

New York Yearly Meeting Religious Society of Friends

InfoShare

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Important Dates

NYYM's **Spring Sessions** (formerly known as Representative Meeting) will be held April 1 and 2, 2006, at the Rutgers University campus in New Brunswick, N.J.

Yearly Meeting sessions at Silver Bay will be held July 23–29, 2006.

Powell House conferences include workshops on clerking, eldering, dealing with grief, and vocal ministry, a retreat for small meetings and worship groups, a Ministry and Counsel Coordinating Committee retreat, and several other events of interest. See the Powell House catalog or visit their Web site at www.powellhouse.org.

Addressing the Concerns of Friends

Recent issues of *Spark* have focused on specific concerns of Friends. The November 2005 issue asked us to consider spiritual hospitality and spiritual growth as aspects of advancement and outreach. The January 2006 *Spark* invited us to examine our conscience and to educate ourselves and others around issues of conscientious objection to military taxation. The March 2006 issue will hold up concerns related to our worship, and the May issue, in addition to being the annual Silver Bay issue, will focus on the concerns related to our children and young adults. Friends are encouraged to submit articles related to this theme by April 1, 2006. E-mail your material to paul@nnyym.org or mail it to Paul c/o the Yearly Meeting office.

If you have suggestions for other themes for future *Sparks*, please send them to us.

Please remember that it's important to share the activities and events of your committee, meeting, or worship group with the wider Yearly Meeting community. You can do this through *Spark*, *InfoShare*, and the Calendar and the Events section of the NYYM Web site. Please submit your material, in a timely fashion, to Paul Busby at the above e-mail address or by mail to the Yearly Meeting office

Spiritual Hospitality

Many of our Meetings experience a regular trickle of newcomers. In my experience, a goodly number of these newcomers come because of spiritual longing for deeper meaning and greater reverence. But at my meeting, many new attenders stay for a month or a year, then disappear. Apparently this happens at many meetings. Why is this? Do we know how to offer spiritual hospitality to those visitors who seek a deeper, more stable center for their lives?

How many of us make a point of greeting newcomers nearest to us at the rise of meeting and inviting them to coffee hour? Do we make a genuine effort to get to know them and help them to feel comfortable and *safe* in

talking about why they came to meeting and what they are looking for—their hopes, their doubts, their fears? Doesn't that relate to how comfortable and safe we feel about talking about our own spiritual journey (and our own doubts and fears)? Doesn't that also relate to whether the central focus/spirit of our meetings is about spiritual friendship for one another or whether instead we are too much focused on when we will schedule the next Nominating Committee meeting or who will lead Religious Ed. next week, etc.?

I raise these concerns because I wonder whether the trickle of visitors and new attenders may not soon turn into a steady flow or even a flood. This may be a challenge for most of our meetings, but think of the enormous spiritual opportunity it would provide to share our beliefs and practices!

I think the situation in the world is pretty dire. For example, jobs affording middle-class existence are vanishing. Our national political processes seem more and more to benefit the superrich. The sense of community and mutual help and support is breaking down. Most serious of all, it is becoming ever more apparent that humankind is wreaking havoc with the Earth's weather and climate, destroying whole ecosystems and contributing to the extinction of more and more animal and plant species. These conditions bring insecurity, fear, and the loss of a sense of mooring. Isn't it quite likely that increasing numbers of people will come to us seeking a sense of community and a deeper sense of meaning and purpose and value in their lives?

And then what? Will we be ready? A good first step would be to read and reread the central articles in *Spark* of Nov. 2005. The whole issue is essentially devoted to deepening the spiritual life of our meetings and to offering spiritual hospitality to newcomers. I commend the articles by Christopher Sammond. I was quite moved to be reminded that it is our individual spiritual practice during the week that helps to deepen and strengthen the reverence of worship on First Day. It is the quality and depth of meeting for worship and the worshipful quality of our daily lives that will most persuade newcomers to join us.

Try to imagine that you are a total newcomer to your meeting and don't know anyone in the meeting. Would you feel welcome? Would someone come up at the rise of meeting to answer questions you might have and to discretely, gently inquire what spiritual issues might be on your mind? What is the first impression of a newcomer to your meeting who sees all these Quakers scurrying about discussing committee business, property concerns, First Day school issues, etc.? (Okay, so that never happens at your meeting, just at mine.) But still, how does an attender break through all our "busyness" and find a real place in our community? Will she/he find spiritual hospitality among us?

Glen Bibler, Brooklyn Meeting

AFSC: 10 Reasons Why the U.S. Must Leave Iraq

This new pamphlet explores why the U.S. occupation of Iraq is both wrong and counterproductive and why the troops must be brought home now. To download this resource or to read online, go to:

<http://www.afsc.org/iraq/activism/10-reasons.htm>. The pamphlet may be viewed in English or Spanish and downloaded in PDF format in either language.

New AFSC Video Online

Please take a few minutes to watch the powerful new music video for the title track of bluesman Robert Cray's Grammy-nominated album, *Twenty*. The video, at <http://afsc.org/iraq/cray-video.htm>, features AFSC's Eyes Wide Open exhibit and takes a strong stand against the Iraq War.

Robert Cray explains, "The song is about an innocent young guy who, after the events of 9/11, wants to do his part for his country. He doesn't know he's going to end up in Iraq, watching the horror that's going on there, and he ends up losing his life."

From the video, you and your friends will be encouraged to sign the "Not One More Death, Not One More Dollar" letter to Congress. So far, more than 40,000 people have signed this letter, calling on Congress to stop funding the war in Iraq.

An earlier AFSC video, *Wage Peace*, can be seen at www.afsc.org/eyes.

AGLI Workcamps in Africa

The African Great Lakes Initiative (AGLI), a project of Friends Peace Teams, is sponsoring international workcamps in Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, and Uganda in June and July 2006. Workcampers will assist with building or rebuilding homes, clinics, and/or schools. A two-day preservice training begins on June 23 near Washington, D.C. Workcampers fly to Africa on June 24 and return to the U.S. on July 29.

For information or to apply contact Dawn L. Rubbert, program manager, AGLI, 8409 Winzenburg Dr., St. Louis MO 63117; 314-647-1287; dawn@aglionline.org; www.aglionline.org.

Interfaith Organization: "Faithful State of the Union Address"

FaithfulAmerica.org, an interfaith advocacy organization founded by the National Council of Churches USA, has released its "Faithful State of the Union Address." The address offers an assessment of the nation's priorities through the lens of faith, conscience, and moral values.

"We want to get past the political posturing, party rhetoric, and examine the state of our union in light of our most enduring religious traditions," said Vince Isner, the program's director. ". . . Our hope is that people of faith and conscience will begin talking seriously about their role in shaping a more perfect union."

The address reads in part:

. . . Thousands of years before there was a United States of America,

the Hebrew prophet Micah proclaimed . . . a moral standard for persons of faith and the nations they build. He declared, "What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God?"

In light of these words, the state of our Union is troubled indeed. As persons of faith and conscience we hold ourselves to a standard that measures more than our economic wealth and military might. . . . As human beings living together on this planet we know that we are, as the Judeo-Christian tradition reminds us our brother's and our sister's keepers. We are, as Native American Tradition teaches, guests of this planet not its owners. We are, as Jesus taught us, the "light of the world."

The address was released in both print and podcast. Both may be found at <http://www.faithfulamerica.org> .

For information contact Vince Isner, director, FaithfulAmerica.org, 110 Maryland Ave. NE #108, Washington DC 20002; 202-544-2350 x206.

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 e-mail office [at] nyym.org or call us at 212-673-5750 to let us know.

Please remember that **printed copies of *Faith and Practice* are available** from the Yearly Meeting office for \$6.50, including postage. You may order ten or more copies for \$5.00 each, including postage. The hardcover edition is \$10. Send your order with a check to Faith and Practice Orders, NYYM, 15 Rutherford Pl., New York NY 10003.

Peace Week 2006: Practicing Peace in Our Family Lives

Families are the primary agents of social change in any society. The family is not a barrier between us and a better society, but a path to that better society.

Elise Boulding, quoted in NYYM Faith and Practice p. 44

Friends Seminary Parents Group and PTA, with Fifteenth St. Monthly Meeting, present Practicing Peace in Our Family Lives Monday, February 13, 2006, 6:00–7:30 P.M., in the Blackbox Theater of Friends Seminary, 220 E. 15th St., Manhattan.

A panel of three experts will discuss the queries

- How do we bring peace into our family? (Ed Elder, family therapist & clerk of NY Quarterly Meeting)
- How do we guide our children to make peaceful media choices? (Mary L. Rothschild, director, Healthy Media Choices, & Member, Brooklyn Meeting)
- How do we infuse a social conscience in our children and help them live out their conscience? (Ernestine Buscemi, HIV/AIDS advocate & assistant clerk of NYYM)

Invitation to Worship with Stamford-Greenwich

For the past 18 months, New York Yearly Meeting has been supporting tiny Stamford-Greenwich Meeting in Connecticut with regular visits. Several New York Quarter Friends have attended worship there and found it to be sweet, deep, still, and nurturing.

In January, Stamford-Greenwich Meeting held its first 3 P.M. worship as an experiment to see whether it might be easier for Friends to gather in the afternoon. What follows is a message of thanks for the January 15 worship from the clerk of Purchase Quarter Ministry and Counsel—and an invitation to attend the second of Stamford-Greenwich's 3 P.M. meeting for worship on February 19.

Stamford-Greenwich Friends Meeting is at 572 Roxbury Road, Stamford, CT. It is possible to take a train to Greenwich, but arrangements need to be made with some Purchase Quarter Friend for a lift from the station to the meetinghouse. It's about a 20-minute drive. Cabs are available, but the fare runs upward of \$15.

If you are interested in attending either the next 3 P.M. worship or a 10 A.M. worship and have questions, contact me.

Carol Holmes

Message for Friends in New York Quarter & NYYM office:

Friends at Stamford-Greenwich Meeting were most appreciative of the efforts made by those Friends from Purchase and New York Quarterly Meeting who joined them at their 3 P.M. meeting for worship on the 15th of January. With 13 in attendance, it was the largest meeting they have had for some time. The food and fellowship that followed was rich and fulfilling. Stamford-Greenwich Meeting is again extending a warm invitation to Friends from Purchase Quarter and New York Quarter to join them at their next afternoon meeting for worship, which will be held on February 19 at 3 P.M. Please announce this invitation to members and attenders in your meetings and through your newsletters.

Janet Hough, clerk, Purchase Quarterly Meeting Ministry and Counsel Committee

Healing Ourselves Workshop for Friends of Color

NYYM's Black Concerns Committee is sponsoring this experiential weekend, February 17–19, 2006, for people of Color who want to begin healing our wounds from racism. Personal healing work will occur through worship sharing, large group discussion, and listening to each other in small groups. We will also spend time identifying ways we can support each other as people of Color in the Religious Society of Friends. This workshop is facilitated by Vanessa Julye, whose Web site is <http://vanessajulye.quaker.org/>.

For further information contact Helen Garay Toppins c/o the Yearly Meeting office or at hgfreesdom@earthlink.net.

NERM Fun Day

Northeastern Regional Meeting will feature a Fun Day on February 25, 2006, at Adirondack Friends Meeting, 27 Saratoga Ave. South Glens Falls, N.Y. Registration begins at 10:30 A.M., with singing and worship at 11:00 A.M. A potluck lunch at noon will be followed by fun and games. Barbara Rhudy will facilitate the afternoon program. Barbara draws from a lifetime of dance and movement practice, as well as many years of experience helping others to find joy in playful movement. For more information call Regina Haag at 518-793-3755.

An organizational meeting of a regional meeting Ministry and Counsel will precede Fun Day, beginning at 9:15 A.M. at Adirondack Meeting. Anyone from the region who is interested is invited to attend. David Herendeen may be contacted at 518-743-9477; dherendeen55@yahoo.com, with questions or concerns about this gathering.

Tryon Worship Group Sponsors Benefit

Tryon Friends Worship Group is sponsoring a concert by Michele Angeline and Tom Hoover, to benefit Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Fulton County (N.Y.). The concert will take place Sunday, February 26, 2006, from 3:00–5:00 P.M. at the YMCA Community Room, 33 Bleecker St., Gloversville, N.Y. Admission is free, but donations will be greatly appreciated.

Teachers of Peace: Educating for Peace and Social Change

William Penn House (www.wmpennhouse.org) is offering a seminar March 2–5, 2006, on Teaching Peace. This seminar, for teachers of middle and high schools, takes the recent trend toward conflict resolution programs in schools one step further by focusing on how teachers can help their students change society.

Building on the success of two previous Teachers of Peace seminars and using the model of Multi-Track Diplomacy (www.imtd.org), we will learn together how peacebuilding can be and is being enacted in various sectors of society. Within a supportive community of peacemaker-teachers and with the leadership of our Planning Committee of master teachers, we will share strategies, lessons, ideas, stories, and questions about ways to create peace with young people.

The seminar will take place at the William Penn House in Washington, D.C. The cost is \$400 per person, including program costs, lodging, meals, and materials. For information or to register, call Janaki, Bernadette, or Patricia at 202-543-5560 for an application, or download the brochure or application at www.wmpennhouse.org/teachersofpeace.htm

Retreat for Small Meetings and Worship Groups

Attention small meetings and worship groups! There will be a retreat especially for you at Powell House, March 10–12, 2006, led by Denise Sherman and Carol Holmes. You are warmly invited to participate.

The purpose of the retreat is to nurture your spiritual lives and support your efforts to expand your membership and grow as a source of light to the Yearly Meeting. The weekend will give the participants a chance to share their experiences, find mutual support, and explore spiritual questions through fellowship with others from similar groups.

The Advancement Committee is making \$50.00 vouchers available to assist attendance. Please send someone from your group, so that that person may return spiritually refreshed from this venture and share what he or she has found.

Information and registration: Powell House, 524 Pitt Hall Rd., Old Chatham NY 12136; 518-794-8811; info@powellhouse.org; www.powellhouse.org.

Peace Vigil to Be Held at Amawalk

A vigil to mark the third anniversary of the war in Iraq will be held at the Amawalk meetinghouse Sunday, March 19, at 3 P.M. We will read the names of all U.S. servicemen and women killed in the past three years. All are welcome to join us.

For information, contact Nicholas Burlakoff at 914-923-1351 or nicholasbu@earthlink.net.

God Has No Politics: Event at Poughkeepsie Meeting

Newton Garver of Buffalo Monthly Meeting will be the featured speaker at the Paul Pfuetze Lecture to be held at Poughkeepsie Monthly Meeting, 249 Hooker Av., Poughkeepsie, on March 25, 2006, at 4:00 P.M. Newton's topic is God Has No Politics, a discussion of the universal and nonpartisan nature of God, the differences between politics and governance, and the dangers that arise when "church leaders fall prey to the lures of power."

There will be fellowship and refreshments at the rise of the meeting.

For further information contact Don Badgley, c/o Poughkeepsie Monthly Meeting.

Quaker Conference to End Torture

The Quaker Initiative to End Torture (QUIT) invites you to its first conference June 2–4, 2006, at Guilford College in Greensboro, NC. The Friday night keynote speaker will be Jennifer Harbury, author of *Truth, Torture, and the American Way: The History and Consequences of U.S. Involvement in Torture*

We invite your meeting to send one or more members/attenders to the conference, so they can report back on how Friends can bear a constructive, broad-based witness on this crucial issue.

The conference arose from a deep concern of Friend John Calvi, who has long worked with many torture victims as a massage therapist and healer. John says, "Increasingly, there are corners without Light in American culture and places of American domination where there is no longer simply the threat of abduction, imprisonment, or death, but also the likelihood that this includes torture. . . . What was once small and secret is now widespread, public, and stated policy. Opposition to torture would be the essence of Friends' Peace Testimony, practice, and faith and would add to our history."

The Peace Issues Working Group of Friends World Committee for Consultation has endorsed this concern, as have (thus far): Baltimore YM, South Central YM, Iowa YM (Conservative), Canadian YM, Frederick MD Meeting, Medford NJ Meeting, Birmingham AL Meeting, Matinecock NY Meeting.

For information and to register visit www.quit-torture-now.org.

YouthConsultation to Replace YouthQuake 2006

After much discernment, discussion, prayer, and deep listening, the members of the YouthQuake Planning Committee are led to hold a youth leader consultation this December in place of YouthQuake 2006. We hope that this consultation will be an opportunity to revitalize and grow YouthQuake into the conference God envisions for our young Friends.

Coming to this decision was difficult and challenging for us. As we looked at who we were expecting to attend the originally planned gathering, we realized that the vast majority of youth would be coming from one tradition of Friends. We felt that this imbalance was both inconsistent with the mission of YouthQuake and would put an undue burden on those young Friends from the other traditions. We deeply miss our sisters and brothers from the many yearly meetings who do not currently participate in YouthQuake. The planning committee feels called to bring together youth from throughout the Quaker family so that we may seek together God's will and work; we do not feel like we can do this with YouthQuake 2006. Through the guidance of YouthConsultation 2006, we hope to realize this mission of YouthQuake in the future.

YouthConsultation 2006 will occur December 27-31, 2006, in place of the original event. In the next few months, we will be inviting each yearly meeting in the United States to send key representatives to this gathering. We envision this small gathering, with no more than 5 representatives from any yearly meeting, as an opportunity for renewal, directed by people most concerned with young Friends. YouthConsultation 2006 will be an opportunity for Friends most deeply connected to the life of yearly meetings to come together and reenvision a vibrant, rich, diverse, and God-breathed YouthQuake.

We ask for your prayers, patience, and support as we continue to work towards a YouthQuake that will strengthen our ties as a family of Friends

and enliven the Spirit of God in all of our youth.

YouthQuake 2006 Planning Committee
(submitted by Amy White)

Rockland Meeting Mentoring Program

Over the last two years, Rockland Friends Meeting has been instrumental in helping to develop a mentoring program for newly released prisoners (mostly women) from the Rockland County Jail. This program has been closely modeled after the one run by the Women's Prison Association in New York City.

Women involved in parenting groups in the jail are invited to get involved with a mentor to help them with the transition back into the world. Trained mentors meet the women while they are still in jail and, working closely with a case manager from the Rockland Parent Child Center, the agency administering the program, continue to have weekly contact for at least six months. Monthly group supervision is provided by the Rockland Parent Child Center. At this time 12 mentors have been trained and there are 8 active mentoring pairs. In addition, a support group for those being mentored has just begun and apparently is quite successful.

This project was an outgrowth of the work the meeting has done to honor the memory of Leigh Schuerholz, our former clerk, who died from a stroke six years ago. Leigh ran the parenting group in the Rockland County Jail and maintained contact with the women when they went on to state prisons. She helped them when they got out and even had two of them live in her home. The meeting raised a considerable amount of money with the idea of starting a halfway house for these women once they were released from prison. We hired a consultant who wrote an excellent grant, but after several years of unsuccessful attempts to get funding, we decided to use the funds in a different way.

\$1,500 of this was given to Open Arms, a sober-living facility, to provide money for expenses related to reuniting women with their children and transportation to work, educational and training programs. This money is in a revolving fund and gets replenished when these expenses are reimbursed.

We began work on the Mentoring Program three years ago and decided to work with the agency Leigh Schuerholz had worked for, especially since they were already running a parenting program in the jail. We used most of the money we had to help fund the case manager who would be helping with the program. The understanding is that the Rockland Parent Child Center will now raise money themselves to keep the program running. The Prisons Committee of New York Yearly Meeting has been generous in their support of both the initial project and the mentoring program. We are very appreciative of this support, especially since it has been such a long and sometimes discouraging process. We are very pleased to now have the mentoring program continuing Leigh's prison ministry.

Ashley L. Cook, Is Marjorie Sexton Scholar for 2005

This year's Marjorie Sexton Scholarship recipient is Ashley L. Cook, a

member of the St. Regis Mohawk Nation. She lived on the St. Regis reservation as a child, and still has family members there. She comes from a close family, and is the middle child of three sisters. Ashley has written a lovely letter to the Indian Affairs Committee to tell us about herself and to express her appreciation at being selected to receive this scholarship.

Ashley was born with spina bifida, and had surgery to correct this condition as a newborn. She uses a wheelchair to make her more mobile, and needs some assistance with daily activities, as her muscles are not strong. She hopes to apply for a Canine Companion that will allow her to be more independent at college and in everyday life.

Ashley is 19, and graduated from East Syracuse Minoa High School last June. She attends Onondaga Community College, where she is majoring in humanities. She would like to work with young children, perhaps in obstetrics or neonatal care.

Recently, Ashley and her family met with members of the Indian Affairs Committee and with Anita Murphy from the Onondaga Community College Foundation. This foundation selects the Marjorie Sexton Scholarship recipient, and the scholarship is awarded through them. Everyone enjoyed a festive lunch in Syracuse, and representatives from our committee had a chance to meet Ashley and congratulate her on her achievements.

Ashley has written to the Indian Affairs Committee to tell us about herself and to express her appreciation at being selected to receive this scholarship.

At the luncheon, Anita spoke with the committee members present, saying how nice it was that we make an effort to meet personally with the student who receives our scholarship. We hope to continue this sort of celebration as an annual tradition.

Susan Wolf, clerk, Indian Affairs Committee