

# New York Yearly Meeting Religious Society of Friends

## *InfoShare*

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### **Evaluations of Summer Sessions**

Friends are invited to try a different way of evaluation this year: Just write down any thoughts about the week and send your comments to crdk@highlands.com or jhcooley@aol.com. Carol Rice will compile and share comments with the rest of the Sessions Committee at our next meeting. Title your e-mail Summer Sessions Evaluation. Don't put it off too long. We'll compile comments by the end of August.

We know there are some aspects of the week at Silver Bay that cannot be changed, and some desirable goals that are mutually exclusive. It still helps to know what people feel about the accommodations, the schedule, the special sessions, and the organization and planning of the week. Let us know. —*John Cooley, clerk, Sessions Committee*

### **Memorial Service for Charlotte Frantz**

At the request of the children (Cory, Mimi and Kelly), Buffalo Monthly Meeting will hold a memorial service for Charlotte Frantz on Saturday, August 16, at 11:00 A.M., at the Orchard Park meetinghouse, 6924 E. Quaker Rd., Rt. 20-A, Orchard Park, N.Y. on Reception to follow. —*Rodney Pierce, clerk, Buffalo Monthly Meeting*

### **Memorial for Peter Bentley**

There will be a meeting for memorial for Peter Bentley, a founding member of Stamford-Greenwich Meeting, at Stamford-Greenwich meetinghouse, 572 Roxbury Rd., Stamford, CT, on August 16th at 2 P.M. —*Esme Ingledew, recorder, Stamford-Greenwich Meeting*

### **General Secretary's Report 2008 Summer Sessions**

After I spoke an oral report as led at Summer Sessions, some Friends asked if I could provide a text. This is a reconstruction:

As I have held questions about what to share about my sense of our condition as a yearly meeting, the quote from the famous Rabbi Hillel has

kept coming to me:

If I am not for myself, who is for me?

If I am only for myself, what am I?

And if not now, when?

*Rabbi Hillel*

My sense is that we are at a place of pausing, assessing direction, and seeking guidance. We are focusing less on our internal frictions, and we therefore are having more energy to hold questions about how we are called.

I have heard from many Friends of a sense of being ready and willing to devote time, energy, and their very lives to addressing the raft of growing problems in this world, problems which, if left unaddressed, will lead to global crises of an unprecedented nature. And these same Friends, ready and willing, are not clear where or how to begin.

I have witnessed this upwelling of concern and a desire to be of service particularly among the young adult Friends in this Yearly Meeting. I hear a willingness on their part to devote their very lives to the service of making this world a better place, but without the clarity as to how to proceed.

Greta Mickey, our Peace Concerns coordinator, has been in conversations with many Friends from around the Yearly Meeting who are called to doing peace work. As she has talked with these Friends, she has heard that many are holding questions as to whether this yearly meeting, as a body, might be called to some unified witness or work in the world, and what that might be.

At the FGC Gathering, I heard from the adult young Friends there that they feel stuck and unclear as to how to proceed, and they began asking for help from older Friends who may have had that experience in the past.

So I see us as part of a larger body of Friends, who are listening, discerning, waiting for clarity as to how to proceed. And I see an upwelling of energy and willingness to be of service.

In a great many of our monthly meetings, I see most of our energy going into “keeping on keeping on”—just doing what it takes to keep the doors open, and things running. And most of whatever energy is left is usually devoted to working passionately against what is wrong in the world. We are trying our best to mitigate the damage of corrosive systems and

influences. This leaves us with precious little energy to create what we want to see in the world.

We need to seek a common vision. We need to be with the question “What are we trying to create?” If most of our energy is going into self-preservation and working against what is wrong in our world, not much is left for building up the future we want for ourselves.

### **What are we trying to create?**

When I attended the annual NYYM/NEYM pastor’s retreat, the facilitator asked all the pastors to name what was special, characteristic, or distinctive of their particular congregation. What is the charism of the group they serve? As one of the participants, I applied that question to this body—what is the charism of NYYM? What came to me were the insights of the mystic Jakob Böhme, who predated Fox by one generation and was thought to have influenced him, along with much of Europe, in the ensuing years, including Blake, Schelling, and others.

Böhme had a vision in which he understood all reality as being made up of two principles, one being the fiery, creative, fruitful principle, and the other, that of love. The fiery, creative principle is neither bad nor good by itself; it just is. What came to me as the charism of this body, what distinguishes us from any other yearly meetings I have experience with, even those that are structurally quite similar, such as Baltimore and New England, is that we have more of this fiery principle than I have witnessed anywhere else.

When this principle is harnessed to, and subordinate to love, what it creates is powerful and good. Without love to temper it, it is a force that can be highly destructive. The image that came to me was that of a steam pipe. If the steam is contained in the pipe, its energy can be useful. If there are leaks in the pipe, it can erupt outwards and do great damage.

I continue to witness a need for us to do better at opening to new energies—from newcomers to our monthly meetings, newcomers to this annual session, from our youth and young adults. I continue to see newer members in monthly meetings whose gifts, ideas, energies, and insights are not being welcomed and included. They are frustrated. When we do not receive what newcomers have to offer, they leave.

We are at risk of becoming a private club. We need to practice being an open circle.

We need to be particularly aware of the gifts of younger Friends in our nomination process, inviting them to be part of the fabric of what we are creating. In preparing this report, the words of Ella Baker, civil rights activist, which were immortalized by Dr. Bernice Johnson Reagon in "Ella's Song," have had power for me:

To me young people come first, they have the courage where we fail  
And if I can but shed some light as they carry us through the gale

The older I get the better I know that the secret of my going on  
Is when the reins are in the hands of the young, who dare to run  
against the storm

Not needing to clutch for power, not needing the light just to shine  
on me

I need to be one in the number as we stand against tyranny

Struggling myself don't mean a whole lot, I've come to realize  
That teaching others to stand up and fight is the only way my  
struggle survives\*

Finally, in visiting monthly meetings that are flourishing, I have noticed some common patterns and practices that I feel we need to be emulating more broadly.

Best practices of monthly meetings that are growing:

- The joining of advancement and work in the world
- willingness of individuals to take action
- willingness of community to eagerly use the gifts of newcomers
- attentiveness to spiritual grounding
- good clerking and process in business
- individuals who have energy to welcome others into the life of the community
- sense of calling, direction
- energy to start somewhere and get going
- willingness to stick to our practice over the long haul, even when it is difficult

\*Ella's Song, Lyrics and music by Bernice Johnson Reagon, Songtalk Publishing Co., © 1981

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

August 1–September 30, 2008

### **August**

10 Visit Rahway & Plainfield MM, Plainfield, NJ  
23–31 Vacation

### **September**

1–7 Vacation  
10–14 Visit east end of Long Island, Friends from Peconic Bay MM,  
Shelter Island MM, and Orient WG  
21 Visit Poplar Ridge Meeting  
21–23 Attend NYYM Pastors' Retreat, Moravia, NY  
26 Meetings for Discernment Steering Committee, Albany  
27–30 Attend Superintendents and Secretaries Retreat, Rockaway  
Beach, OR

### **32nd Annual Quaker Lesbian Conference**

WHERE HAVE YOU COME FROM AND WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

The 32nd Annual Quaker Lesbian Conference will be held Friday–Sunday, August 15–17, 2008, at Burlington Conference Center (BCC) in New Jersey.

The Quaker Lesbian Conference exists to be a loving time and space in which women (self-defined) familiar with Quakerism, who are lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, or moving toward those identities, can connect with Spirit and with each other. We envision an intergenerational community in which each woman shares worship, spiritual exploration, and loving relationships in an environment embracing diversity, individual leadings, struggle, and play.

BCC is in the middle of downtown Burlington, an urban setting. We will have exclusive use of this relatively accessible facility. There is ample and interesting space for workshops and an attached meetinghouse in which to hold worship. There are bunk beds, and it is necessary for you to bring your own linens.

Children are welcome. Childcare will be provided.

For more information or to add your name to the mailing list, e-mail [qlconf@aol.com](mailto:qlconf@aol.com).

### **The FUM Task Group has the following query for Friends:**

How are we called to continue to speak our truth to FUM?

—*Annie Bancroft & John Menzel, coclerks*

### **Iowa Flood Relief**

A quick update on Iowa Yearly Meeting's flood-relief support, as of July 31, 2008: In the last week we have been able to purchase two complete washer/dryer sets for single-parent families with small children who had no insurance. A family had lost all their cooking utensils, which were their primary source of income from baking for farmers' markets, and we were able to completely replace them. We assisted two low- or fixed-income households that had some insurance but for whom the deductibles were a hardship and another single parent who had lost all the basement furnishings. All these losses are due to flooded basements, and are representative of three different monthly meetings.

Additionally, the Iowa Chapter of Friends Disaster Service is setting up a week of work with volunteers for August 11–17 to assist the rebuilding of walls in one or two homes in the Mason City, Iowa, area. Plans being considered to assist the Parkersburg tornado area as well for rebuilding or replacement of damaged equipment. This could be in cooperation with William Penn University and could include replacement of computers destroyed and not covered by insurance in the Parkersburg School facilities.

We have assisted six families directly already, and two more families will be assisted shortly through the generosity of Friends and friends from across our country. A total of \$6,368.73 has been received to date.

—*Ron Bryan, Iowa Yearly Meeting (FUM)*

NOTE: For information on how you can help, contact Iowa Yearly Meeting, Box 657, Oskaloosa, IA 52577; [iaym@mahaska.org](mailto:iaym@mahaska.org); 641-673-9717.

### **AFSC Counter-Recruitment Training**

The American Friends Service Committee Upper N.Y. Area Office will host Counter-Recruitment 101 training Friday and Saturday, August 22–23, 2008, in Syracuse. Registration is free, but space is limited. Contact Chrissie Rizzo or Twiggy Billue at 315-475-4822; [crizzo@afsc.org](mailto:crizzo@afsc.org) or [tbillue@afsc.org](mailto:tbillue@afsc.org).

Limited overnight accommodations available for \$40. Participants receive a copy of AFSC's counter-recruitment manual. The training is led by Oskar Castro, AFSC's national coordinator of Youth and Militarism. Young people are especially welcome. —*Chrissie Rizzo, AFSC in Syracuse*

### **Anna Curtis Center Renovation and Other PoHo News**

The renovation at Powell House to make the youth center accessible, healthy, and green is well underway. Check out the latest progress at <http://pohoaccessible.blogspot.com>.

WORK ON THE ACC LABOR DAY WEEKEND August 29–31, 2008

How appropriate for us to work over Labor Day weekend (through Sunday lunch)! We don't know where we'll be in the renovations of the Anna Curtis Center (ACC), but we know there will be things that we can do this weekend. It could be putting on the deck, painting, roofing, and siding, so check the Web site for updates or call Powell House at 518-

Join us. We'll have a great time *and* have ice cream and lemonade breaks. Bring a bathing suit too, and jump in the pond to cool off. We'll have lots of good, healthy, nutritious, yummy food.

Liseli Haines, property manager, will coordinate the work projects. Contact her at [liseli@powellhouse.org](mailto:liseli@powellhouse.org) for other possible summer dates!

Register by August 15th: \$ 50 adults; children & youth no charge

After August 15th: \$75 adults; children & youth \$25

Childcare for 10 & younger with three weeks' notice

To help support these efforts, contact Powell House, 524 Pitt Hall Rd., Old Chatham NY 12136; 518-794-8811; [www.powellhouse.org](http://www.powellhouse.org); [info@powellhouse.org](mailto:info@powellhouse.org).

Powell House will be hosting an **on-line auction** this fall, concluding in mid-November. For information please contact [sandra@powellhouse.org](mailto:sandra@powellhouse.org); 518-794-8811 ext 15`

NEWS OF ME! Share your news and love for Powell House! We plan to publish youth alumni updates a couple of times a year. Please give us a brief update that you would like to share in the *Powell House Alumni Notes*. We'd also welcome your sharing favorite Powell House memories the difference Powell House has made in your life. We welcome pictures as

well. Send information to [alumni@powellhouse.org](mailto:alumni@powellhouse.org). Parents of alumni: please forward this to your children—we don't have contacts for many of them. Thank you!

### **YSOP and UU to Join in Workcamp**

On October 17 and 18, 2008, the Youth Service Opportunities Project is planning an overnight Workcamp for Quaker and Unitarian Universalist youth in grades 8 to 12 to join together in serving homeless and hungry people in New York City.

Now in its 25th year at 15 Rutherford Place, YSOP Workcamps offer youth a great way to serve those in need, build team spirit, and give direction to a meeting's youth group. Begin the next school year with a meaningful service experience while helping people in need by coming on the October 17–18 Workcamp!

Please contact: Kimberly Tomaszewski, YSOP NY program assistant, [ktomaszewski@ysop.org](mailto:ktomaszewski@ysop.org); 212-598-0973 x103. A flyer for the event is available at [www.nyym.org/events](http://www.nyym.org/events).

### **Singing à la Nightingales**

Singing, Fellowship, and Food

Come to Mohawk Valley Meeting in Clinton, N.Y., October 24–26, 2008, for another gathering of song.

Nightingales is a Northern Yearly Meeting a cappella singing group that Mary Jacobs and Christopher Sammond have enjoyed and want to share with Friends here.

Singing as the Nightingales do is about singing from the heart, not about being a great singer. It is about being in a community singing with love. If you were ever told, "You can't sing," you *can* sing. If you can talk, you can sing. We sing from *Rise Up Singing* and *Worship in Song* (bring your copies), but we often bring songs or rounds we have encountered. We go around in a circle, and every person present, even the very youngest, gets to name a song they want sung. There are also times when we break into song without books and without structure, our hearts leading us from one song to another, one genre to another, sacred, silly, schmaltzy, rounds, hymns, show tunes—we wander into some amazing bayous of song.

These weekends are also about fellowship and food. We all bring food to share, and have potluck meals that we take turns organizing and cleaning up after. And we tell about our lives. We do that in words, and in the songs we initiate, for there is little more revealing than the song in your heart. Sometimes we sing our way into the truth of who we are, and receive that from the singing.

Those who can camp, do so, or sleep in sleeping bags on the floor. Those who need a bed, due to age or physical need, get the few that are available. We charge a small fee for breakfast staples, but otherwise we do everything ourselves, so the cost is negligible (\$10). Please come, and bring those you love with you.

Shuttle service from Utica Amtrak station is a possibility. Children are most welcome, though those not wanting to participate in the singing are the responsibility of their parents.

For more information: Contact Mary Jacobs, 585-547-3313, [mjacob61@mac.com](mailto:mjacobs61@mac.com), or Christopher Sammond, 845-876-0802, [c1sammond@aol.com](mailto:c1sammond@aol.com).

We need to know how many to plan for, and what food you plan to share. Registration: Contact NYYM office at [office@nym.org](mailto:office@nym.org) or call 212-673-5750.

### **Executive Director Sought for NCPTF**

The National Campaign for a Peace Tax Fund (NCPTF) in Washington, D.C., is seeking an executive director to begin October 1, 2008. The executive director will lead lobbying, administration, and fundraising activities of NCPTF, and Peace Tax Foundation, a 501(c)(3) educational organization.

NCPTF lobbies for passage of Religious Freedom Peace Tax Fund Bill, to establish in law the right of conscientious objection to military taxation. For detailed requirements and salary information, and to submit résumé (do so before August 15, 2008), contact [searchcommittee@peacetaxfund.org](mailto:searchcommittee@peacetaxfund.org). Additional information at [www.peacetaxfund.org](http://www.peacetaxfund.org), or call 888-PEACETAX.

### **Pendle Hill Workshops**

**September 5–7, 2008**, Faithful, Effective Work for Peace and Justice, fourth annual Pendle Hill retreat for clerks and members of peace and social concerns committees. Speakers include Mary Lord, Kathy Guthrie, Clinton Pettus, Scilla Wahrhaftig, Joan Broadfield, and Kristina Keefe-Perry.

**October 10–12, 2008,** Youth Workers Training Retreat, a weekend workshop with Kri Burkander and Lisa Graustein.

**October 31–November 2, 2008,** Inquirers' Weekend: An Introduction To Quakerism, a weekend workshop with Helen Garay Toppins and Thomas Swain

**November 14–16, 2008,** Clerking: Serving the Community with Joy and Confidence, a weekend workshop with Arthur Larrabee

**December 5–7, 2008,** Claiming Our Peace Testimony, a weekend workshop with Mary Lord

For information or to register, go to [www.pendlehill.org](http://www.pendlehill.org), call 800-742-3150, ext. 3 (U.S. only) or 610-566-4507, ext. 3 (worldwide), or write to Pendle Hill, 338 Plush Mill Rd., Wallingford Pa. 19086-6099.