

**New York Yearly Meeting
Religious Society of Friends**

InfoShare

Volume 10

February 2011

Number 1

Editor, Paul Busby, paul@nyym.org

**"I saw a small beam of sunlight this morning"
Letter from Jailed Hudson Meeting Clerk**

The following letter was written by Nancy Smith, 78, clerk of Hudson Monthly Meeting, from the Irwin County, GA, Jail, where she is serving out the beginning of a six-month sentence for crossing the line at the School of the Americas. It is copied from the SOA Watch Web site.

EDITOR'S NOTE: On February 14, 2011, Yearly Meeting staff confirmed with School of the Americas Watch that Nancy is still in the county jail and welcomes correspondence.

Irwin County Detention Center
Tuesday, January 11, 2011

Dear SOA Watchers,

...on the 5th day the mail arrived! And, oh my it was good. So many people wrote wonderful words of support and encouragement. I was just astounded by the wealth that just fell on me!

I'm in a dorm of 32 women, 4 to a room, with double-bunk beds. The facility here at Ocilla (GA) is clean, modern, warm (most of the time) with lots of heavy doors that bang shut throughout 24 hours. Food is inexcusably bad, but it comes regularly 3 times a day and a vegetarian like myself can usually trade the (what passes for) meat for (what passes for) vegetables.

The next stop will be a transfer to a federal prison. Or not. Some of the women have been here for over a year and expect they might just serve their full sentence here. Or not. And it's the not knowing that keeps everyone on edge. The stories are heart breaking to hear; many get in trouble through drugs, pills or because their boyfriends committed an offense. Many have small children at home, no financial resources, no job skills, no support system, no education, and some face very long sentences. Hold them in your heart; light a candle for them. They need you very badly.

There is a common room for the women in this unit, metal tables with attached benches, a TV set and microwave. The ceiling is very high and gives the feeling that we're underground. There are three space openings leading up to small skylights. That's our only glimpse of what's outside. I saw a small beam of sunlight this morning.

I talk about SOA all the time. Because I'm such an oddity here, many want to know what I did to get here and I tell them. They are horrified of course, when they hear what SOA graduates have done and we have some good conversations about governments and abuse of power.

And we also joke a lot, sitting around laughing, passing the time. You may be interested to know that I'm developing a southern accent. Not good enough to pass, but I'm working on it. One of my roommates says if I let my hair grow out a bit, she will braid it for me (corn rows?).

Great warm hugs to you all, wherever you are.

Nancy

You can write to Nancy at:

Nancy H. Smith #7059, Irwin County Detention Center, 132 Cotton Dr., Ocilla, GA 31774.

School of the Americas Watch Is Now Bilingual!
¡Observatorio de la Escuela de las Américas Ya Es Bilingüe!

SOA Watch "North and South" teams

Equipos "Norte y Sur" de SOA Watch

The growth of our Latin American team allows us to offer our e-mails in both English and Spanish. This is in line with SOA Watch's commitment to become a movement that integrates our diverse struggles from North to South, honoring and supporting the dual struggles against militarization and for a culture of peace and sovereignty in Latin America.

To subscribe to SOA Watch's e-mails, go to www.soaw.org, click on "Sign up for media alerts," then click on the appropriate link for English or Spanish.

Additionally, the *Boletín de los Pueblos* is a Spanish-language monthly SOA Watch publication that addresses the need for us all to be informed about the growing militarization in the Americas and the struggle against it. You can access the bulletin at <http://encuentronortesur.wordpress.com/2010/11/16/boletin/>.

NYYM Meeting for Discernment

Plainfield Meetinghouse, 225 Watchung Avenue, Plainfield NJ
Saturday, February 26, 2011, 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.

The deadline for registration for the February 26 Meeting for Discernment has been extended to February 18. Walk-ins will not be turned away, but advanced registration is requested. Our hosts want to prepare adequate food and table space for everyone!

All are invited to participate in the upcoming Meeting for Discernment, when Friends from around the yearly meeting will gather for a day of extended worship with attention to instances of Spirit-led action. Our winter Meetings for Discernment have been times when Friends who are active in their individual meetings and worship groups come together to share with and learn from one another. Friends who are active on yearly meeting committees listen and carry back to their committees a deepened understanding of the calls, cares, and concerns of the meetings and worship groups. We encourage Friends who may have been reluctant to spend a full day in worship, to try it. This is not a silent retreat. It is active engagement with the Spirit, with time to let go of all presuppositions and sink down into that which is everlasting.

The deadline for those requesting overnight hospitality and/or childcare has passed. Registration forms and more information, including the schedule for the day, are available on the NYYM Web site, and can also be requested by calling the NYYM office, 212-673-5750. Suggested donation: \$10, payable on the day to the host meeting.

Young Friends in Residence Internships

Start Dates March 1 & September 1, 2011

Young Friends in Residence (YFIR) is offering opportunities for interns, to work at the Beloved Community House in Newfield, N.Y., ten miles outside of Ithaca. Interns will live in intentional community with two or three other interns. Work includes developing youth and adult programs focused on creating a space for friends of all ages to experience, live in, and respond to Spirit. Interns are encouraged to immerse themselves in the local community and participate in the life of Perry City Monthly Meeting and the wider Quaker community. An openness to grow and deepen spiritually is required, as is experience in Quaker practices. Small monthly stipend (\$200) plus room, board, and travel expenses.

For more information, including a job description and application, see the NYYM Web site, contact Chris DeRoller at 518-794-8811, or e-mail YFIRwg@gmail.com.

YFIR is a collaborative program between New York Yearly Meeting and Perry City Monthly Meeting with significant support from Farmington-Scipio Regional Meeting.

New England Friends Home Seeks Director

The New England Friends Home, an 18-unit assisted-living facility in Hingham, MA, operated by New England Yearly Meeting is in search of a new executive director beginning April 2011. For information contact John Bach at 970-209-8346 or nefriendshome@gmail.com.

Christopher Sammond's Travel Calendar

February

- 5–6 Visit Fredonia MM, Fredonia, NY
- 10–12 FUM Board Meetings, Richmond, IN
- 15 YAFFS Search Committee, Poughkeepsie, NY
- 25–26 Meetings for Discernment, Plainfield Meetinghouse, Plainfield NJ
- 27 Visit Montclair MM, Montclair, NJ

March

- 18–19 Lead retreat, Syracuse MM
- 26 Visit Elmira MM

AVP Workshops in Rochester

Basic Workshop February 18–20, 2011

Advanced Workshop April 1–3, 2011

The Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) will hold two workshops in Rochester, February 18–20 and April 1–3, 2011, at Ascension Episcopal Church, 1360 Lake Avenue.

Facilitators and participants are voluntary. Suggested donation \$25–100. Scholarships are available; your attendance is more important than a donation. Funds are used to support food, facility use, and AVP/NY.

To register call 585-354-6844 or e-mail: pamelasusanhawkins@gmail.com. For more information on AVP please visit: www.avpusa.org/ and www.avpny.org/.

Brooklyn Meeting to Host AFSC Program on Haiti

Brooklyn Friends will host an American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) program, "Enhancing Urban Peace in Port-au-Prince, Haiti," on Sunday, February 27, 2011, at 1:00 p.m. at the Brooklyn meetinghouse. The featured speakers will be Jorge Laffitte, the AFSC regional director for the Latin America & Caribbean International Division, and Carmen Ortiz, the AFSC country representative for Haiti. The subject will be the current AFSC efforts to build the capacity among the people living in the camps to overcome emotional trauma and to prevent violent conflict.

January 12 marked the one-year anniversary of the devastating earthquake in Haiti. During this past year the reconstruction process has been slow because of the internal complications in Haiti, and their people continue to suffer daily. The AFSC continues its humanitarian efforts in this desperate country, and our speakers will inform us of their current concerns and accomplishments.

Meeting for worship is from 11 to 12, followed by the social hour with refreshments. The AFSC program will begin at 1:00 p.m. The Brooklyn Friends meetinghouse is at 110 Schermerhorn Street. Everyone is welcome.

Rightly Ordered Financial Management for Friends Meetings and Organizations

Woolman Hill

February 25–27, 2011

Facilitators: Connie Brookes, Jill Hoyenga, Betsy Muench, Melissa Stoner

How can thoughtful financial management support Friends' testimonies of integrity and simplicity? From fundraising challenges to simply having an open conversation about how finances can better express Quaker values, we all labor to find rightly ordered ways of working together on financial matters.

Among the topics: fostering open conversations among Friends about money; setting up a bookkeeping system for a small meeting; creating effective financial reports; how to read and understand financial reports and use them in Friends' discernment processes; socially responsible investing; fundraising and the management of charitable gifts; managing uneven cash flows; the use of working capital; managing restricted funds: assuring appropriate use of special-purpose funds.

Woolman Hill is in Deerfield, Mass., relatively close to the eastern part of

our Yearly Meeting. For more information: visit www.woolmanhill.org or call 413-774-3431. A flyer for the workshop is at <http://woolmanhill.org/conferences/2010-11%20files/Finances.Feb2011.pdf>

Inviting the Spirit Chatham Summit Monthly Meeting

How do you experience the Spirit?

Film, music, travel, poetry, living with integrity...these are just a few of the ways in which we open ourselves to the Spirit in our lives.

Chatham-Summit Meeting's Ministry & Counsel is again sponsoring a series of programs in which members of our Meeting share with us the Spirit that moves them. All Friends are invited to attend.

All programs will be held after meeting for worship from 1 to 2 p.m. (exception: Friday, July 15, Movie Night). A potluck meal will precede all programs; everyone is invited to bring a culinary contribution.

February 27: A Quaker Hymn Fest—Contradiction in Terms?

March 20: Does the Spirit Speak in Us?

April 17: A Quaker in a Forbidden Country

May 15: What Can You Say...About Integrity?

June 19: Poetry that Invites the Spirit

July 15: *Friendly Persuasion*—Family Movie Night

For further information contact Arlene Johnson,
arlene_johnson@verizon.net.

FOR Peace Prizes



Each year, the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) awards three peace prizes—international, national, and local—to individuals or organizations whose commitment to peace, justice, and reconciliation is recognized as extraordinary.

We need your help in making these awards. Please nominate your favorite individual or organization working for peace **by Friday, March 4.**

Make a nomination for the FOR Peace Awards today at <http://forusa.org!>

Awards are made in three categories:

- International Pfeffer Peace Prize: Honoring those around the world working for peace and justice.
- Martin Luther King Jr. Award: Recognizing those working in the United States in the tradition of Dr. King, furthering his nonviolent approach to transforming racial, social and economic injustice.
- Nyack-Area Peace Prize: Recognizing unheralded local groups and individuals in the Nyack, NY area, where FOR is headquartered.

There is no requirement that you or the nominee have any affiliation with the Fellowship of Reconciliation, so please share this announcement with your networks of peace and justice advocates!

Photo above: 2010 FOR Peace Award winners: Tashi Dolma, Tashi Rabten, Medea Benjamin, Scott Kennedy

**Celebrate Women's History Month
With the New York Yearly Meeting
Black Concerns Committee**

Helen Garay Toppins HGTpeace@optonline.net

Join us:

HarlemQuake—Saturday, March 5, 2011

10:00 a.m.—We will visit Lynette Yiadom-Boakye exhibit "Any Number of Preoccupations" at the Studio Museum in Harlem, 144 West 125th Street, New York, New York 10027. See www.studiomuseum.org for directions and additional information about the museum.

11:30 a.m.—We will tour the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, 515 Malcolm X Boulevard, New York, NY 10037. The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture is one of the world's leading research facilities devoted to the preservation of materials on global African experiences. For directions and additional information about the Schomburg see www.nypl.org/locations/schomburg.

12:30 p.m.—Lunch in Harlem

2:00–4:00 p.m.—A celebration of African American Women:

Celebrating Women's History

18th-Century African American Women in the Quaker Orbit

A conversation with Donna McDaniel and Vanessa Julye, coauthors of *Fit for Freedom, Not for Friendship: Quakers, African Americans and the Myth*

of Racial Justice, at Countee Cullen Branch Library, 104 W 136th St., New York, NY.



There is a common misconception that Friends' belief in equality meant that most Quakers assisted fugitives and were active abolitionists. While there have been Friends—a large number of them women—committed to ending injustices from the 17th Century on, *Fit for Freedom, Not for Friendship* reveals that racism has been as insidious, complex, and pervasive among Friends as it has been in the European American population. In keeping with Women's History Month, the authors will lift up Quaker women and those who traveled in "the Quaker orbit" as models even centuries later. They believe the truth of our past will aid us in creating the diverse, inclusive community we pray for in our future.

Sunday, March 6—After worshipping with Manhattan and 15th Street Meetings there will be a potluck for Vanessa and Donna followed by their presentation "The Story Continues" at 1:15 p.m. See the NYYM Web site for location and times of worship.

Fit for Freedom is available from QuakerBooks of FGC, 800-966-4556; www.quakerbooks.org. See also www.fitforfreedom.org.

Photo above: Donna McDaniel and Vanessa Julye.

1st Annual Midwinter Gathering: Quaker Healers

March 4–5, 2011, Mohawk Valley Meeting

What better way to help survive the rest of winter than with a chance to get together to share good food and good company and exchange healing work and ideas?

Do you have training or experience in a healing modality?

Are you a Friend (member or attender)?

Do you desire further connection and opportunity to share leadings/knowledge?

Consider yourself invited to join us for Friday night and Saturday at Mohawk Valley Meeting in Clinton, NY. Potluck meals beginning 7:00 p.m. Friday and ending with Saturday supper. Hospitality provided by Mohawk Valley Meeting Friends. \$20.00 donation appreciated, to cover costs.

RSVP. Limited Space Available

Registration and more information: Buffy Curtis, 508-566-6639,
bufhughtp@gmail.com; or Kathy Slattery, 716-988-5157,
kathyslattery62@gmail.com

Come One, Come All!
Warm the Winter!

Powell House Events

Winter Wonderland: A Sojourning Opportunity March 4–6 *and* March 25–27, 2011

Have you ever thought about sojourning in a Winter Wonderland in the country by yourself, with your family, and/or your friends? Have you ever thought of using Powell House as a bed-and-breakfast?

Here is your opportunity!

Powell House is offering two weekends in March for just that. At the moment we have lots of snow and ice on the pond. There is enough space to go sledding, ice-skating, snowshoeing, and cross-country skiing, or any other winter-related activity. However, if you want to spread your wings a little, there are also several ski resorts and other local events nearby—even some that don't require having snow! We'll have info on what they are and how to get to them when you arrive. And just in case you're wondering, *this* bed-and-breakfast will also include lunch, dinner, and snacks.

Please come and take advantage of the last of the snow, the warmth of the people, and the beauty of Powell House.

Upcoming Events

Mar 11–13, Peace Within, Goodness Throughout (John Calvi)

March 11–13 Grades 6–7

March 18–20 Alternatives to Violence Project: Basic Workshop

March 25–27 Winter Wonderland

March 25–27 Grades 10–12

April 3–4 Statewide Midwives Retreat

April 8–10 Loaves and Fish—A Template for Empowered Living (Jan Wood)

April 8–10 Grades 8–9

April 11–14 NE/NYYM Pastors' Retreat

April 15–17 Women's Witnesses to Peace and Justice (Sarah Mandolang and Margaret Lechner)

April 22–24 Work Weekend/Messiah Sing (both buildings)

April 29–May 1 FTF VII: Living in the Power (Callid and Kristina Keefe-Perry)

For more information go to www.powellhouse.org; Powell House, 524 Pitt Hall Rd., Old Chatham NY 12136; 518-794-8811; info@powellhouse.org.

ARCH Visitor Training

March 10–12, 2011
Camp Linwood, Sandyston, N.J.

Aging Resources Consultation and Help (ARCH) will conduct a midweek training session for Friends interested in reaching out with practical as well as spiritual/pastoral care to persons over 60 or with a disability. For further information see the calendar at www.nyym.org.

Also: See the ARCH report for 2010 at www.nyym.org, under Organization > Committees.

FWCC 2011 Annual Meeting

Philadelphia, March 17 & 18, 2011

Friends Center is the location for this year's abbreviated Annual Meeting on Thursday and Friday, March 17 and 18. It will be followed by "Being Salt and Light: Friends Living the Kingdom of God in a Broken World," a gathering on the theme of the 2012 World Conference of Friends. All Friends are invited to both events.

Registration is now open for both the Annual Meeting and the Salt and Light event. For more information and to register for the Annual Meeting go to <http://fwccamericas.org/> or call 215-241-7250.

FWCC World Conference Applications Being Accepted

The sixth World Conference of Friends will be held near Nakuru, Kenya, April 17–25, 2012. Around 1,000 Friends will gather on the campus of Kabarak University to consider the theme "Being Salt and Light: Friends Living the Kingdom of God in a Broken World."

The World Office of Friends World Committee on Consultation (FWCC) is now receiving applications for open places at the Conference. You can apply online at www.saltandlight2012.org/openplaces.html.

FWCC's Web site describes their mission as "Answering God's call to

universal love, FWCC brings Friends of varying traditions and cultural experiences together in worship, communications, and consultation, to express our common heritage and our Quaker message to the world.”

The clerk of NYYM’s FWCC Committee is Judy Inskeep. Her contact information is in the *Yearbook*.

Read more about the World Conference at www.saltandlight2012.org/.

**May *Spark*: Envisioning the Future of Quakerism
You are invited to submit articles**

Since its beginnings Quakerism has evolved and changed. Continuing revelation leaves the Quaker approach to spiritual growth open to new directions. How is Quakerism responding (or failing to respond) to the multiple ecological, economic, technological, and social changes occurring around us? What aspects of Quakerism, its tools, and its practices have a special role in the emerging new realities? Send in your visions, leadings, thoughts, concerns, prophecies, suggestions, discernment about Quakers as a peculiar people, and/or New York Yearly Meeting specifically, in the coming years and decades.

Articles should be e-mailed to paul@nzym.org *and* to the coordinators, Jens Braun, sjbraun@taconic.net, and Christopher Sammond, nzym.gensec@gmail.com by April 1. Alternatively, you may mail your submissions to Paul Busby, 15 Rutherford Pl., New York NY 10003.

For questions or clarifications please contact Jens Braun at 518-392-0891; sjbraun@taconic.net.

Long Island Quarterly Meeting

April 24, 2011

Conscience Bay Meeting

As part of Long Island Quarter’s two-year program to share how the Light is moving within each monthly meeting, Conscience Bay Friends, as the host meeting, will be sharing reflections on the spiritual life of their meeting as visiting Friends witness and participate. Contact Joanna Komoska, 631-283-3981 or jkomoska@optonline.net.

All Friends Regional Meeting

May 1, 2010

Montclair Meeting

(Note change in date from April 24)

Business meeting 9:30 a.m. As part of Earthcare Witness, and in anticipation of spring planting, Friends will tour Montclair Friend Pat Kenschaft's year-round vegetable garden at 1:30 p.m. All welcome. Contact Alice Coulombe at aa.lleenn@verizon.net.

JYM Volunteers Needed for Summer Sessions

Volunteers are needed to work with the youth of NYYM (grades K–12) at Junior Yearly Meeting (JYM) at Summer Sessions. Volunteers plan and carry out a program, prepared at the JYM Planning Weekend, June 17–19, at Powell House, which is mandatory. The JYM program runs from 9:00 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. Monday through Friday during Summer Sessions. JYM volunteers also provide afternoon and evening childcare (referred to as "PM Childcare"), for children through age 10, during committee and session times Monday–Friday. The commitment includes attending the JYM Planning Weekend in June, a 7:00 a.m. meeting each day at Silver Bay, and the morning JYM program (or PM Childcare) each day. Financial assistance will be discussed at the JYM planning weekend.

If interested, please ASAP contact Miriam McGiver, coordinator, mmcgiver@nycap.rr.com, or Ginny Haines, coordinator, VirginiaIsabelle@gmail.com.

Quaker United Nations Summer School

July 3–15, 2011, Geneva, Switzerland

For people with an active interest in international affairs: Would you like to study the UN at first hand? Do you want to meet people from all over the world? The Summer School aims to provide an introduction to the work of the United Nations.

In previous years it has been especially attractive to people who have recently completed higher-education studies.

Application packs available from www.quaker.org.uk or Helen Bradford (QUNSS), QPSW, Friends House, Euston Road, London, NW1 2BJ, England; helenb@quaker.org.uk. Deadline for applications is **March 14, 2011**.

Friends General Conference Gathering
"Meeting at the Center"

July 3–9, 2011

Grinnell College, Grinnell, Iowa

Each year about 1,500 Quakers (mostly from the unprogrammed, liberal tradition) spend a week together on a college campus at different sites around the US and occasionally Canada. Attenders range from newborns to elders in their 90s.

The 2011 Gathering will be from July 3–9 at Grinnell College in Grinnell, Iowa. The theme will be "Meeting at the Center."

The Gathering features Spirit-led programming for children, a dynamic high school program, and opportunities for Friends with common interests to gather. Choose from a wide variety of small, week-long workshops such as Quilting, Racism, Lobbying, Truth, Clerking, Bible, Eldership, and Dancing in the Light.

The housing options include campus dorms (with and without air conditioning), on-campus camping in a central location, or nearby hotels. Scholarships and volunteer work grants are available. Registration by April 1 gives priority consideration for financial assistance.

Further information is available at www.fgcquaker.org or from FGC, 1216 Arch St. #2B, Philadelphia PA 19107; 215-561-1700.

New General Secretary for FGC

Sue Regen, presiding clerk, FGC

Rich Van Dellen, clerk, General Secretary Search Committee

We announce with great pleasure the appointment of Barry Crossno as the next general secretary of Friends General Conference (FGC). His service will begin in mid July when Bruce Birchard retires after 19 years as general secretary.

Barry brings a deeply committed spiritual discipline, as well as experience in fundraising, information technology, and management from a variety of organizations, both corporate and nonprofit. The Search Committee thought his strengths plus an emphasis on a collaborative approach fit well with FGC's volunteer dependent organization with paid staff as servant leaders to help carry out the work.

Barry is a member of Dallas Friends Meeting and is currently working and

worshipping at Pendle Hill. The FGC Web site has more information on Barry: an announcement posted the weekend of January 28–29 and a subsequent interview with Barry. We encourage everyone to view these. www.fgcquaker.org.

AFSC Work against Gun Violence

Deanna Tilley, coordinator, Youth and Community Violence Prevention Project

Gun violence is taking a huge toll on our society. While we continue to hold in the Light the families and friends of those who died and for the recovery of those injured, we must express our faith and concern through action. The Youth and Community Violence Prevention Project of the American Friends Service Committee's (AFSC) New York Metropolitan Regional Office works with New York City community partners, primarily in Crown Heights, Harlem, and Washington Heights.

We enjoy a formal partnership with New Yorkers against Gun Violence (NYAGV; www.nyagv.org) in the implementation of the Campaign to Reduce Demand for Illegal Guns in New York City. With NYAGV we are building a coalition of 50–100 young people, ages 15–24, to be peer educators and community advocates on gun related policy discussions, and increasing the capacity of 30–40 community based activists and organizations to influence policy initiatives and sensible gun legislation.

For further information contact Deanna Tilley, 212-598-0964; dtalley@afsc.org.

New Executive Director for *Friends Journal*

Janet Ross, clerk, Board of Trustees, Friends Publishing Corporation

The Board of Trustees of Friends Publishing Corporation is pleased to announce the appointment of Gabriel Ehri as executive director designate, as of March 1, and as executive director on July 1, 2011.

Gabe has a strong vision for the future of *Friends Journal*. He has a deep and broad understanding of new communications media as well as a passion for traditional magazine and book publishing.

Gabriel shares the board's vision of Friends Publishing Corporation's continued growth into a comprehensive communications organization that uses multiple media to reach broader audiences—young Friends, Friends from every yearly meeting, religious seekers, and sympathetic fellow travelers. This outreach will include use of new media and the solicitation

and development of content that speaks effectively to our condition.

Friends Journal is on the Web at www.friendsjournal.org.

Update on the Ramazani Family from Buffalo Meeting

Submitted by Robin Whitely, Chatham-Summit Meeting

Friends read in January *Spark* about the nine-member Ramazani family from the Congo who have been taken under the wings of Buffalo Friends. Efforts to introduce the family to the wider Quaker family began with a January 9 "Conversation" at Buffalo Meeting, where Ndanga Ramazani shared a prepared statement describing what his family had to endure during the conflicts in the Congo and Burundi and in the refugee camps in Kenya. On January 16, both Ndanga and his wife, Feza, attended Farmington-Scipio Regional Meeting Winter Gathering. And, "if way opens," says Rodney Pierce, clerk of Buffalo Meeting, "we would like to see the Ramazani family attend Summer Sessions at Lake George."

Ndanga is enrolled in spring courses at Erie Community College to complete an undergraduate degree, and the children are attending three different schools, receiving special tutoring, and attending the Boys and Girls Club after school hours. The Ramazanis' gratitude for Friends' help is expressed in these words from Ndanga's statement: "By the Divine will of God, we found our lovely friends of Buffalo Monthly Meeting, who have warmly welcomed us to worship with them. My family and I enjoy the Quaker meeting, and thank God for being in this good family of God's children through the shedding blood of Jesus Christ. We love and enjoy all members of Buffalo Meeting."

Buffalo Friends deeply appreciate the inquiries and support of Friends from throughout NYYM. Contact Rodney Pierce, sparce7@verizon.net.

Epistle from "If God is Love, What is Sex?"

10th to 12th Grades

Powell House

February 4–6, 2011

Sex. A word we were taught by today's society to be taboo. God. A word that means something different to everyone. Love. A word that is universal. Something which so many of us seek to find and hold in our lives. These were the topics of this weekend: what they meant, how they felt, how they fit together and the importance of discussing them.

We arrived to welcoming open arms of friends and facilitators. Ready to dive into the challenging and important discussions and activities we would soon face. And to boldly go where no youth conference has gone before—at least in recent memory.

After a delicious dinner, we settled into session and talked about relationships and what they mean to us. We then divided into small groups and took on the roles of each weekend topic: Sex, Love and God. We discussed why we (Sex, God, Love) exist. What we're here for. How we're experienced by humans. If we're needed and what would happen if we weren't present. This exercise turned out to be more difficult than expected.

Later that night we settled into "News of Me." Out of the silence we listened to each other's tales of triumph and trouble (try saying that five times fast).

After breakfast on Saturday, we split the group by gender and talked about what attracted us to others and what we wanted in a relationship. We tried identifying what the other gender was looking for. We then attempted to write personal ads extolling our virtues and specifying what we were looking for. Another hard to do exercise it turns out. We shared our insights with the larger mixed group, surprised in a good way by some of what we learned.

Next was a hearty lunch followed by same gender group discussions where we talked about our opinions, experiences, fears and feelings of sex and what it means to us. Unfortunately time encroached and work called. We went off to Godly work projects (snow removal), Lovely work projects (exploring the mysteries of the art and game closets) and Sexy work projects (making cinnamon rolls, deviling eggs and dipping pretzels in chocolate).

Free time followed before a much-needed three-way massage and self-space. A smooth transition into the evening began with a delicious dinner and a rousing game of Four on a Couch. Cabaret was fabulous with improv games like bus "sex" (bus stop with a twist) and songs of consensual sex. While cabaret was racier than usual, it was done tastefully and tenderly – poking fun at the humanity and divinity that sex can highlight.

We scurried off to bed, ready to brave the new day and the things it would bring. Session the next morning included a terrifying game of The Wave that morphed into Primate Bellows. We began worship with songs and a

quote from Psalms 46:10 *Harpu u'de'u ki-anokhi Elohim*. Often translated as "Be still and know that I am God" Chris shared a weighty Friend's rendition "Shut up and make love to me" and then her own version based on the original meaning of the Hebrew words "Let go and experience me."

This weekend we did let go and experience meaningful conversations and much fun around topics that are often difficult to talk about. We never did formally answer the question "If God is Love, What is Sex?" Maybe next time.

Old Chatham Meeting Update on the Meetinghouse Project

Spee Braun, clerk, OCMM Meetinghouse Committee

Should you travel to Powell House this year, look for Old Chatham Meeting's new meetinghouse in the meadow across the way. In October 2008, we purchased the nine-acre parcel, which was part of the original Powell family's estate. At a joyful gathering in August 2010, we broke ground for the building.

We wish to build a Meetinghouse that will symbolize our desire to live faithful and fruitful lives, and to carry out a strong witness for peace and justice in our troubled world. (*Monthly Meeting minute from April 2001*)

For some time, Old Chatham Meeting held a strong leading to have a meetinghouse. This leading seemed to arise from the ground of our commitment to enhance the spiritual life of our community and ourselves as individuals. We felt a compelling need to provide better space for our First Day schoolers, to have a room dedicated to worship, and to be more visible and easily found by members of the local community. Moreover, as activities in our Meeting and at Powell House grew, the competing demands for the library space we use at Powell

House could not always be accommodated.

With a successful fundraising push in spring 2010, we were able to order the timber frame and line up contractors for fall 2010. The foundation was poured in September, the frame was



erected in October, and then the rush was on to enclose the building fully before the winter set in. We sighed with relief when during the last week of December, despite frigid weather, the contractor installed the windows and doors to complete that phase of construction.

We hope that this space will serve not only our Meeting, but Friends visiting Powell House, Friends of New York Yearly Meeting, and other groups whose work is leading to a stronger community and a more God-centered, peaceful, and just world.

(Monthly Meeting minute from April 2001)

Our path has required frequent discernment and a good amount of faith. This will continue as we turn the meetinghouse shell into a finished building, install septic system and well, and finish the curb cut, driveway, and parking lot. While the snows continue, we are exploring ways to refill our coffers. We have received amazing gifts of time, skills, and money (and patience) from Friends in the Meeting, and financial support from friends in the Old Chatham area and from individual Quakers in New York Yearly Meeting and beyond.

We need to keep raising large amounts of money and keep mobilizing the many people in the Meeting with construction skills, as well as those who provide food, take pictures, and clean up the work site. Look for announcements on how you, too, can join in and help Old Chatham Monthly Meeting create this house of worship.

Features of Old Chatham's New Meetinghouse

- Meeting room that seats 80 people comfortably
- two classrooms for First Day school and childcare
- Greeting room and kitchen
- Convenient access to Powell House
- Flexibility of function
- Full accessibility
- Energy efficiency

Photo above: Old Chatham's meetinghouse under construction. See www.oldchathamquakers.org/new-meetinghouse.html for more pictures.

A Closer Walk with Thee
3rd Annual Northeastern Christ-Centered Friends Gathering
for both the committed and the curious

Powell House

Labor Day Weekend, September 2–5, 2011

This third annual gathering of Christ-centered Friends from the Northeast at Powell House reaffirms our original epistle from our 2009 gathering:

“Knowing that language and doctrinal notions have caused unnecessary divisions among people of faith, we have no desire to add to these, but simply to stand with Jesus Christ at an open door, where He offers His light and love.” Our second gathering, 2010, called us to “be Living Epistles of Christ” as written in 2 Corinthians 3:2–3.

Fee: \$200. For campers on the grounds: \$100.

For more information contact Herb Lape, Planning Committee clerk:
lapeherb@gmail.com. To register for this or any Powell House conference,
go to www.powellhouse.org/.