

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

***InfoShare***

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**Friends Are Invited to Join New Bronx Worship Group**

Friends are exploring the possibility of creating a worship group in the Bronx, New York City. If you are interested in being a part of the Bronx worship group please contact Helen Garay Toppins, in the New York Yearly Meeting office at office@nyym.org, call 212-673-5750, or write to NYYM, 15 Rutherford Pl., New York NY 10003. The Advancement Committee and Yearly Meeting staff are always ready to help Friends set up new worship groups.

**Ticonderoga Worship Group Forming**

Old Chatham Monthly Meeting has approved having Ticonderoga Worship Group under its care. Old Chatham approved the following:

Two Friends who live in Ticonderoga, New York, and attend Middlebury, Vermont, Monthly Meeting are forming a worship group and request that Old Chatham Monthly Meeting take the worship group under its care. They are also asking Middlebury Monthly Meeting to take them under its care. They feel called to offer Quaker worship to their community, though there is not yet a larger group of worshippers. Their expectations for our support are in the realm of visiting with them regularly (kids included), advice, and holding them in the Light.

We feel that supporting this new worship group is an important form of outreach, and one that our meeting is spiritually strong enough to take on. We agree to take the Ticonderoga Worship Group under the care of Old Chatham Monthly Meeting. At the same time we should not lose sight of the needs of Hudson Meeting, a smaller meeting closer to us.

Further information will be published as it becomes available.

## ***Faith and Practice* CD Coming**

The NYYM Communications Committee is proceeding with plans to produce a CD version of NYYM's *Faith and Practice*. If you are interested in having our book of discipline on CD, please sign the sign-up sheet at Representative Meeting or e-mail [office@nyym.org](mailto:office@nyym.org) to let us know.

## **Query for State of Society Report**

Dear Friends,

Once again, it is time for the Coordinating Committee for Ministry and Counsel to ask you consider the spiritual state of your meeting. We invite you to look back over the year 2005, focusing on your meeting and Friends who are part of your meeting community. This query may help you in your deliberations:

**In what ways does your meeting for worship reflect the presence of Spirit working in your lives?**

Please include any other information that you feel would be useful for the Yearly Meeting to know about your activities, joys and concerns.

Guidance for those seeking information about writing a State of the Meeting report can be found in *Faith and Practice*, which says: "the monthly meeting on ministry and counsel should appoint one or more of its members to prepare and present a report on the spiritual condition of the meeting. This should be reviewed in turn by ministry and counsel and by the meeting for business of the monthly meeting."

Whatever the process, when the monthly meeting has approved the report, the clerk should forward the report to the Yearly Meeting office by Wednesday, February 15, 2006. If possible, send it both electronically to [office@nyym.org](mailto:office@nyym.org) and by hard copy to New York Yearly Meeting, 15 Rutherford Pl., New York NY 10003.

If you have questions, you may contact any member of the NYYM Coordinating Committee for Ministry and Counsel or someone from your regional ministry and counsel.

—*Deborah Wood, for CCM&C*

## **Retreat: Nurturing Our Yearly Meeting, Nurturing Our Selves**

It isn't too late to register for Nurturing Our Yearly Meeting, Nurturing Our Selves. This is NYYM's Nurture Coordinating Committee intergenerational retreat, open to all Friends and friends! The retreat is at Powell House, December 16–18, 2005.

Nur-ture v. 1. To feed : nourish. 2. To train or educate.  
3. To help grow or develop : cultivate.

In April 2005, the Nurture Coordinating Committee (NCC) held a mini-retreat at Oakwood Friends School. In response to the success and excitement of that time we spent together—and clear messages to "do it again!"—the NCC is now holding a weekend-long retreat at Powell House.

During this time, we will focus on the following issues which rose up during the mini-retreat: nurturing individual leadings, nurturing monthly meetings, nurturing the children of NYYM—all under the umbrella of rethinking the structure of our yearly meeting and advancing the growth of the Religious Society of Friends.

We will indeed look for the life and spirit of our yearly meeting and find ways to nourish, educate, and cultivate our selves, our faith and our yearly meeting.

Ann Davidson, director of NYYM's Powell House Conference and Retreat Center, is offering a very special price to us—\$50 for adults & youth, \$25 for commuters & young children. Let us take advantage of this wonderful offer and pack Pitt Hall!

This retreat is being facilitated by Melanie-Claire Mallison, clerk of the Nurture Coordinating Committee and member of Ithaca Monthly Meeting, who has many ideas of what we all could be doing to nurture Quakerism in our own backyard and beyond. Feel free to contact her at [mallison@cnf.cornell.edu](mailto:mallison@cnf.cornell.edu) or 607-272-1108.

To register, please go on the web at [www.powellhouse.org](http://www.powellhouse.org) or contact Powell House at 518-794-8811.

## **Workshop Retreat for Small Meetings and Worship Groups Powell House March 10–12, 2006.**

Each meeting or worship group, no matter how small, can expand into the

wider community and function as a radiant beam of light. It can become a "beacon to inquiring minds," welcoming inquiry as to Quakers' existence and a way into the broader functioning of Quaker ministry, activities, and purpose in the world.

The Advancement Committee is committed to creating a harmonious unity of all the living strands of our community, namely those men, women, and entire families who are an integral source of energy within the small meeting and worship group. We witness how this energy can then spread and multiply, bearing up the Yearly Meeting and its diverse body of membership in an upward spiral in the sharing of the Spirit's gifts we need to embrace. Therefore, we visualize the retreat as a significant venture, a spiritual outpost. We see it as a gathering of Friends who take seriously the nurturing of Friends' institutions including the infrastructure that nurtures us—our meetinghouses, schools, and Powell House.

In that spirit of love we hold and realize the components of small meetings and worship groups and the need to nurture and support their efforts to expand. This is the purpose of the planned retreat. It is hoped that people from most smaller meetings and worship groups will attend, as a gathering of a Great People, invoking the visions of George Fox.

The facilitators are: Denise Sherman of Bulls Head-Oswego Meeting and Carol Holmes of Brooklyn Meeting.

To register contact Powell House, 518-794-8811; [www.powellhouse.org](http://www.powellhouse.org). The fee is \$180 per adult, \$90 per child, \$45 per infant. Payment may be made by check or credit card. Powell House offers a \$40 discount to first timers. In addition, one \$50 voucher to help cover the retreat cost will be provided by the Advancement Committee to small meetings and worship groups in the Yearly Meeting.

—*Advancement Committee*

### **AFSC Seeks Immigrant Detention Coordinator**

The AFSC New York Metropolitan Immigrant Rights Program, based in Newark, N.J., seeks an individual to enhance current program focus on policies and conditions of immigrant detention. This staff member will: provide leadership training to immigrant communities; develop human rights committees; and

create a documentation project that brings regional and national attention to hardships caused by immigration detention.

Qualifications include familiarity with current immigration issues, local demographics and concerns and characteristics of detained individuals, asylum seekers, refugees, and traumatized individuals. In addition candidate should be trained in popular education methodologies and community organizing principles. Good interpersonal skills are needed, as well as a demonstrated ability to plan creatively and strategically and to envision and implement programs. Second language and computer literacy required. Strong written and oral communication skills and an ability to work effectively and comfortably with Quaker principles are essential.

For information: [www.afsc.org](http://www.afsc.org) or [www.idealists.org/job/158882-124](http://www.idealists.org/job/158882-124).

Competitive salary, excellent benefits. Cover letter and resume to [NYMRORecruit@afsc.org](mailto:NYMRORecruit@afsc.org) or to Anne Wright, AFSC/NYMRO, 15 Rutherford Pl., New York NY 10003 by 3 P.M. December 30, 2005. No calls, please.

—*Anne E. Wright, assistant to the regional director, AFSC/NYMRO;*  
<http://afsc.org/nymetro>.

### **Is Prison Ministry for You?**

Many Friends who are involved with Prison Ministry are asked, "Why prison ministry?"

Quaker prison ministry is a tradition as old as our Peace Testimony and has been around just about as long as there have been Quakers. Perhaps this tradition began and continues because of our strong conviction that there is that of the Divine in each of us.

Through our outreach and ministry we have been privileged to see many exceptional imprisoned people who have overcome their anger and antisocial behavior and metamorphosed into productive, helpful, and spiritual individuals.

Friends who come into the prisons strive to offer an emotionally safe place (an actual place, as well as psychological environment) for people in prison to meet for a few hours a week. Here they begin to lower their guard, learn to become less angry and frustrated, and begin to trust us and then, in turn, other inmate members of the group. The friendships that develop in these worship groups carry over into their daily lives and make life a little easier for them all week

long. And, being Quakers, we naturally treat them with love and respect, which goes a long way toward making them feel once again to be worthy of respect.

Now the question again, Why prison ministry? Is it a sacrifice to spend hours of our precious weekend time with people in prison?

Most of us will probably tell you that we feel truly privileged and inspired to be able to meet and get to know the exceptional people who populate our worship groups. These are people who grew up in the worst circumstances you can imagine. These are people who have transformed themselves into the motivated, caring human beings we are privileged to know!

Many of us will also mention the quality of the silent worship in our prison worship groups. Compared to our monthly meetings, the silence in these smaller meetings often seems more intimate and more intense.

And then there are Friends who feel a spiritual lift that comes with getting to know and be known by the "others" of our society; they want to follow Jesus' teachings with regard to how people should treat the poor and the outcasts, which include the injunction to visit them in prison.

The history of Friends includes a long tradition of prison ministry, and we have the satisfaction of knowing that we are helping to build loving and caring communities within our prisons. Because we go cheerfully throughout the world spreading the message of Friends, here we are also bringing some small measure of comfort and peace and friendship to some very exceptional and deserving people. At the same time, we're experiencing renewed spiritual growth of our own and the strong bonds of fellowship that come from working together in a cause that has value to all of us.

So, Friend, what are you waiting for? Come and join us!

—*Bill Bortree, clerk, Purchase Quarter Prison Ministry*

### **A Faith-Based Perspective on Nonviolence**

Donald Badgley of Poughkeepsie Monthly Meeting will be the featured speaker for the Justice for All Speakers Forum December 11, 2005, at 4:00 p.m., speaking on the topic A Faith-Based Perspective on War and Nonviolence (and the Need to Protect Our Children). The event will be at St. Margaret's Episcopal Church, East Elm Ave. and Old Albany Post Rd., Staatsburg (north Hyde Park) NY 12580.

Saint Margaret's sponsors the Speakers Forum "to raise awareness about the intimate and necessary connection between the Judeo-Christian tradition and action on behalf of justice for the poor, the marginalized, the disenfranchised and the oppressed both in our nation and in our world."

Further information: 845-889-4181.

### **Friends Ministers' Conference, November 2006**

The next national Friends Ministers' Conference will be held November 17–20, 2006, at the Adam's Mark Hotel in San Antonio, Texas. The theme will be The Living Christ Today: Expressed to and through Friends. This is still quite a way off, but pastors and other public and recorded ministers can start planning now.

### **Connecticut Friends School Adopts a Spot**

Connecticut Friends School's Maples class (K–1) has "Adopted a Spot" as a service project. They have been planting a garden in Mathews Park in Norwalk and, while the planting is under way, the Maples are asking for donations of perennials, seeds, and bulbs to include as they create this garden from scratch.

Gardeners, as you thin and divide in your own gardens, please keep this ambitious project in mind and, of course, please stop by and visit the garden. Donations can be dropped off at Hastings Hall.

For further information contact Sean Higgins, Connecticut Friends School, 317a New Canaan Rd., Wilton CT 06897; 203-762-9860; Sean@CTFriendsSchool.org; www.CTFriendsSchool.org.

### **Quaker Youth Speak Out Listening Project**

"The Quake that Rocked the Midwest: Quaker Youth Speak Out Listening Project" is now available with audio and flash presentations on the *Friends Journal* Web site. Please visit [www.friendsjournal.org/quake/index.html](http://www.friendsjournal.org/quake/index.html) to read and listen to this new multimedia piece on youth and Quakerism.

"This project is unique in that you will hear from Quaker youth, in their own voices, their thoughts about Quakerism," said Breeze (Luetke-Stahlman) Richardson, producer of the project. "It is the only project of its kind publicly available and offers listeners both within the Quaker community and in society

at large the opportunity to learn about our faith from those who are our future." Listen and learn from 20 young Friends from across the U.S. as they talk about their thoughts on: Pacifism, Being a Quaker and Liberal, Lifestyle and Life Choices, the Quakerism of Young Friends, and much more. The Web site also gives readers an opportunity to give their opinions and thoughts on being young Friends.

"The Quake that Rocked the Midwest" is remarkably different from the regular content on *Friends Journal's* web site, [www.friendsjournal.org](http://www.friendsjournal.org), which captures the look and feel of the printed magazine. "We wanted lively and colorful web pages for youth that will speak to them," said Susan Corson-Finnerty, publisher and executive editor. "It is our hope that Quaker youth will use these pages to express their personal faith and talk about their experiences as Quakers."

For further information contact Anita Gutierrez at *Friends Journal*, 215-563-8629.

### **Review: *Hallelujah: The Poetry of Classic Hymns***

Celestial Arts has published a delightful book, *Hallelujah: The Poetry of Classic Hymns*, edited by Anna Marlis Burgard. The book provides the text for a large number of well-known hymns by such people as Charles Wesley, Fanny Crosby, Thomas A. Dorsey, Alfred, Lord Tennyson, Henry van Dyke, and Edna St. Vincent Millay, as well as many others. Each hymn is preceded by a scripture reference, and a note about the author follows each one. Here you will find *all* the words to these songs, often including stanzas that do not appear in most hymnals.

The illustrations by Richard Krepel provide a very nice complement to the words.

*Hallelujah* sells for \$19.95. Celestial Arts is an imprint of Ten Speed Press, [www.tenspeed.com](http://www.tenspeed.com).

### **What is the Yearly Meeting For?**

The Yearly Meeting needs to be in conversation about how the organization that supports it can best do its work. Are we doing the right things? Do the current priorities address the needs of the Yearly Meeting at this time? How can we move toward a common vision for this part of the Religious Society of Friends? If we are to address these questions adequately, we need to have a

clear sense of where we are at this point in time. Without a clear sense of where we are starting from, seeking together in a grounded fashion becomes very difficult, if not impossible.

In my first months here, I visited monthly meetings and often asked: "What is the Yearly Meeting for?" (In this query, I made no distinction between the entire Yearly Meeting, the organization that seeks to support it, or the annual session of business. Responses usually touched on all three.) I was frequently surprised at how little Friends knew about what the Yearly Meeting organization actually does. Since that period of initial traveling, I have heard many exchanges where a lack of understanding of what the Yearly Meeting organization does seemed to be part of why resolution was difficult.

I believe that the Yearly Meeting as an organization exists to serve the monthly, quarterly, and regional meetings, and worship groups, to help them to do what they do not have the resources to do by themselves. It does this by supporting individuals in their leadings, by offering direct support to worship groups and monthly, quarterly, and regional meetings, and by representing the Yearly Meeting body to the wider body of Friends and to the world at large.

### **Supporting Individuals in Their Leadings:**

This is obviously work best suited to an individual's monthly meeting or worship group. However, there are some important ways in which the Yearly Meeting also supports individuals.

When only one Friend in a monthly meeting feels led to pursue a particular type of ministry in the world, be it working in prisons, peace witness, tax witness, addressing racism, etc., it can feel isolating and frustrating to carry such a concern alone. By joining with other like-minded Friends on a Yearly Meeting committee, Friends have found much needed support in being faithful to their leadings.

The Yearly Meeting also provides funds, mostly from endowed bequests, to help individuals grow more fully into their gifts. Friends have used these funds to go to the School of the Spirit, to international conferences, to clerking workshops at Powell House or Pendle Hill, and to Friends schools.

The Yearly Meeting annual session also provides Friends with an opportunity to experience worship and worship for business at a depth not afforded by most monthly meetings. In attending Northern YM, I found this an invaluable aid to my growth in understanding Friends' faith and practice, and Friends in New

York Yearly Meeting report benefiting in similar ways. These individuals then go back to enrich the lives of their monthly meetings and worship groups.

### **Directly Supporting Monthly Meetings and Worship Groups:**

The most obvious way that the Yearly Meeting supports our worshipping communities is through visitation. The general secretary, the administrative secretary, Friends traveling under the auspices of Ministry and Counsel Coordinating Committee, the Conflict Transformation Committee, and Friends from the Advancement Committee all are visiting monthly meetings and worship groups. These Friends provide a wide variety of support, ranging from the ministry of presence of a seasoned Friend at worship to leading workshops and retreats to helping a meeting with its conflict to supporting a meeting in its efforts to grow. This type of support has recently been expanded and should continue to expand.

The Yearly Meeting places special emphasis on small monthly meetings and existing, new, or emerging worship groups, for both visitation and staff time. Furthermore, the Advancement Committee provides a Powell House retreat each year devoted to nurturing Friends from these groups in hopes that this support will enrich these smaller communities. The Advancement Committee also provides a variety of written resources for all monthly meetings, as well as logistical and some financial support for new worship groups.

It is my hope that *Spark* will continue to move in a direction that focuses on issues directly affecting our monthly meetings and worship groups. The new series of topical issues is an attempt to use *Spark* in that way, addressing the concerns that are heard about most frequently in visitation.

### **Representing the Yearly Meeting:**

It is important to many Friends that we have a prominent voice in the world. Individual witness has power, and our collective voice has a different kind of power. When the Yearly Meeting as a body is seen as supporting a particular cause, this has a significant impact in the political and social arena. Some recent examples of this would be when our clerk spoke at public hearings on the death penalty and the peace tax fund. She has also served to give us a significant voice in the New York Council of Churches, which has brought collective ecumenical concerns regarding the war in Iraq and parole justice to our elected officials, state and national.

As your general secretary, I have been representing this Yearly Meeting by

serving on the selection committee for a new FUM North American Ministries secretary. I have been able to represent the rich theological and cultural diversity of our Yearly Meeting, seeking to ensure that whoever fills this vacancy would be able to address the needs of the broad range of FUM-affiliated Friends in NYYM.

I have also represented us twice in the annual Secretaries and Superintendents Retreat, where heads of staff from FGC, FUM, and EFI yearly meetings, as well as from international Friends service organizations such as the FWCC and AFSC, gather to support each other and to labor over issues confronting us in our different perspectives as Friends. I have found myself called on to serve as a moderating influence on the issue of the full inclusion of gay and lesbian Friends, an issue that is threatening to seriously divide our Religious Society at this time.

The Yearly Meeting is also the connection through which Friends represent us on FGC's Central Committee, FUM's General Board, AFSC's Corporation, FWCC and FCNL's boards, etc. If we are to have a voice in the Quaker world, we will need to send representatives. And if we wish to have a nominating process in which the means of travel is not a limiting factor, we will need to offer financial support for this representation.

This is my subjective response to how the Yearly Meeting organization is fulfilling its charge to serve the body of the Yearly Meeting. I have skipped over some important ways it offers support, preferring to favor readability over an exhaustive list. Some may feel that I have made some significant omissions. What seems important to me is not that we create an exhaustive list, but that we have an accurate, even if general, overview. Then we can begin to have the conversation about what the Yearly Meeting should be from the grounded place of a clear understanding of what it is currently doing. Without that, we risk spending too much time and energy batting around empty rhetoric instead of laboring fruitfully with one another after the manner of Friends.

—*Christopher Sammond, general secretary, NYYM*

## **Coming Up at Powell House**

### **Adult Conferences**

**Nurturing Our Yearly Meeting, Nurturing Ourselves—Intergenerational Retreat 12/16–18/2005**

**New Year & Kwanzaa Celebration** 12/30/2005–1/1/2006

*Hosted by PoHo Staff*

This intergenerational conference is a time to reflect on the past year and live in the moment with our family and friends.

**Silent Retreat: Dwelling Deep: an Extended Meeting for Worship** 1/13–16  
(through Monday lunch)

*Linda Chidsey; cosponsored by the School of the Spirit Ministry*

During this extended weekend, Friends are invited to enter more fully into the silence and to experience the deeper rhythms in which we might live.

**Conflict Transformation Intensive** 1/19–23

*NYYM's Conflict Transformation Committee*

This is an opportunity for Friends to gain more depth of understanding and skills in conflict transformation.

**Drawing out Gifts 1: Becoming the Gift God Made You to be** 1/27–29

*Christopher Sammond*

Each of us is imbued with gifts of the Spirit. They are what is most precious within us, and, because of that, what is most challenging to bring forward. For us to become fully who we are, these gifts need to come to expression both in our spiritual lives and in the lives of our communities. This workshop will provide a welcoming space for you to get in touch with and begin to bring forth what is seeking to find expression in your life.

This is the first workshop of a series, Drawing Out Gifts, sponsored by NYYM's Coordinating Committee on Ministry & Counsel

**Food for Fire: Breaking into the Power of Quakerism—Young Adults**  
2/10–12

*Martin Kelley*

Friends have a history of uniting truth and love and turning it into action. We'll reach into the Quaker attic to dust off gospel order, plain living, traveling ministry, prophetic witness; we'll try them on and see how they fit into our experiences of the living Spirit.

**Workshop Retreat for Small Meetings and Worship Groups**

3/10–12

*Denise Sherman and Carol Holmes*

Each meeting or worship group, no matter how small, can expand into the

wider community and function as a radiant beam of light. It can become a "beacon to inquiring minds." This workshop will nurture and strengthen small meetings and worship groups.

### **Youth Conferences**

Wintersong 2005 7th–12th 12/9/2005-12/11/2005  
(Workshop is full)

### **Seriously Silent** 10th–12th grades 1/14–16

The cold winds of midwinter may be blowing at our door but we will find solace in the warm blanket of silence. This weekend we will enter deeply into the silence with extended periods of self-space and communal worship.

### **Sharing Friends** 4th-6th grades 1/20–22

We'll listen to one another's answers to questions like: What do you look for in a good friend? What do you like to do with your friends? What sometimes makes you mad or sad when you're with your friends? How can a group of friends get along? Join us for a weekend of making, keeping and enjoying friends.

### **Chocolate Hearts** 7th–9th grades 2/10–12

Chocolate warms the hearts of many and brings contented sighs and big smiles. So too do relationships. But hold on to chocolate too tightly and you end up with a mess! Smother loved ones and the same thing happens. We'll talk about relationships, what makes them tick, what makes them not. We'll also fashion candy hearts of chocolate and other good sweet stuff.

### **Art and Spirit** 10th–12th grades 2/17–9

Discover the divine through discourse, drawing, dance, and duct tape. If we are made in the image of the Creator, then we are made to create. Spirit shines through our creations. We'll share our experiences of the Spirit and of the power of creativity through words and pictures and movement.

### **Lions, Lambs and Luges** 4th–6th grades 3/10–12

Some days we're cuddly and warm and other days we're all tooth and claw and ferocious roar. Some times it seems like we're racing downhill on an icy track unable to stop or steer. And other times we're calm and cool and sailing right along. This weekend we'll play with our emotions, see where they come from and how to take control of them when things seem to be sliding away from us.

**Stress Busters** 7th–9th grades 3/24–26

When you've got ghosts in your attic you can call Ghostbusters but when you have knots in your stomach it's Stress Busters you need. We'll practice a number of stress-reducing, energy-reviving activities this weekend.

To register or for more information: Powell House, 524 Pitt Hall Rd., Old Chatham NY 12136-3410; 518-794-8811. Adult conferences e-mail [info@powellhouse.org](mailto:info@powellhouse.org); youth, [chrisandmike@powellhouse.org](mailto:chrisandmike@powellhouse.org).