

# New York Yearly Meeting Religious Society of Friends

## *InfoShare*

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Editor, Paul Busby, paul@nyym.org

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### **Financial Assistance Deadline Extended for Summer Sessions at Silver Bay**

Living in Blessed Community requires a shift in our thinking as the Light shows us our interdependence and increases our empathy with all Creation. We come to understand that building compassionate and healthy relationships with others and with all creation is what God asks us to do. Our spiritual growth depends on it.

Because of this emphasis on interconnectedness and compassion, living in Blessed Community can be a vital part of our witness for peace, social justice, and care for the earth.

*Blessed Community approved 4/07 SEYM*

The above quote from Southeastern Yearly Meeting encompasses what Friends are witnessing to as they generously give to the NYYM Equalization Fund. This fund, which continues to receive donations, is helping to support Friends who wish to join our community this July 18–24 at Silver Bay. We *a//* benefit when we as Friends come together.

There is still time to request assistance from the Equalization Fund. The deadline has been extended to June 30, 2010. Summer Sessions registration information is available online at [www.nyym.org](http://www.nyym.org). You may register online using PayPal or you can send in your registration form and check to NYYM, 15 Rutherford Pl., New York NY 10003. If you have any questions please contact the NYYM office at 212-673-5750 or e-mail [office@nyym.org](mailto:office@nyym.org).

Whether or not you need financial assistance, please register now!

### **Summer Young Adult Intern Chosen** Applications Still Open for Fall Intern

Lissa Wolfe (Brooklyn) is the NYYM summer intern. If you would like to be in touch with Lissa regarding anything relating to young adults in New York Yearly Meeting please contact her at [Lissa@nyym.org](mailto:Lissa@nyym.org).

We are still accepting applications for the fall intern. The deadline is September 1, 2010. The intern would serve from September 15 to December 15, 2010. The stipend for the three-month internship is \$599.00.

Hours—20 hours per month for three months. After consultation with supervision, the intern can work 5 hours in a given week or more or less in other weeks as long as the total for the month is 20 hours. There are no benefits. Approved phone, travel, and other incidental expenses will be reimbursed.

The interns should be connected to NYYM in some way—either raised in NYYM and now attending college or working out of state, or raised in another YM but now participating in the life of a meeting or worship group in the YM.

The young adult must be connected to a Quaker meeting for worship. They do not have to be a member of a meeting, but they do need to be involved in the worship life of a meeting or worship group. The meeting can be near home, school, or place of employment.

Although the NYYM office is available for the intern to work in, this is not a prerequisite. Work may be handled from a home-based office or a college dormitory. There is no coverage for home-office expenses, save those enumerated above.

If you would like an application or more information please contact Helen Garay Toppins office@nyym.org.

### **Christopher Sammond's Calendar**

#### June 2010

- 5 Meeting regarding how the PoHo Youth Program serves NYYM and vice versa, Powell House, Old Chatham, NY
- 6 Visit Sullivan Prison Worship Group, Woodbourne, NY
- 8–10 Vacation
- 19 Traveling Friends Advisory Group, Poughkeepsie, canceled due to death in family
- 20–21 Visit to Westbury MM, Westbury, NY, canceled due to death in the family
- 29–30 Travel to Kenya

#### July 2010

- 1–4 Attend United Society of Friends Women International/Quaker Men

Triennial, Mombasa, Kenya  
 5–9 Travel in Chwele, Elgon East, and Tongaren Yearly Meetings, Western Province, Kenya  
 9–11 Friends United Meeting Combined African/North American General Board Meetings, Bungoma, Kenya  
 11–12 Travel back from Kenya  
 18–24 NYYM Annual Sessions, Silver Bay, NY

### **Memorial for Sanford Segal**

Rochester Monthly Meeting approved holding the memorial meeting for Sandy Segal under its care on July 11, 2010, at 5:15 P.M. in the River Room of the University of Rochester Chapel.

A simple supper will be available after the meeting. Folks needing overnight hospitality may contact the Rochester Meeting coclerks at [rfm.co.clerk@gmail.com](mailto:rfm.co.clerk@gmail.com) indicating any special needs.

### **Communicate with Friends at Summer Sessions Daily Newsletter: The *Minute***

Every day at Summer Sessions a newsletter, the *Minute*, is printed, made available for attenders, and posted on a bulletin board, to let Friends know about agendas for upcoming meetings for business, the special events of the day, and other important news.

The first *Minute* is prepared prior to Summer Sessions and given to attenders when they arrive at Silver Bay. This *Minute* informs Friends of new information regarding committee meetings, events, etc., that wasn't available earlier.

Friends wishing to have information included in the first Silver Bay *Minute* should send their items to [paul@nyym.org](mailto:paul@nyym.org) **no later than July 8.**

### **Summer *InfoShare* Will Be Posted Early in August**

The Summer issue of *InfoShare* contains items submitted at Summer Sessions, as well as other news from Friends in NYYM.

The deadline for submitting items for Summer *InfoShare* is July 28, 2010. Please e-mail your items to [paul@nyym.org](mailto:paul@nyym.org) before that date.

If Jesus preached to criminals, was convicted as a criminal, and died next to other criminals, why is it currently so acceptable among so many Christians to hate criminals?

*—member of a NYYM prison worship group*

### **A Message from Noel Palmer**

To F/friends and loved ones regarding God's continued healing and abundant mercy in this my recent experience. I could not have asked for such a privilege because it is too meaningful, too rich, and too deep. I am convinced that this experience is relevant not only to me individually but to the Religious Society of Friends at large, as we declare our Faith, in practice, to the world.

It is essential that the witness of Friends verify that the Power of God is universal and available to all who desire to worship. As we yield to the Divine there is an atonement that allows the Spirit of God to be manifested in our lives, so that His Will is fulfilled in our daily living. Again, I want you to know how much I appreciate your prayers and well wishes that have extended toward me.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Noel Palmer continues to be able to stay at home after a long hospital stay. He loves receiving cards and notes, and he appreciates prayers.

### **FGC Job Postings**

Friends General Conference (FGC) is searching for candidates for the following four positions. All applications received by **July 16** will be given full consideration. Later applications may be considered, depending upon progress in each search.

#### **Youth Ministries Coordinator:**

This is a 60% time position dedicated to helping Friends and meetings build intergenerational communities based in mutual respect and caring. Much of the work is with young adult Friends. Strong organizational and communication skills are necessary. Must know the Religious Society of Friends very well; membership a plus.

Read the job description [www.fgcquaker.org/about-us/youth-ministries](http://www.fgcquaker.org/about-us/youth-ministries).

**Conference Associate:**

The full-time conference and admin associate is part of a team of three staff who manage the annual FGC Gathering of Friends and other FGC conferences and also provides some administrative support for the whole FGC office. Candidates should be detail oriented with strong communications, computer, and Web skills. Read the job description [www.fgcquaker.org/about-us/conference-coordinator](http://www.fgcquaker.org/about-us/conference-coordinator).

**Quaker Quest Associate:**

This full-time position is one of four supporting FGC's Quaker Quest program in the USA and Canada. Candidates should have strong organizational and communication skills, experience leading workshops and working with volunteers, and a deep commitment to the Religious Society of Friends.

Read the job description [www.fgcquaker.org/about-us/quaker-quest-associate](http://www.fgcquaker.org/about-us/quaker-quest-associate).

**Communications/Quaker Quest Intern:**

This one-year full-time intern works with other staff to develop, implement, and monitor strong Web-based and electronic communications about Quakers and the Quaker Quest program. Strong online communications and writing skills and a good knowledge of the Religious Society of Friends are essential.

Read the job description [www.fgcquaker.org/about-us/quaker-quest-intern](http://www.fgcquaker.org/about-us/quaker-quest-intern).

To apply for any of these positions, send cover letter, résumé, and list of at least four references via e-mail to [nicoler@fgcquaker.org](mailto:nicoler@fgcquaker.org).

**Ben Lomond Quaker Center Seeks Director**

Ben Lomond Quaker Center, a retreat facility near Santa Cruz, California, seeks a full-time, on-site director to begin no sooner than January 1, 2011. (A couple who job-share will be considered.) Applicants must be experienced in managing staff, finances, fundraising, and program development, be computer literate, and be able to perform common maintenance tasks. Familiarity with Friends' beliefs, values, and practices is required. Membership in the Religious Society of Friends is strongly preferred. Experience managing retreat centers, youth programs, and/or nonprofit organizations is highly desirable. Compensation includes salary, housing, utilities, and benefits. Applications from individuals, couples, GLBT, and persons of color are welcomed.

See [www.quakercenter.org](http://www.quakercenter.org) for job description and where to send cover letter and résumé, which must be received by August 15, 2010.

**Powell House: On the Way to Silver Bay  
And the Kick-Off for Our 50th Anniversary!  
July 16–18, 2010**

Last summer, several of us met on the weekend that NYYM's Summer Sessions began at Silver Bay. We had such a good time that we're doing it again—opening up Pitt Hall, the Anna Curtis Center, and the campground.

We'd love to see you, whether you're going on to Silver Bay or not. It will be a weekend filled with visiting, playing Ultimate Frisbee, blowing bubbles, singing, playing board games, quilting, swimming, and even doing work projects.

But...it will be more than that! It was 50 years ago this summer that Elsie Powell gave the 57 acres to New York Yearly Meeting—the beginning of Powell House as we know it. Come with stories to contribute to the oral history of Powell House and share PoHo games and songs from the 60s, 70s, and beyond.

Similar to our New Year Celebration, Pitt Hall will be designated the quieter building, with times set apart for extended worship. You're welcome to come for half the weekend or all of it. Just let us know you're coming, so we'll have enough food.

**Early Bird Rate**

2 Nights: \$200 families; \$100 singles, commuters, and campers

1 Night: \$100 families; \$50 singles, commuters, and campers

Childcare: Amid the games, music, arts and crafts, and other activities, attention and care for children is a community-based opportunity.

To register call 518-794-8811, ex. 10; [info@powellhouse.org](mailto:info@powellhouse.org); or register at [www.powellhouse.org](http://www.powellhouse.org).

**Meeting for Discernment at Summer Sessions**

NYYM will hold our sixth Meeting for Discernment, on Tuesday, **July 20**, during Summer Sessions at Silver Bay. We will gather in the Auditorium from 10:00 A.M. to noon and reconvene from 1:45–4:00 P.M. In the evening, from 7:45 to 9:15, there will be an opportunity for Friends to share about their experience of the Meeting for Discernment. (This will run concurrently with interest groups.)

*Everyone is welcome and encouraged to attend.*

In the morning session of the Meeting for Discernment, we will open with a period of silent worship, to help us center and gather in the Spirit of Love and Truth. Friends will then be invited to consider the following query:

**What has your meeting or worship group learned through your experience of resisting change or embracing change?**

In the afternoon, we will invite Friends to practice the possibilities of the Meeting for Discernment in a new way, by listening to how the Inward/Inner Light is calling us into a new future. To begin, we will invite Friends to sink down very deep, as we hold this query in the Light, praying for guidance from the Inner Teacher:

**How are we as a yearly meeting being called to change?**

In this, we will be inviting Friends to practice corporate spiritual discernment, from a place of deep, deep centeredness, to listen to the still small voice within and to listen to the ministry that rises up within the body on that day.

In both the morning and the afternoon, the clerk will set the pace, leaving time after each message for reflection, and wait until the meeting has settled and gathered again before calling on another person to speak.

We seek, in the fullness of this day, to continue growing into the three charges given to the Meetings for Discernment in July 2007: "to help strengthen connections between monthly meetings and the Yearly Meeting; to support individual leadings; and to help discern emerging directions within the Yearly Meeting."

We urge Friends to participate in both sessions, if they are able, mindful that the afternoon session will be quite different this year. Also, we encourage Friends to sit toward the front of the room, so we can feel physically close and hear each other better.

Any questions or concerns can be addressed to Janet Hough (Chappaqua), clerk of the steering committee for Meetings for Discernment, at [janet.hough@verizon.net](mailto:janet.hough@verizon.net) or 914-769-6885.

### **Interest Group Proposals for Silver Bay**

Interest groups at Silver Bay will be held on Tuesday and Wednesday from 7:45–9:15 P.M. An interest group is an educational opportunity to inform attenders about a topic or activity of importance to Friends.

Those interested in facilitating an interest group should send their proposals to the appropriate coordinating committee clerk by June 25. Coordinating committee clerks are: Ministry, Julia Giordano; Nurture, Cheshire Frager; Witness, Fred Dettmer; General Services, Jeffrey Aaron.

Proposals must include

- Brief description (no more than 50 words)
- Facilitator
- Contact information for facilitator
- Coordinating committee (approval by a coordinating committee is required)
- Approximate attendance expected
- Needed supplies (AV, boards, projectors etc.)
- Preferred evening (Tuesday or Wednesday)

Any questions, contact Barbara Menzel at [bjmenzel@optonline.net](mailto:bjmenzel@optonline.net) or 908-227-5135 (cell).

### **Tagless Tag Sale at Silver Bay**

Yes, there will be a Tagless Tag Sale at Silver Bay during Summer Sessions this year. The Tagless Tag Sale will be held during the Fun(d) Fair on Wednesday, July 27, from 2:30–5:30 P.M.

**If you have sale items (new or used items in good shape) to donate**, please contact the Tagless Tag Sale coordinator, Cynthia Cornelius, at [rlcorn@aol.com](mailto:rlcorn@aol.com) or 203-775-8010, or the clerk of Witness Coordinating Committee, Fred Dettmer, at [fdettmer@aol.com](mailto:fdettmer@aol.com) or 917-968-0369. Or simply bring your salable items to Silver Bay and contact Cynthia following your arrival.

Treasures that you are ready to pass on sell well, as do clothing, jewelry, small electronics, household items, and things for children. The Tagless Tag Sale benefits the Sharing Fund and Powell House. Tax deduction receipts for in-kind charitable contributions will be available upon request.

### **Articles Sought for Spark Issue on Friends and Humor**

Eleanor Novek, Manasquan Meeting

Some say God gave humans humor to lighten our hearts, while others say God uses humor to teach us about our shortcomings. Scholars point to plentiful word play in both Testaments, including jokes, puns, riddles, irony, parables, caricatures, ridicule, and sarcasm.



Though laughter may not be the first thing on our minds when we come to sit in meeting for worship, humor can be present in any gathering, even those attuned to the Spirit. Earthly distractions like the insistent chirp of a bird on a branch outside or the furtive unwrapping of a throat lozenge may provoke a giggle, but sometimes humor seems to stem from a Divine source, deep within.

The September issue of *Spark* will be based on the theme of Quakers and Humor. Rather than a simplistic approach (“How many Quakers does it take to change a light bulb?”), we’re looking for testimony from Friends who experience humor and the power of laughter in their daily lives of work and prayer.

I have been asked to coordinate this issue and gather articles from among Friends. If you are led to write an article about the ways Friends experience, use, and/or respond to humor, please let me know at [enovek@monmouth.edu](mailto:enovek@monmouth.edu). I would like to receive articles by July 28.

### **What Young Adult Friends Are Up To**

These are exciting times for young adult Friends in our Yearly Meeting and across the country as they seek to work and worship together.

As part of her ministry as an intern with the **Young Friends in Residence** (YFIR) program, **Anna Obermayer** has organized a Bible study group for Friends in the area of Perry City, Ithaca, and Poplar Ridge Meetings. Starting on March 30, they will be meeting at 7:00 P.M. on the last Tuesday of every month at Beloved Community House in Newfield, N.Y., where the YFIR interns live. Interns are asked to offer their support to monthly, regional, or quarterly meetings as needed. Anna had noticed that an interest in Bible study had been expressed. “This Bible study group will be less about looking at the Bible academically,” says Anna, “and more about discovering or deepening our own personal relationship with the text...more about what the Bible means to *us*, rather than what it has meant to others.”

Equally important in the YFIR program is the ministry of working with youth, drawing on the inspiring model of the Powell House Youth Program. In March, YFIR intern **Natalie Braun** facilitated a retreat for youth ages 11–14 and reported that she would be facilitating another retreat for youth ages 14–18 in April. “**Perry City Monthly Meeting** has generously provided immense amounts of support,” says Natalie, “and a wonderful

meetinghouse in which we host these retreats. All around this is a very exciting time!" For more about the YFIR program see [www.fgcquaker.org/be-young-friend-residence-new-york](http://www.fgcquaker.org/be-young-friend-residence-new-york).

In the same spirit, on March 28 young adult Friends gathered at **Perry City Monthly Meeting** for a service weekend called "**Building (in) Community.**" Part of the weekend was spent preparing for the **national Young Adult Friends (YAF) gathering** held in Wichita, Kansas, on May 28–31.

Young Friends are encouraged to check out NYYM's Circle of Young Friends Web site at <http://sites.google.com/site/cyfnnyym/>.

### **"If I Had a Trillion..." Youth Video Contest**

*First Prize*—\$500 and trip to Washington, D.C., to show video to home legislator

*Second and Third prizes*—Flip video cameras

The economic cost of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan has reached **\$1 trillion**. Youth are affected by the ongoing cost of the wars and our federal budget priorities (budget cuts, future debt incurred) but are often not part of the conversation or the antiwar, pro-peace movement. National Priorities Project and American Friends Service Committee are teaming up to make sure youth have a voice!

#### **The Rules:**

- Entries must be produced by youth between the ages of 13 and 23.
- Due by July 31, 2010.
- Must be between 1 and 3 minutes in length and address the \$1-trillion price tag for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Instructions and video and issues toolkits can be downloaded here: <http://drop.io/ihtdmaterials>.

### **Yearly Meeting's New Web Site: An Online Labor of Love**

NYYM Communications Committee

Friends who use the Yearly Meeting's resources electronically have found a welcome surprise recently when they visited the Yearly Meeting's Web site. The site has been completely redesigned to make it easier for Friends to learn, work, and worship together and to extend our ministry into the world.

Discussion about a new site for the YM dates back several years. As Friends increasingly recognized the Internet's communication potential, the Advancement Committee began encouraging monthly meetings and worship groups that did not yet have their own Web sites to create them. YM committees wanted to use online communication to explain their functions and services to the membership and reach out to potential new committee members. With the deep layers of information on the existing Web site, however, Friends were not equipped for a major redesign.

When Vonn New joined the Communications Committee in the summer of 2008, she volunteered her excellent Web-authoring skills for this mission. With the help of a number of other YM members with Web skills, Vonn set out to adapt the Web site to the needs of current and future users. After establishing the basic structure and appearance of the site, she organized groups of Friends for two "Web site work camps," and they migrated content from the old site to the new one.

The entire Web site is ministry, designed to be friendly to seekers and to offer a platform for Friends' work in the world. "This is our testimony to the whole world..." The new site contains a "frequently asked questions" section, with explanations of basic Quaker concepts, information on where to worship, and essays from Friends exploring their own understandings of what it means to be a Quaker, to help explain the diversity of beliefs in NYYM. Special care has been taken to speak in plain English and to avoid terms that might be misunderstood by non-Quakers. The page menus are organized to help people find things easily.

For the religious education mission of monthly meetings, the site contains lists of Friends' schools and other Quaker education resources. It also features a link for donations and numerous ways to get connected to other Friends, both inside and out of the Yearly Meeting. Minutes and epistles are posted, with brief explanations of what they are. *Spark* and *InfoShare* are available

The site will also be useful for Friends within the Yearly Meeting to stay informed about what we're doing. The calendar will unify scheduling so that Yearly Meeting events can be coordinated and time conflicts reduced. Members of YM committees will eventually be able to use online discussion groups, both open and password-protected, to support committee business, collaborative decisionmaking, and interchange among Friends.

Although most of this content has been migrated already, this massive undertaking isn't finished yet. If Friends are familiar with the old Yearly Meeting Web site, <http://nyym.org>, and can't find something they are used to, they can click on the "NYYM Classic" button on the new page and be redirected to the old site.

Finally, the new Web site will also be easier to maintain, allowing office staff and committees to keep items current more easily. Many items from the old Web site have been moved to speed the process of finding information for both newcomers and experienced Friends. We hope that the redesign will serve as both outreach to seekers and a more efficient way for members and committees to find information. Let us know what you think.

### **Friends in the Republic of Georgia**

Fred Dettmer, clerk, Witness Coordinating Committee

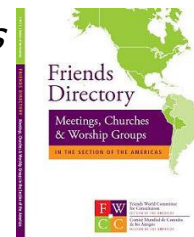
In the Summer of 2008, war broke out between Russia and the Republic of Georgia. New York Yearly Meeting Friends, through our general secretary, Christopher Sammond, and our then-assistant clerk, Heather Cook, sent a message of our prayers and support to the small Quaker community in Tbilisi, Georgia.\* In turn, Georgian Friends asked for our help in their efforts to provide refugee relief and to establish a conflict-transformation program.

Since that time, NYYM's Peace Concerns coordinator, Greta Mickey (Central Finger Lakes), has been answering this call on our behalf and is visiting Tbilisi again in May and June, together with Shirley Way (Central Finger Lakes), to help Georgian Friends develop Alternatives to Violence programs. We expect to receive a report on this project at Summer Sessions. Friends World Committee for Consultation has published a report from Friends in Georgia on their efforts and the assistance provided by NYYM. Friends are invited to read the report at: [www.fwccemes.org/news/georgian-friends-still-working-for-peace-and-bringing-relief-to-refugees-of-last-year-s-war](http://www.fwccemes.org/news/georgian-friends-still-working-for-peace-and-bringing-relief-to-refugees-of-last-year-s-war).

\*See NYYM Minute 2008-11-19; the letter is available at:  
<http://www.nyym.org/pubs/0811min.pdf> and  
<http://quakers.ru/forum/showthread.php?t=656>.

## 2010 Edition of *FWCC Directory* Published

Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) is happy to announce that the *2010 Friends Directory of Meetings, Churches and Worship groups in the Section of the Americas* is now available for purchase online. Meetings, churches, and worship groups are listed for the U.S. and Canada and for some of the Caribbean and Latin American groups. The *Directory* includes yearly meeting information for all groups in the Americas.



While the directory contains the most current information available that was sent to us, our web directory of meetings, churches, and worship groups in the U.S. and Canada is even more up to date.

Order your copy at <http://www.lulu.com/product/paperback/2010-fwcc-directory/11267122>. Because of limited staff resources we will not be fulfilling any orders out of the office. The previous edition of the *Directory* was published in 2002.

## News from William Penn House

Brad Ogilvie, William Penn House

### **Pacifism: Beyond choosing sides**

One of the messages given at a Quaker Meeting in New England was a reflection on the controversial consideration of building a mosque near Ground Zero in NYC. The speaker reflected on the fact that members of the Jewish community were among those who spoke in support of the building of the mosque as a symbol of the tolerance of our society, and as a means for reconciliation. This is a wonderful example of the ability of people to put their faith into action, and has had me thinking about what kind of radical actions those of us who consider ourselves peacemakers and pacifists can take. It is easy to stand on the sidelines and be heartened by the acts of others, but what can we do? There are always the relational opportunities—such as the recent Young Adult Friends gathering—where we can perhaps see that most of us are not extremists but are instead variations of the middle, and we share a desire for a better world. These opportunities are important for building the foundations of a peaceful world by seeing the world as “us,” not “us” and “them.”

At William Penn House, we have been talking more about the ways we can be a resource for raising these challenges and perhaps giving people both

opportunities and motivations for making serious commitments to change—in both the way we form relations and how we live our lives. It's a global challenge that transcends religious and political ideology.

#### UPCOMING POTLUCKS AND PROGRAMS

Every Tuesday evening: Yoga. 6:30 P.M. \$15/person; \$12 for WPH guests, teachers, government employees, people who work in nonprofits.

Tuesday, June 22, to Sunday, July 27: Eco-Workcamp. All ages are invited to be a part of this Workcamp. Five days of activities that explore the environmental issues of our times and ways we can make a difference, while seeing Washington through new lenses.

Monday, July 26, to Sunday, August 15: Creating the Peaceable Kingdom. This Workcamp will take place for two weeks in South Dakota and one week in DC developing relations and community while identifying and addressing the challenges of our times. Participants can join us for one, two, or all three weeks.

### **Shan Cretin Will Be AFSC General Secretary**

The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) has announced that Shan Cretin will be its next general secretary. Shan will assume her duties this September.

Before this appointment, Shan has served as director of the AFSC's Pacific Southwest Region for seven years, responsible for programs in Southern California, Hawai'i, Arizona, and New Mexico. Those programs focus on several key social issues, including immigrants' rights, prison reform, food security, peace, and demilitarization.

Shan is a former clerk of Pacific Yearly Meeting. She cofounded the Los Angeles chapter of the Alternatives to Violence Project and has facilitated conflict-transformation workshops at the Chino Youth Correctional Facility and in the Los Angeles community.

Shan has lived, worked, and traveled throughout the United States and many locations in Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, Latin America, and Canada. A graduate of MIT and Yale, Shan served on the faculties of Harvard, Yale, West China Medical University, Shanghai Medical University, and University of California at Los Angeles.

**General Secretary's Oral Report**  
Spring Sessions, 2010  
Chautauqua, NY

The following is a reconstruction of the oral report Christopher Sammond made to Spring Sessions at Chautauqua.

Good morning. About a third of what I will share this morning is in my written report, and there is much in that report that I will not be covering now. I ask you to please read that report at your leisure; there is much in there that I worked hard to prepare and which I think is important.

We are one body. Different parts nurture the whole. This is not empty rhetoric, but what I see every day. I see how Friends grow in their service to FGC, FUM, AFSC, etc., and then bring those skills back in service of their monthly meetings. I learned how to clerk by watching excellent clerking at FGC's Central Committee. At a recent retreat at Powell House, I met two women who were new to Friends. Each had come to Friends because their child had attended a Friends school, and now they are regular attenders at their respective meetings. Some of our most active young adult Friends were nurtured by Friends high schools. The two strongest meetings in Long Island Quarter are associated with Friends schools. Each institution draws support from the other. Most of the Friends active in the Spiritual Nurture Working Group were nurtured by School of the Spirit. Powell House, Pendle Hill, and Earlham nurture many of our Friends, rekindling their spiritual fires, giving them much to give their monthly, regional, and yearly meetings. I have initiated sharing some ideas on financial development from New England Yearly Meeting with Financial Services and a whole-meeting approach to conflict developed in Philadelphia Yearly Meeting with our Conflict Transformation Committee. Other yearly meetings here and in Europe are taking careful note of what we are doing with Meetings for Discernment. A peace curriculum developed by Friends from Western Yearly Meeting and Northwest Yearly Meeting is going to be used in elementary and secondary schools in Kenya. We are connected.

And as one connected Society, we are in a pivotal time. Many of the institutions that sustain our wider society are really struggling. Some examples: *Friends Journal* has raised serious questions about being able to continue. AFSC had to cut its budget in half last year, and laid off many staff, including closing the Syracuse office. FGC has laid off staff. Philadelphia Yearly Meeting has laid off staff. FCNL has laid off 25 percent of its staff. In May, Great Plains Yearly Meeting will be looking at whether

or not to lay itself down. Pendle Hill is struggling. FUM, operating with a skeleton crew for several years, began a restructuring retreat last fall with the question of whether or not to lay the organization down.

If *Friends Journal* closes, it will be a loss for all of us. If FUM is laid down, we will all be the less for it. Laying down Somerset Hills is a loss for all of us. We might not feel the change, the loss, right away, but when part of what nurtures our collective life has been lost, it impacts all of us, sooner or later, in ways large or small.

If we truly treasure what we have found in Friends, if our being a Friend has changed our lives, if we believe that what Friends have to offer the world is part of a most desperately needed solution to many of the ills that beset us, then we need to treat our Society as the treasure that it is, and support it. And if our Society is not as it should be, if it is not living up to what we aspire to be, then we need to work to change it.

I have heard many Friends speak to how one of the things that they have appreciated about Friends is not being constantly hit up for money. At the same time, I have heard from monthly meeting treasurers that many members and attenders give little or nothing at all to their meetings.

The most powerful community-building event in my years at Twin Cities Friends Meeting came in the person of a young woman who had been worshipping with us for only a few weeks or so. She came to us and said "I recently moved here from another state. I had come out to my parents, and they have disowned me. I have just been diagnosed with adult-onset leukemia, and at the whiff of a terminal diagnosis, all my new friends here vanished. I have no one. I need your help."

Over the next year and a half, our meeting journeyed with that woman as she went through a bone-marrow transplant, the most harrowing treatment you could possibly imagine. We had a hotline giving information on her condition. We got updates after every meeting for worship. We went and sang to her in her isolation ward. We sat and prayed by her bedside while she was unconscious. Later, we brought her meals, took her to appointments, brought worship to her, and helped her with the myriad of small details that she did not have the energy for. We gave, and we gave, and we gave.

And what we learned in our giving was that our giving was like a pent-up force, waiting for a much needed outlet. We didn't know this until she provided us the opportunity, but we needed a place to put our giving. It is



a basic human need, a spiritual need, and we needed someone to be vulnerable enough to ask for help in order for us to have a place to put it. And once we had a place to put it, our giving helped us develop “muscles” we didn’t even know that we had. That flow of giving and receiving, and those new muscles, built community, and built it on a level we had not experienced before.

I read an article recently about a woman who was born into substantial means. She pondered how to best share her wealth, and hit upon the idea of “flow circles.” What she does is give grants of \$20,000 per year for three years to individuals she chooses, based on their character as demonstrated by the lives they are leading. There are two stipulations: the person has to give all the money away; and they can’t give any to themselves or anyone they know.

Her theory was that if she removed the perceived barrier to giving, a sense that “I don’t have enough to give,” that people would experience what a positive thing giving is, and continue doing so after the grant was up. Interviews with former recipients bore out her theory. People got in the habit of giving, valued it, were deeply changed by it, and kept right on giving after the grant was over.

When I was in Kenya three years ago, I witnessed how they collected offerings there. Unlike churches here, where we pass around an offering plate, they have a central large basket, and people line up to put in their contribution. One woman was so filled with joy at the prospect of giving her few Kenyan shillings that she literally danced up the aisle to put them in the basket. Have any of us experienced that level of joy in our giving?

At this past Budget Saturday, the then clerk of Financial Services invited the group into worship sharing around the following query: If money were no object, what are we called to? The worship which followed was powerful, as the tender beginnings of who we might become, who God was calling us to be, began to emerge. After about twenty minutes, several Friends spoke, saying that we didn’t have time for this kind of exercise, that we didn’t have that kind of money, and we needed to get down to the task of trimming the budget. Those tender beginnings of a vision stopped.

I wonder if cutting that worship sharing short wasn’t a reflection of our fear of stepping into what we are called to do and be. If that’s the case, that’s a spiritual problem, not a financial one. I believe that if the vision is well led, and grounded in the body of this Yearly Meeting, the funds will be there to

support it. Our budget gap is not about a lack of resources. It is about a lack of clear, Spirit-led, unified vision. May we have the humility and the patience to open to it.