relationship with a group of people. You want to be with them for your own interests. Few

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Experiential Faith

Don Badgley

Poughkeepsie Meeting

For centuries, we Friends have been known as a faith community that carries its ministries into the world as acts of witness. Often, those community actions begin with individual leadings that subsequently gain the collective strength of the meeting or wider body of Friends. Then, more often than not, we detach our witnesses from the Divine Source that led us to the ministry. In addition, "liberal" and non-pastoral Friends rarely share ministries in the world that simply proclaim the Divine Presence that empowers our worship and works.

I travel among Friends under the weight of a Minute of Travel, endorsed by my Monthly Meeting and by New York Yearly Meeting. The phrase "under the weight" is not just Quaker-ese. This call to share what has been given me in the

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Around Our Yearly Meeting

MEETING NEWS

FCNL Workshop in Buffalo

Buffalo Monthly Meeting recently held a workshop with an FCNL intern currently attending Houghton College. The workshop was designed to teach how to lobby an elected official. Within a few weeks of the workshop, 3 people went to a Congressman's office to talk with him about federal sentencing reform. Currently, we are working with a Toronto Friend to revamp and develop our website which we hope to launch within a few months.

Wilton Meeting Updates

We are remodeling two of our buildings to improve our space for both Connecticut Friends School and Wilton Meeting. We are holding discussions on *Waking Up White* by Debby Irving as a first step in ongoing work on white privilege. We are launching our Lifelines to Solitary ministry in support of reforming our justice system. We are participating in the NYYM Quaker Outreach Practitioners' Circle and the Monthly Meeting Partner Project in an effort to grow our meeting.

Rochester Art Show

Rochester Meeting held an art show and sale of items donated by Friends. The money raised was given to needy families in Rochester to make their Christmas a little brighter.

News from Poughkeepsie Meeting

This fall we held donation drives to collect coats and blankets for the protesters at Standing Rock and winter clothes for needy students at the Krieger Elementary School, our neighbor across the street.

Volunteers from the meeting continue to visit the Quaker worship group at Green Haven state prison. During summer and fall we conducted a weekly vigil at a local farmers market opposing excessive solitary confinement.

At the meeting house we have mounted an art exhibit of work by five meeting members in order to make our foyer welcoming. We now have a book club meeting on the first Monday of each month. We are excited to have rented what was once our parsonage to the Pirandello Institute, a nonprofit organization that conducts Italian language and cooking classes and cultural events. Our Christmas Program was joyfully expanded to include members of Gabriel's House, a congregation that uses our building, including their children's step dance group, followed by an abundant potluck supper.

Future plans include a film series, beginning with a documentary about Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. In February we will host the Nine Partners quarterly meeting.

Outreach in New Brunswick

New Brunswick Monthly Meeting has recently created a Student Outreach Group to plan events for

outreach to the Rutgers University and New Brunswick communities. The Outreach Group has recently begun a series of "Quakespeare" Community Reading nights where friends gather for a live reading of a Shakespeare play. The first Quakespeare night was a success with a December 15th reading of Twelfth Night. Friends who are interested in information about future readings may contact Kristin Catena at kriscatena@gmail.com

Rahway-Plainfield held a book study of the book *Our Life is Love* by Marcelle Martin in September and October.

UPCOMING EVENTS

WORSHIP. EXPLORE. FEAST. Introducing QuED Days: A free series for Young Adult Friends

Each QuED (Quaker Exploration and Discourse) Day includes breakfast, worship, speakers, lunch, and opportunities for conversations, spiritual direction, games, and more. For additional information, visit nnyym.org or find us (NYYM QuED) on Facebook.

January 14: Chatham-Summit, 158 Southern Blvd., Chatham, NJ

Speakers: Jeff Hitchcock on Quakers and Race; Carol Holmes; and Adria Gulizia on Why Conviction Matters Now More Than Ever

February 11: Fifteenth Street, 15 Rutherford Pl., New York, NY

Speakers: Christine Ashley; Angie York Crane

The next Meeting for Discernment is at Poplar Ridge on March 11!
Please see page 8 for more details.



Continuing Revolution: Pendle Hill's young adult Friends Conference, focusing on PEACE and Justice June 2-7, 2017

Pendle Hill's Continuing Revolution six-day conference orchestrates a profoundly impactful training-oriented conference of 40-45 young adults (ages 18-35). Each year, we design programming around one of the Quaker Testimonies that energizes, inspires, and connects Friends with an interest in social

action and justice. Continuing Revolution is a uniquely positioned conference at the intersection of faith and activism.

Our intensive program focuses on deepening participants' relationship with the Religious Society of Friends, nourishes their own faith and practice, and invigorates their identities as social change agents. The world needs radical systemic change, and each year Pendle Hill serves as a gathering, training ground for f/Friends on this path.

For more information, please contact kmcquail@pendlehill.org (Katrina McQuail) or agreulich@pendlehill.org (Amy Greulich). You can find us on FB and Twitter, @Cont_R_v_lution.

All Friends are Welcome at Coordinating Committees Weekend

Coordinating Committees Weekend, January 27 and 28 at Powell House, will come just one week after the US presidential inauguration. This weekend is an opportunity for Friends to gather and discern how we are led as a body to respond to the changes happening in our country. Friday evening and late

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Notices

New Members

Ruth Helen Detjen — Poughkeepsie

Ted Lochwyn — Staten Island

Eric Nelson — Cornwall

Cherry Myers Rahn — Central Finger Lakes

Emily Sandusky — Brooklyn

David Sinclair — Manhasset

Transfers

Robin Mallison Alpern, from Scarsdale to Amawalk

Abigail Burford, from Montclair to Chatham-Summit

James Darragh, from Westbury to Brooklyn

Nathan Kennedy, from Binghamton to Ithaca

Tobias Kennedy, from Binghamton to Ithaca

Ruth Matthews, from Chappaqua to New Paltz

Maureen McGovern, from 15th Street to Brooklyn

Mary Owen, from Staten Island to Brooklyn

Magnolia Sampson, from North Branch (PA) to Brooklyn

Nedelya Simeonovia, from North Branch (PA) to Brooklyn

Deaths

Betsy Morse, member of Shrewsbury, on January 3, 2017

John Ruch, member of Dover-Randolph, on November 4, 2016.

Joseph Rutledge, member of Chappaqua, on October 13, 2016.

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Saturday afternoon there will be small and large group sharing to share concerns and leadings around our responses to perceived changes.

This weekend will primarily be a time for our coordinating committees to meet and to do their work, and just as at our sessions, all are welcome to participate in those meetings, whether or not they are on a coordinating committee. The coordinating committees—Ministry, Witness, Nurture, and General Services—will meet Saturday morning and afternoon. Any NYYM Friend who is interested in observing or participating in the functioning of any of those bodies is welcome to do so.

We will gather in the face of nationwide and worldwide turbulence. The theme chosen by Sessions Committee for Summer Sessions, in awareness of the significant changes after the recent painful and divisive election season, is *Bringing the Peaceable Kingdom to a Turbulent World*. We hope that by bookending our work as committees with times of sharing and discernment that we might be able to better ground our work in the Spirit and seek ways in which our ongoing work might need to shift in response to current events. That group process appeared to be welcomed and helpful at our recent Fall Sessions, so we are bringing it back to this weekend together. The weekend is scheduled to end at dinner on Saturday, except for Sessions Committee, which will meet through lunch on Sunday. Those who wish may join Sessions Committee, or stay into Sunday on your own accord.

If you are moved to take part, you must make your reservation at Powell House, <http://powellhouse.org>, or 518-794-8811, ASAP.

Save the date!

The Friends Center for Racial Justice in Ithaca, NY, will be offering a workshop, "Growth Opportunities for White Allies" from Friday, April 21 to Sunday, April 23. Jeff Hitchcock, Judy Meikle, Steve Mohlke and Pamela Wood will be facilitating. More information to follow.

The new Friends Center for Racial Justice is beginning to live into its mission of providing a physical space where Friends can come together to work on racism within the Religious Society of Friends. It will promote racial healing, raise awareness of white privilege, and

work to increase an appreciation of racial diversity. An additional objective of the Center will be to facilitate connecting Friends with individuals and organizations in their local communities working on racial justice.



Hello Friends! You are invited to write for Spark. Articles in Spark are considered a form of written ministry. Pieces should be spirit-led and reflect your personal experience, Quaker history, or present faith and practice.

NEW THEME FOR MARCH SPARK: The Election and What Comes Next. The next issue of Spark will provide Friends a forum in which to respond to the election. Friends have experience recognizing that of God in everyone and listening for the voice of the divine within us. Has that experience helped you respond rather than react to recent events? Many Friends are coming to meeting with feelings of distress, looking for spiritual connection. How well are you staying centered at a time when there's a lot throwing us off-center? Personal testimonies are welcome.

May theme: Discernment

We welcome articles on this or other Friendly topics. Please send your submissions for the March Spark to communications@nyym.org by **FEBRUARY 2nd**. This is a hard deadline due to Spring Session info that must appear in that issue.

You can share your meeting's news, announcements, and upcoming events with the rest of the Yearly Meeting through InfoShare, our digital newsletter. We publish InfoShare between issues of Spark, in February, April, June, August, October, and December. Send your items to communications@nyym.org. Don't get InfoShare? Email office@nyym.org to get added to our list.

Announcements received outside of the timeframe for Spark and InfoShare are posted on Facebook at www.facebook.com/NewYorkYearlyMeeting/ and tweeted out via [@NYYMTweets](https://twitter.com/NYYMTweets) (go to twitter.com/NYYMTweets). I look forward to hearing from you!

— Sarah Way

Faith and Witness at Standing Rock

Elizabeth (Buffy) Curtis Mohawk Valley Meeting

Here I find myself in the place no words can describe—the space between words—the silence between breaths—the place where faith and witness are wed...

There are nearly a thousand people gathered and marching... a portion of the nearly 15,000 (including 5000 veterans) who have come from all over to be present for prayer and possible eviction...bundled against the blinding snow and wind. A gathered body of witness. A gathered group of committed souls. A physical embodiment of speaking truth to power—a peaceful, non-violent prayerful presence—now stand and wait.

We have been called to join and support the nearly 500 veterans who have converged from all corners of the country to serve and protect the Water Protectors of Standing Rock. They are leading the march. The remaining supporters carry flags and signs and banners, barely upright in the force of the winds—flags perfectly straight in the gale, flying in regal, color-filled testimony. We have walked *en masse* to the barricaded bridge or as close as this quarter-mile body of people can get. The snow is blowing so hard one walks nearly blind with eyes closed in the stinging, wind-driven white curtain. This many bodies together allows the parts to become one. We stand in silence, waiting, watching, listening....then,

I am on my knees...there is a hushed, cocoon-like quiet down here. I am sheltered from the snow and wind, surrounded by a forest of legs and bodies, encompassed. I am here on my knees because I must be here. I am praying, still and yet vibrating with the sensations of the enveloping energy field of intention...a shimmering bubble of light and warmth holding me. The power and sensation of my prayer is unlike any I have known—emanating out of every pore of my body—my crown chakra nearly exploding. I am, yet, fully and totally anchored to the snowy ground upon which my

knees rest. There is no time and all external distraction disappears. I am one...I am none...I am invisible and yet have become this single glowing ember within this remarkable fire of resilience and resistance...

I am transformed in this holy human alchemy...Faith and Witness are wed.

This may be the culmination of several years of partnership and companionship with various native 1st nations' people... sharing in the mutual care of the waters, being gifted with the traditions and practices of the people who have faithfully walked this journey with Mother Earth for hundreds of years—those who have not forgotten why we humans are here—to love and protect, to nurture and show gratitude for every blade of grass, drop of water, breath of air. To understand that the core of every faith tradition is fueled by the fire of Love...Or it may be The Universe providing yet one more opportunity for growth and awe....

In fact, it matters not which it may be. What matters is that I (we) said yes! When it seemed impossible to even think about coming out here because it was dangerous, because I couldn't not work, because my partner in all of this might not get the time off, because I hate the cold and get frostbite, because it was expensive, because it was an irresponsible use of fossil fuels to fight the extraction of fossil fuels, because, because, because...and all of those were true.

Yet here we were, doing the impossible and being so clearly directed and held in every mile. It was as if it were an incoming tide that lifted and carried us, all the gear and food gathered, the van being available, the continuing messages of f/Friends to "get here," the call while on the road to the Yearly Meeting office that set in motion the letter of delegation and protection in a matter of hours, the unbelievable power of prayer that held us as we carried the life and Spirit of NYYM with us.

Travel through the most stark, breathtakingly beautiful, meringue-like landscape, caressingly cleaved by the aqua blue waters of the Oahe Lake and Missouri River. The welcome of all the many people once we got there. Smiles and encouragement, direction and help as the

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Summer Sessions News

From Your Sessions Committee

“Bringing the Peaceable Kingdom to a Turbulent World” is the theme selected by your Sessions Committee for our 2017 Summer Sessions, July 23-29. It is in keeping with the fifth priority in the Statement of Leadings and Priorities adopted in 2014: “We Envision A Yearly Meeting That Supports and Amplifies Our Witness.” Having identified a theme, we are now working on a schedule for summer through which we may be inspired by God and our vision of the highest good for all. We recognize that all areas of witness are interrelated, as are all areas in which our committees work. Our grounded spirituality and ministry improve our witness; we nurture each other that we may be better witnesses; even the decisions we make about finances and other areas under the General Services Coordinating Committee have implications related to our witness in the world.

For the 2017 NYYM Summer Sessions, we will focus primarily on three areas: eco-justice, social justice, and peace. Our work for eco-justice reflects the injunction in the Epistle from 2016 Friends World Committee for Consultation World Plenary: “We call on Friends everywhere to take practical actions to sustain life on Earth.” Our work for social justice is reflected in the more than one hundred NYYM Friends who attended the 2016 White Privilege Conference, but social justice goes beyond antiracism to include fighting unjust discrimination wherever it occurs and taking positive steps to affirm our fellowship with all people. And our peace testimony, which has been central to our faith from its beginnings in the seventeenth century, will be reflected in our Summer Sessions coming about four months after the 2017 Section Meeting of the Americas (March 23-27 in Pittsburgh, PA). This meeting has the theme of “Vivir La Paz—Living Peace.”

We cannot create the summer program alone. We look to the yearly meeting committees and working groups to create vital workshops and seminars that further the theme of “Bringing the Peaceable Kingdom to a Turbulent World.” We will be in contact with the clerks of the Coordinating Committees to ascertain what programs the groups under them want to include in summer sessions. We also hope that the leaders of Junior Yearly Meeting will create age-appropriate activities that focus on our theme and our witness in the world.

For Summer Sessions to be a success we need to have as wide a participation as possible. We have been looking at ideas for broadening our outreach to Friends in all of our local meetings. The possibility of a different venue and having a pay-as-led policy are being considered, but these explorations will not bear fruit until after 2017. For this year, we are depending on our current, successful process for financial assistance—the Equalization Fund (EQ). Our normal practice is to ask for donations to the EQ only three times a year on each of our sessions’ registration forms and on those same registration forms we make the EQ available to those in need. Now, we are expanding our request for donations (which are tax-deductible!). They can be made to the Fund at any time via the online “Donate to NYYM” link at nyym.org—in the “This payment is for:” box, simply note you are making a donation to the Equalization Fund. Five monthly donations (February through June) of \$122.40 would cover room and board for someone staying in Hebron or Paine Hall (the largest block of rooms we reserve at Silver Bay). Please consider this as you reflect on what you are led to give to support our yearly meeting. As an aside, we will also list the Summer Sessions registration fees and room rates in the February InfoShare, so that folks have more time to plan their budgets.

Our work together, as we gather at Silver Bay, as much as our other work, defines us as a Yearly Meeting. At the end of Summer Sessions 2014, we came to unity on a Statement of Leadings and Priorities. We left with a feeling that our God of Love had been in our midst. We went home with a clearer vision of who we were as New York Yearly Meeting. Our hope is that at the end of Summer Sessions 2017, everyone attending will have an increased understanding of what it means to be a witnessing Quaker.



Spirituality and Witness

Mary Eagleson
Scarsdale Meeting

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associations come together to do a social good. For people to do a real social good, they come together for some other reason and do a social good out of their peripheral vision. Otherwise, it is a system. (McKnight, Block, 2011, *The Abundant Community*, p. 72)

Quaker meetings clearly fall into McKnight and Block’s category of association. We choose to come together for worship and fellowship, and we do so because we find that our individual spiritual lives are enriched and supported by our meetings. We might say that our leadings toward social action of any kind arise out of our “peripheral vision.”

The clarity of the peripheral vision of some Quakers past and present involves a certain risk, however. People, especially Quakers, come to expect that Quakers will “do something” about all manner of social problems: war, poverty, racism, lack of educational opportunities, prisons, environment, and on and on. The passion we feel about various of these issues can easily get us “ahead of our Guide.” We are often frustrated by our inability to excite our Friends about issues that are of deep concern to us. We may become so involved with our social concerns that we neglect the reasons we have become Quakers: to worship together and to support each other as community. We move in the direction of becoming a

system. Systems aren’t necessarily bad; they just don’t provide the kinds of relationship we need in order to be whole human beings.

Especially in the election campaign just past, many of us have become deeply emotionally involved. As a result of signing petitions for one political end or other, my email inbox has been flooded with appeals from various political groups, and the memo line often reads “Stop....” Stop Trump, stop this appointment, stop the climate-deniers, and so on. Yet even though the appeals are seductive, I feel that they are pulling us toward violence. I don’t mean physical violence, but rather the violence of control and resistance to control.

I was moved by the quotation from Edward Burrough in the November *Spark*:

We are not for Names, nor Men, nor Titles of Government, nor are we for this Party, nor against the other, because of its Name and Pretence; but we are for Justice and Mercy, and Truth and Peace, and true Freedom, that these may be exalted in our Nation. (Burrough, 1659, *To the Present Distracted and Broken Nation of England*)

My hope for us as Quakers is that we remain true to Friend Burrough’s advice, and that we understand our work for justice, mercy, peace and truth as coming from our “peripheral vision” as an association whose main purposes are worship, community, and mutual support.



Please contribute
to NYYM at
nyym.org/?q=donate.

Witness as a Result of Faith

Liseli Haines
Mohawk Valley Meeting

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we did not talk about it. He told me about being a banker in a small town in North Dakota, making loans and collecting payments once a year when the farmers harvested their crops and had cash available to repay the loans. He knew his clients and trusted them. They came to him year after year. Sometimes the bank got burned but not often. Then the federal government stepped in with banking regulations. The farmers had to pay monthly or quarterly and could not. The banks were encouraged to press for repayment. The farmers couldn't keep up. There were foreclosures and hard feelings. This banker decided that working in this atmosphere was no longer acceptable. He left and set up his own consulting business. He felt badly, as he had the North Dakota attitude of "we take care of our own." The federal regulations may have helped in some places, but not here. I had never been presented with such a clear picture of the problems of the federal banking regulations. Moreover, I got a glimpse into the life of a good man trying to help his neighbors.

Next day as we all prepared to head out on the reopened interstate, he gave me his card. "Keep in touch." This is surely the way to get to know different people: to get out of our usual circle, build relationships, and listen to others' hopes and fears.

This leads into the FCNL advocacy teams that FCNL is working on, to help people learn how to lobby, to get to know their members of congress and build relationships with them. I am particularly interested in building a relationship with Claudia Tenney, our newly elected Representative. So far, my only personal connection with her, several years ago, left me stunned at how at odds our ideas could be. I look forward to seeking that of God within her.

Part II

Recent experiences at Standing Rock have brought clearly to me another connection between Faith and Witness. In early December, I was led by news of the announced eviction on December 5th and a

desire to support the Standing Rock Sioux to travel to Standing Rock. While we were there, my partner and I heard no talk about the announced eviction. What we found was a camp in constant prayer. It started at 6:30 in the morning at the Sacred Fire with a sunrise ceremony and water ceremony and seemed to last throughout the day and night.

While we were there, two direct actions were held, both of them Witness held in Prayer. One was in support of the veterans who started to arrive the day after we did. They were walking to the bridge on highway 1806 that had been barricaded by law enforcement. This main road to Bismarck had been closed since the Fall. The veterans walked forward to the barricade on the bridge to talk to the people on the other side (presumably law enforcement officers). The rest of us followed behind and stopped short of the bridge. It was a time of prayer and waiting. The bridge, barricade, and veterans were invisible behind the wet snow blowing into our faces. We prayed, each in our own way, for the healing of the world, for the protection of the waters, for those who were hurt and those who had been perpetrating the violence. Standing or kneeling in the wet, clinging snow. Prayer as Direct Action. Faith and Witness.

Sunday, December 4th, was a called Day of International Prayer with different Faith groups speaking at the Sacred Fire. Those ceremonies culminated with the announcement that the day's action had been changed from a walk to the barricaded bridge to forming a circle of prayer around the camp, an area perhaps 30-40 acres in size. We started in one place, a line of 30 or so people, then were redirected to go to the perimeter of the camp. We found a place with a dozen other people standing in the snow by the river but were soon called to join the ever-growing line of people a little closer around the camp. We could only see a portion of the line. Away to our right, winding off between tents and cars; away to the left, a shifting line going up Media Hill where children were sledding. We shifted on the icy ground, stretching out to hold our neighbor's hand. A young woman veteran stood to my right, straight and strong in her camouflage fatigues. We skated around to shift and keep our footing as we saw the line coalescing up the hill. A runner came around: "We have almost

done it, almost done." It had taken an hour and a half. At three o'clock the runner came around again: "We did it, it's complete." Close on his heels another runner from the Sacred Fire: "The Elders say that the Army Corps of Engineers have denied the easement." He kept repeating it as he ran down the line. We looked at each other, asking, do you suppose it is true? We did not know. Nevertheless, we felt glad and the timing may have made us all believers in the power of prayer as

Direct Action, as a form of Witness.

There were fireworks that night, but there were fireworks the night before as well. Every day, every night a celebration; the announcement of our gratitude for what we have; our commitment to Earth and our joy in living. If we made a mark, an advance, it is one advance in a forever struggle. There will be no end to our work, our prayers, our gratitude and our Witness: a direct result of our Faith.



Opportunities for YM Families to Connect

Quaker Parent Meetups: Fellowship and Fun

The kick-off for these gatherings was held on Saturday, December 3, and included parents and children from six Monthly Meetings in four Quarters. The format of Meetups is welcoming and relaxed: we create space for worship sharing with parents and lots of time for fellowship. Child care and refreshments are provided. It is an opportunity to connect around joys and challenges we face as Quaker parents. A participant at the December gathering lifted up how nurturing it was to hear one another's stories. And the kids had a wonderful time in the care of teen and young adult caregivers!

We're planning 2017 Meetups! A series of four events in New York Quarter will begin with March 18 and June 3—details of location and time will be announced shortly.

Contact Melinda Wenner Bradley at childrenyouthfs@nyym.org to organize a Quaker Parent Meetup in your Quarter, Region, or Half YM.

NYYM Families on Facebook

Did you know that there's a page for NYYM Families on Facebook? You'll find news about events for families and articles of interest for parents and youth. www.facebook.com/NYYMFamilies



Celebrating 100 Years of the American Friends Service Committee

American Friends Service Committee was founded in 1917 in response to WWI, with the goal of both relieving the suffering of war and providing alternatives to military service. AFSC knows that miracles can happen when we build the capacity for peace person-by-person, community-by-community. As our 100th anniversary approaches, we want to share powerful lessons from our history and remember the connections AFSC has built across the world. We've developed a traveling museum exhibition about AFSC and will be hosting a peace and justice summit conference in Philadelphia to share and learn with you.

"Waging Peace: 100 Years of Action" is an interactive exhibition opening in January 2017 at the African American Museum in Philadelphia. The exhibit demonstrates the effectiveness of nonviolence to build justice, overcome oppression and prevent violence, using the provocative stories of those who

struggled against injustice during the last century. The exhibit is built around five issue areas AFSC continues to engage with today: building peace, ending discrimination, addressing prisons, just economies, and immigrant rights. A call to action, inspiring visitors to engage in justice work beyond the museum, is the capstone of the museum experience.

AFSC has also created a condensed version of the exhibit for use at Quaker meetings and churches. If your meeting/church would like to host the condensed exhibit, visit <https://www.starcafe.org/service/centennial> to fill out a short reservation form. We will provide a guide with promotion and event ideas to meetings displaying the exhibit.

Another part of our 100th anniversary celebration is an AFSC-sponsored summit April 20-23, 2017 in Philadelphia. With the summit, we will articulate a vision forward for peace and justice by joining movements that are making the connection between

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A banner at the Oceti Sakowin camp, Standing Rock, December 3, 2016. Some refer to the Dakota Access Pipeline as the "black snake," in reference to an old Lakota prophecy of a black snake that will come from under the ground, bringing destruction to the earth. Photo by Kristian Nammack.

Visiting Oceti Sakowin

Christine Japely
Fifteenth Street Meeting

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Lutheran congregation quickly announced that they wouldn't take sides. (Schlecht, Jenny, Bismarck Tribune, Nov. 25, 2016.) So it was refreshing to see that the UU's meetinghouse had a large and lovely banner: Standing with Standing Rock: Bismarck-Mandan Unitarians Universalists: Standing on the Side of Love. The Bismarck Friends Meeting sign was right next to it.

There was a palpable pro-DAPL attitude in the sister cities of Bismarck-Mandan, evident in the local paper's (Bismarck Tribune) editorial choices and comments. In tiny Bismarck there was a huge Republican headquarters with large Trump signs, and Trump signs were prominent in many service stations for miles around, along with guns and ammo. Three young women of color at the hotel where we stayed that first night said to us: "You're lucky you're white! Bismarck and North Dakota are mean. You would be treated badly here if you were Latin, black, Native, because that's what the white people here do." We absorbed this, and then discussed the fact that Sioux Tribal Chairperson Dave Archambault would be appearing in Bismarck for a public community discussion in a few days. "Well, I hope he wears a bullet proof vest, because someone will try to shoot him," said one of the young women, concern in her voice. "He's in danger."

To New York City folk, Bismarck is a tiny toy town with one low skyscraper, the fourteen-story state capital office building. The streets-

cape and neighborhoods are charming and small-scale, and look like mid-America in the 1930's. But then one mile east there's a new mega Bible-thumper "prosperity Gospel" type Christian church and school establishment (which brought a chill to my heart because it's so out of scale to everything else, and also so ugly).

I was compelled to visit Standing Rock and experience the Oceti Sakowin encampment because I felt nagging unfinished business from the Pine Ridge standoff of the 1970's, back when I was very young and couldn't have done much. Still, it was a historical injustice that remained lodged in my consciousness. We white colonizers and usurpers continue to owe a huge and shamefully unpaid debt to Indigenous peoples who our forebears pushed off the land or murdered. All of this fed my urge to go to the Dakotas.

John and I drove out to Oceti Sakowin camp inside the Standing Rock reservation early the next morning on a warm and sunny late November day. The surrounding land is the elegant and sparsely forested "Missouri Breaks." Law enforcement had closed the most direct road to the camp, mainly as a nuisance to Water Protectors of every variety. Law enforcement and ND government hyperbolized the "threat" of Water Protectors; schools in Bismarck actually "locked-down" when Water Protectors came into town to peacefully protest at Walmart or Target. These were unarmed folk in simple homespun garments praying in the face of heavily armed police and hired security.

John and I enjoyed an hour's drive through rural Dakota and reservation scrubland scenery—

ramshackle housing, cattle, and some horses every so often. Suddenly, off the road in the middle of "nowhere," there was the huge and lovely Oceti Sakowin encampment of people, horses, flags, and hundreds of tipis, wigwams, wooden structures, old trucks and buses. It was vibrant but solemn with no loud noise or music except for occasional drumming and song. People were enjoying the sun and warmth, and we parked our car and made our way to the "Sacred Fire" where we burnt ceremonial herbs and greeted the elders sitting in the circle. I was carrying a "NYC Quakers Stand with Standing Rock" sign, and many people smiled, waved, and gave thumbs up. A number of Quakers of all description came up and introduced themselves as the days progressed. A very pleasant Washington-state Quaker lady waved me over; she was busily pulling out a huge frozen salmon from Alaska, and she was looking for volunteers to hack the frozen fish into steaks. The camp itself was an awe-inspiring assemblage of long-term "camps" put up by the various tribes, of which three hundred were present. There were also faith groups, unions, Veterans for Peace, and countless other supportive Water Protectors. The air had the charming aroma of burning cedar wood, and people were busy winterizing their structures. Well-tended, gorgeous horses were here and there in various temporary pens, and there were plenty of friendly dogs. Ample supplies (food, clothing, toiletries, condoms, etc., etc.) were in evidence; the blizzards hadn't yet driven off many people. We dropped off winter coats, hats, and gloves in the donations tent.

John and I took a break at Winona's Café, a kitchen run by Winona Kasto, a member of the Cheyenne River Sioux tribe. This was one of the various food-serving centers in the camp. We sat down around a conversation fire and heard stories from Beatrice, an Oglala Lakota woman who appreciated my pronunciation of her name; in response a nephew of hers nearby started jokingly calling her Beet-Rice. "Yes, that's what they call me!" Beatrice laughed. She explained her deep relationship with White Buffalo Calf Woman, a mythical goddess and inspiration to many of her tribe. When she heard we were from New York City, she said that she'd been there once to visit her sister who had moved there

decades ago and never left. A happy commotion interrupted us; a jeep arrived and Digital Smoke Signals (aka Myron Dewey) hopped out for a quick cup of coffee. Myron, Paiute/Shoshone, is a prominent Indigenous journalist, activist and scholar, and he was flying camera drones to publicize the encampment to the outside world and to keep an eye on "law enforcement" on the nearby hills (which was constantly watching the camp with threateningly heavy duty technology and equipment). Myron was greeted as a hero, and he picked out a few Sitting Bull tee-shirts at a table nearby, but the proprietor waved away his cash. "Take them, it's a gift for all your great work!" ...

Read the rest of this article—on conditions on the Reservation, lack of options for Indigenous youth, conversations with tribal leaders (and Jane Fonda), and thoughts on visiting "Frostbitten Burning Man" as a privileged person—at nyym.org/?q=StandingRockProtest2016

Experiential Faith

Don Badgley
Poughkeepsie Meeting

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Light is weighty and my occasional doubts only add to the weight. The message I offer has been challenging for some Friends and I must be ever vigilant that I not get ahead of the Leader as I strive not to cause offense. My ministry is anchored by other Friends and evolves with each meeting I visit. It is also a profound blessing and I am grateful it has been given to me to carry.

These few words summarize what I carry: *While informed by doctrine, tradition and scripture our religion is founded in the direct and immediate experience of the Divine Light, encounters with God. We trust to this Living Presence as the only True Authority. The time has come to share experiential faith with the world through vocal ministry.*

Sadly, many Friends have become quite adept at keeping the simple Truth of the living Divine Presence well hidden. In our good outreach to the world we seem content to credit our status as Quakers for our worldly political notions and witness works. Whether it's our local meeting, our yearly meeting or FGC, FCNL, FWCC or AFSC—the *Source* of our ministry is *almost never mentioned*.

Absent a constant orientation to the Divine Source, absent acknowledgement of that Light ordering our ministry, our so-called “testimonies” are reduced to notions and our witnesses to the world are weakened if not ineffectual.

For me, the Religious Society of Friends exists for a single fundamental purpose. Even as we do wonderful work to make the world a better place, we might remind ourselves that we do not exist to heal racism, raise awareness of white privilege, to bring about equality or world peace. We don’t exist to fight for gender equality, to feed the hungry, visit the prisoners, struggle for the rights of indigenous peoples or any of the other leadings and works that define us in the world, no matter how blessed and well led these labors may be.

We exist to bring about a world that is led by Divine Love. We can only be effective in that call by leading others to the Experience of the Divine, by ever pointing to the Divine Source. All else naturally follows that prime motivation as we then order our lives in that Light. Our Peace Testimony as stated by George Fox to Charles II was entirely framed and built upon the phrase, “*the Spirit of Christ by which we are guided is not changeable.*” This foundation stone gave the statement its power and that power arose in Fox’s direct Experience of the Divine Light. His ministry was not directed at the powers and principalities of his day. It was directed at individual seekers and at the church communities that Fox felt had strayed from the Experiential Faith taught by Jesus, strayed into notions that diverted “believers” from the Experience.


Today, in the 21st Century, we Friends are loath to challenge other faith communities. Many of us struggle with outreach ministry because we come to Friends fearing, even detesting “proselytizing.” We are content to sit quietly in our meetings and hope our lives speak through our works in the world. If a seeker comes to worship with us we are likely to share our history, works and testimonies and perhaps that will resonate and the visitor will return to worship again. Most do not. Had Fox taken that passive approach, Quakerism would not have traveled past his village.

When Fox experienced that Light he named it the Spirit of Christ. That was his context in his

time and place. I call my Experience of that Spirit the Divine Light and know that it is the same Power that Jesus also experienced and shared; and I say so.

Jesus’ response to the Light was not to start a religion about himself as a God. Others did that later. His response to the Light was to announce the good news that the Kingdom was at hand. He never preached what to believe. That was also added later, with a dash of fear thrown in. He taught what to do and how to behave by living in the Light. He taught Love. We would do well to imitate and share that ministry. That connection was the essence of Fox’s ministry. It is also worth noting that connecting *our* ministry to *his* ministry carries great power and weight, even for non-believers and non-Christians.

Our Quaker testimonies are nothing but the product, the fruit if you prefer. They are the result of the Experience that leads us into Love and from there to peace. Pointing only to the product might occasionally reveal the Source but that approach has been mostly ineffective.

We need to point first to the Light, the Source that may be experienced by all who seek it. That Experience is sufficient unto itself; eternal, infinite, unchangeable and the hope of the world. There are countless people who are craving that simple yet life-altering Truth. Are Friends still willing to publish that essential message? 

Faith and Witness at Standing Rock

Elizabeth (Buffy) Curtis
Mohawk Valley Meeting

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hundreds and thousands of people and vehicles descended non-stop on this outpost of courage and perseverance. Walking about the camp with our signs reading “Quaker Allies” and “Quaker in Solidarity” attached to the back of our coats which brought such an outpouring of acknowledgement and curiosity. Looking for those we needed to find, while never finding them, we were somehow found anyway. Dancing in the Dome, hundreds packed shoulder to shoulder in Social Dance and drumming joy. Working to help sort and unpack the tons of donations in the medical

area in the falling snow. Speaking and singing at the Sacred Fire.

Being present each pre-dawn for the sunrise and water ceremonies; a breathtaking example of the power of Love and service as each woman was assisted to the river in safe passage, over the ice and snow, by the men who became the living railing of support...connecting eye to eye, hand to hand and heart to heart hundreds of times until we reached the river to offer our prayers and tobacco. Then the women offering the same to them...overflowing our hearts one and all...

Attending the Orientation; two hours of clarity about what the reality and conditions of living together in a peaceful, prayerful, Indigenous centered community means. Indigenous Centered, Community Shared, Service, and Bring it Home, were the four tenets infused with the Seven Sacred Principles of the Sioux Nations that were the guiding testimonies of camp life and conduct. No drugs, no alcohol or vehicles of violence were mandatory rules.

Joining in a camp-wide circle of prayer on Sunday, an exercise that took nearly two hours. We were directed by the Chiefs to circle the camp clockwise, collecting us into a 40 acre, 2000 person circle which, when finally, fully formed, received and spread the news that “the easement has been denied!” And being a part of that unbelievable moment of power and grace, disbelief and celebration and reveling in the fireworks that lit up the amazing cold, clear, star-filled sky that night.

As the blizzard descended upon the camp, and following the march to the bridge, we were finally able to leave before becoming captured there. Such a feeling of abandonment and conflict of heart. While connecting with another protector in our eventual haven from the storm in Bismarck, we were amazed and bonded by our mutual admitting of the tears of sadness and guilt we shed about having to leave. Folks from all walks of life were captured by the blizzard, creating an unintentional community and provided ample opportunity for connection and conversations. We managed to find the common core of helping one another to be the place where all differences could be set aside. Person to person communication proved more powerful than any other message. We came together


as strangers and parted as friends, yet another gift to help our long and challenged journey home.

This many weeks later, there is a part of me that has not returned. There is a piece of me that is still in the midst of that gathering of souls, still in the bubble of Light and prayer. So be it and may it inform and guide my daily life here onward. I’m convinced that Mother Nature is protecting all things out there by sending blizzard after blizzard. The Oceti Sakowin camp and the others have shrunk back to a core group of protectors, and construction has stopped for as long as the weather holds the equipment in its icy grip. Everyone on both sides of the bridge is in survival mode.

We here are faced with the challenge of what next; what do we do with this knowledge and experience? There are any number of “Standing Rocks” right here in our own neighborhoods. As Quakers, what is our call now? I, for one, know that we must continue to share our lessons and experiences of our Two Row/Ally/Standing Rock learnings. I do not have permission to simply return to the “same old, same old.” We live in a new normal. It requires my full time presence and attention...my vigilance. While silence and quiet waiting is a guiding and foundational practice of Friends, my witness and my faith is the motivating energy of my life. It is my hope and prayer that all parts of my Quaker presence may be “well used” *“...that my faith and witness will be wed.*

In response to a recent worship sharing query about using the power of silence to strengthen and not shroud our witness, the following prophetic quote, was read. There are no accidents, only divine teachings...

The Message

Silence, they say, is the voice of complicity.
But silence is impossible.
Silence screams.
Silence is a message.
Just as doing nothing is an act.
Let who you are ring out and resonate in every word and deed.
Yes! Become who you are.
There is no side stepping your own being or responsibility.
What you do is who you are.
You are your own comeuppance.
You become your own message.
YOU ARE THE MESSAGE.
In the Spirit of Crazy Horse,
Leonard Peltier 

Meeting for Discernment

The next gathering of the Meetings for Discernment will take place at the Poplar Ridge meetinghouse on Saturday, March 11, 2017 from 9:30am to 3:30pm, hosted by Poplar Ridge Meeting. (*Alternate date in case of bad weather: Saturday, March 18, same time and place.*) Friends are invited to arrive between 8:30 and 9:15 (coffee, tea, and snacks will be provided), with the Meeting for Discernment to begin at 9:30. Lunch will be provided between sessions.

Meetings for Discernment are a time when the yearly meeting gathers for extended worship without the weight of an agenda for business. Because Meetings for Discernment offer an occasion for the yearly meeting community to hear what is rising up among us, monthly meetings and worship groups are asked to appoint at least one person to attend. Appointees are not asked to bring prepared messages, but rather to speak as moved in the moment by Spirit, by God, by the Inner Christ. By meeting this way in the fullness of our community, we hear that which might not be heard in the midst of committees and attending to business.

God is present in our relationships with one another, animating our interactions with extended families, meeting members, friends, and neighbors. All of these relationships are part of God's covenant with us, written in our hearts.

—NYYM Faith and Practice, p. 37

The Meeting for Discernment will focus on the following queries and also the theme for Summer Sessions 2017: *Bringing the Peaceable Kingdom to a Turbulent World*.

How do our meetings nourish the Light within the meeting, the Light within those in the meeting, and the Light in others?

How do I nourish the light within myself? How do I stay centered, ready to be open to new insights and experiences? How can I become ready to listen for Spirit in those people with different opinions and beliefs? How do I face my fears? How do our meetings help with this?

Your prompt registration will facilitate our planning. To register for day attendance, possible pick-up from the airport or train station, and for hospitality and/or childcare, please complete the online registration form at <https://secure.acceptiva.com/?cst=6fb937> (link available at nnym.org) by March 3, earlier if possible, especially if you want hospitality. A good will donation of \$10 per person, paid on-site, will help defray the cost of childcare, a simple lunch, and other necessities. For information regarding financial assistance for travel expenses, contact Jeffrey Aaron: (732) 247-9430 or jephreyaaron@aol.com. For those planning overnight stays at nearby hotels, there are various options in Aurora, Auburn, and Ithaca.

The Poplar Ridge meetinghouse is at 1868 Poplar Ridge Rd, in the hamlet of Poplar Ridge, Aurora, NY. It is about 100 yards east of the intersection of Poplar Ridge Rd. and State Route 34b. Note that some online maps erroneously place the meetinghouse west of State Route 34b. **Winter weather advisory:** If the weather seems questionable, please check your e-mail on Friday, March 10 (if you have provided us with your email address), or call the NYYM office at (212) 673-5750. For information about local arrangements, you may reach Andrew Simkin, clerk of Poplar Ridge Meeting, by cell phone at (206) 390-4286 or by email at simkinat@msn.com

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militarism, racism, and materialism. The summit consists of an academic symposium and a variety of workshops, culminating in a day of action to “let our lives speak”. Everyone is welcome to participate in the summit, but pre-registration is required to attend the workshops. Visit the AFSC Centennial website, afsc.org/100, for details.

We know that after 100 years, AFSC has many deep and poignant connections within the Quaker

community. If you have had a meaningful experience with AFSC, as a participant, staff member, supporter, or donor, we invite you to share your story for our “Peace works” series on the AFSC website, peaceworks.afsc.org. A First Day School curriculum will also be available in 2017 for meetings, including an intergenerational session on gathering Peace Works stories. Let us continue this powerful work together for the next century!



Connect. Engage. Listen. Understand.

SARAH GERK
Binghamton Meeting

This letter was written by Sarah Gerk with Nan Olsen, approved by the Binghamton Community Friends Meeting on November 27, and appeared in the “Binghamton (NY) Press and Sun-Bulletin” on December 9, 2016, on the editorial page.

The Binghamton Community Friends Meeting, otherwise known as Quakers, feel concern for the increasingly tense social climate in this country, which has been felt locally in various ways.

Many residents of Broome County have good reason to be fearful. During the past election season, hateful and divisive rhetoric among our political candidates has increased dramatically. We are saddened to witness escalating expressions of hateful speech directed at people of so many races, ethnicities, religious affiliations, sexual orientations and gender identifications.

This atmosphere of blame, distrust and fear has already precipitated violence. Gov. Andrew Cuomo has sounded the alarm over an “explosion” of hate crimes since election day, and we are especially disturbed to hear increased accounts of bullying of Muslim and Hispanic students in our schools in these past weeks.

We are mindful that our children are keen observers of our behavior. They learn from what they witness. We implore our community to work together to create a just and peaceful environment for all of us, but especially for the sake of the young and most vulnerable.

As a Peace Church, Quakers speak truth to power, and we know experientially that fear is not of God. We strive to live in a way that makes war unnecessary. For this reason we disavow all forms of violence, including hate speech and interpersonal violence. Instead, we work for justice, equality and simplicity.

We believe that spiritual growth is enhanced through an avoidance of materialism and peace is strengthened through mutual respect and the justice of shared resources. We take the commandment to “love thy neighbor as thyself” seriously and without exception, and we believe that our differences enrich us when we celebrate them.

It is our hope that members of this community will come together to create nonviolent solutions to conflict, and to work at building bridges that connect us, rather than walls that divide us. We look forward to engaging in conversations and listening practices with others that build empathy, and promote a deeper sense of understanding, connection, mutual support and trust.



Tending the Garden: *retreats that come to you and your meeting*

Many topics are available, including...

Sacred Journeys

In this retreat, Friends will explore our faith, what feeds us spiritually, what challenges us, and how we understand and experience the Divine. As we share our sacred stories with each other, we will experience what it means to be known more deeply and fully. We will learn more about how it is that, when we are grounded in our community of faith, we are most open to the grace and blessing that are given to us, always.

This retreat and many others can travel to your meeting upon request. Contact Anne Pomeroy (apomeroy10@gmail.com) or Lu Harper (luharper@gmail.com). Tending the Garden is under the care of NYYM's Spiritual Nurture Working Group.