



SPARK

New York Yearly Meeting

The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

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September 2017

Fall Sessions
info inside!



Children and youth field secretary Melinda Wenner Bradley leads the first morning's community worship at NYYM's Summer Sessions, July 2017 at Silver Bay, NY. She asks: How does the Truth fare with thee? How are the children? I wonder where you have been welcomed, and a circle opened for you? Photo by Sarah Way.

An Invitation

Dear Friends,

I look forward to being together for Fall Sessions. These are important times and we have important work to do. And by our presence we nourish each other—for our work together and for our life in the Spirit when we return to our own monthly meetings and homes.

We have several items that have

been carried forward from Summer Sessions, among them a report on details for our experiment in pay-as-attended for Summer Sessions attendance. We look forward to hearing from Steve Mohlke on his first few months as our general secretary. We ran out of time at Summer Sessions to hear about the ways Spirit is showing up at Powell House, and we hope to get an update at Fall Sessions.

And, as always, there will be much more. As we heard in our 2017 State of the Society report, "We seek to claim, name, and share the Truth as we experience it. And at the same time that we reach out, we seek to reach in. For we trust that 'when we are aligned with God, our resources of abilities and gifts are multiplied many times.'"

Please come. Your gifts are important, and they mean even more when we meet.

In peace,
Lucinda Antrim
Clerk, New York Yearly Meeting

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Bridging the Divide

White Privilege: A New Way of Looking at a Very Old Condition

Linda Clarke
Brooklyn Meeting

Racism was long ago the intellectual product of pseudo science, came under study by social sciences and eventually by physical science. Whether you have studied formally or casually, a little or a lot, politically or spiritually, you must have noticed that until recently all of the focus has been on the lives (or natures) of black people. You may also have noticed that remedies have focused on a "charitable" model of assistance, ie., the privileged class "gives" some benefits, such as government programs designed to help minorities. Tokenism, the practice of letting one or two blacks into a privileged area also falls into this category.

Recently, a well-seasoned academic paradigm for studying racism has entered into popular culture. Referred to as "white privilege," it focuses on the lives of white people and the functions that racism perform for them. The basic principle is that whites enjoy advantages that others do not. While the advantages are numerous and varied, much of the focus is on the economic enrichment that inures to whites as a result of racism. (One prominent scholar has characterized white privilege as "unjust enrichment.") This is very

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Exploring Being and Needing Allies

6th-8th Grade Group
with Chris DeRoller &
Robin Rainwater
Powell House

We are awkward, funny, fantastic, joy-filled, creative, loving, messy, well-fed, full of laughter, appreciated, intelligent, accepting, respectful and we listen to one another.

Those are the answers we, Robin Rainwater and Chris DeRoller, got when we asked a group of 11 to 13 year-olds to describe themselves during a Powell House Youth retreat offered last January. The objectives of the retreat were to help participants feel empowered to be an ally and to know when they themselves might need one. We wanted to start off by having them identify what they were good at individually and as a group. Then we tapped into the wisdom and experience within their group to find openings for action.

This age group deals with harassment frequently and could readily name things people get harassed about. This is the list they generated:

- Their political views
- What they wear
- Gender
- Religion or lack of religion
- Sexuality or being a part of the LGBTQ community
- Their race
- How they live
- Their financial situation
- If they're social online or not

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Notices

New Members

Scott Bradley — Conscience Bay
John Major — Brooklyn
Connie Mather — Poplar Ridge
Philip Milton — Conscience Bay
Seth Phillips — Brooklyn

Marriages

Carol Holmes and Bowen Alpern, members of Scarsdale, on August 5, 2017, under the care of Scarsdale Meeting.

Transfers

Dianne de la Veaux, to Brooklyn from Wilmington (PYM)
Nicholas Dosch, from Alfred to Genesee Valley Executive Meeting
Andrew, Dennis, and Regina Haag, from Adirondack to Old Chatham
Mary Hamilton, from Alfred to Genesee Valley Executive Meeting
Ly Kesse, from Alfred to Genesee Valley Executive Meeting
Lawrie Mifflin, to Brooklyn from Swarthmore (PYM)

Deaths

Sharon Chapman, member of Elmira, on June 21, 2017
Lynn Grove, member of Ithaca, on May 25, 2017
Richard Lockyer, member of Purchase, on June 2, 2017
John Morris, member of Purchase, on July 28, 2017
Lynn White, member of Chatham-Summit, on July 22, 2017

MEETING NEWS

Mohawk Valley hosts FCNL
Mohawk Valley Monthly Meeting hosted a Friends Committee on National Legislation Advocacy Team training at the Meeting House on June 23 for 20 people, including members of the monthly meeting, quarterly meeting and local activists. Maiya Zwerling, the trainer, kept us interested and engaged for the three hours of the training.

We began with the historical context of FCNL, how its lobby work began and how it has expanded to

Around Our Yearly Meeting

60 teams across the US. We heard examples of how FCNL has worked with congress people to encourage law making in the public interest, using the Quaker principle of seeking God in every person and building relationships with each.

The 2017 goal is to hold Pentagon spending at its current level. At first it felt as if this was too narrow a goal; but after further clarification we came to realize that increased Pentagon spending would mean a corresponding decrease in spending on Medicaid, social justice, environment and other issues we hold close to our hearts.

We heard some practical tips in terms of developing an "elevator" speech about Pentagon spending, and how to write letters that included a thank you, our connection to our community, what we are asking of the congress person, and how that would help our community. A point many of us found thought provoking was that our Democratic congress people also need to hear from us as they may be inclined to compromise our important issues for gain in another area.

And after it was all over 14 of the 20 attendees were interested or possibly interested in working on the Advocacy Team. We already have two of four telephone trainings scheduled. FCNL is available every step of the way to support us, give us information and pull us together in a variety of ways as we find our own voice. — *Liseli Haines*

Rochester Friend featured in NY Times article

Michael Rhynes, who is a member of Rochester Monthly Meeting and is incarcerated in Attica Prison, was featured in a recent NY Times article about an opera company that goes into Attica to perform. Michael is active in the Attica Worship Group and has started a theater company within the prison. The article includes a photo of and quotes from Michael. Read it here: <https://nyti.ms/2u5hUo3>

Brooklyn hosts Interfaith Association panel on misogyny

The Brooklyn Heights Interfaith Clergy Association has begun a series of panel discussions on Faith and Justice: How Our Religions Challenge and Support Systems of Oppression. The first of these was held at the Brooklyn Meetinghouse

on May 22, co-sponsored by Brooklyn Meeting's Ministry and Counsel Committee. Speakers addressed the topic of misogyny from four religious traditions: Quaker, Episcopalian, Islamic, and Jewish. A lively discussion followed the presentations. We look forward to future discussions in the fall. Many in the audience had never before been inside the meetinghouse, and so it was an excellent opportunity to introduce our Quaker ideas to others in our neighborhood. — *Nancy Black*

Dover-Randolph Community Open House

Dover-Randolph Meeting held a free Community Open House on June 3rd with the theme "Planting Seeds of Hope, Building a Community in Peace". Visitors had the opportunity to meet with representatives from community service groups to learn about their work. The groups included Peace Works, Interfaith Food Pantry, 11th Hour Rescue and GAAMC (a local gay rights group). The Meeting provided free light refreshments, face painting, children's games and tours of our historic Meetinghouse. There were also two presentations. We experienced the artistry and spirituality of "Singing Masks" and "God is a Musician" exploring the connections in music and nature. While the attendance was lighter than we had hoped, we were glad to have made connections with other community groups and make more of our surrounding neighbors aware that there is a small, but active Quaker Meeting in their midst.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Scarsdale's book discussion series on race in America

Scarsdale is starting another series of books on Race in America. Our titles and tentative dates for this year are:

Brian Stevenson, *Just Mercy*, Oct. 29
Barack Obama, *Dreams from my Father*, Dec. 3

David Billings, *Deep Denial*, Feb. 25
Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me*, March 25

Naomi Schaefer Riley, *The New Trail of Tears: How Washington is Destroying American Indians*, April 22

Friends from nearby meetings are invited to join us for worship, social time and book conversations

on those dates.

Purchase Meeting Harvest Dinner

Purchase Meeting will be hosting its annual Harvest Dinner to benefit the Sharing Fund on the last Saturday in October, which is October 28. *Please note the earlier date!* We hope downstate Friends will join us for a home-cooked food extravaganza! Details on reservations will be found on our website in early October. www.purchasemeeting.org

Reminder: Nightingales at Mohawk Valley Meeting

A weekend of singing and fellowship in Clinton, NY, October 6-8. Register at goo.gl/XHUUQP
Or contact Bronwyn Mohlke: (607) 220-3219; BJQMohlke@gmail.com.

JOB OPENING

Young Adult Field Secretary of New York Yearly Meeting

The Young Adult Field Secretary works with young adult Friends in the NYYM area, assisting in multi-generational community development, spreading information, and helping young adult Friends to develop their gifts and find a home in the Religious

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Society of Friends. The position will support retreats, activities, and religious education, as well as college outreach efforts. This is a half-time position that requires ongoing ministry and travel, including weekend commitments, around the NYYM area. Applicants should be a member of (or active participant in) the Religious Society of Friends and have a strong understanding of Quaker ministry, testimonies, structures, history, and practice; have written and verbal communication skills; be skilled at supporting the gifts of others and at building relationships; and have experience with social media.

We expect to begin interviewing in September and will accept applications until the position is filled.

For the full job description, see <http://www.nyyym.org/sites/default/files/YAFSJobDescription.pdf>. To apply, email your resume to YAFSsearch@nyym.org. 

Editor's Note

Welcome to the September issue of *Spark*. Articles in *Spark* are written and submitted by members of our Friendly community. Pieces should be spirit-led and reflect personal experience, Quaker history, or present faith and practice.

November's *Spark* theme: Welcoming, as the first step of Outreach—to be guest-edited by the Outreach Working Group; see "ad" on p. 5. The deadline for article submissions and news updates is October 10.

Meetings and committee clerks: please **share your info**—news, upcoming events, etc.—with me so I can send it out via InfoShare, our digital newsletter. The next issue is in October; send items ASAP to communications@nyym.org.

Check in with our lively Facebook page at www.facebook.com/NewYorkYearly-Meeting/

Find short news updates, links to articles, and the occasional Instagram image on our Twitter feed: twitter.com/NYYMTweets

Finally: the new version of nyym.org is live! Explore it and enjoy the information and functionality. —Sarah Way

Are you hiding your Light under a bushel?

Jeffrey Aaron
Nominating Committee

Once a year, Friends from throughout our yearly meeting gather for a week of joy-filled work for Summer Sessions; but the work of the committees and our representatives to other groups, such as Friends Committee on National Legislation, Powell House and other bodies, proceeds year round. The yearly meeting also provides valuable resources to local and regional meetings and strengthens our voice in the world. But this requires the work of many Friends. Right now, the nominating committee is small, and cannot know about the gifts, concerns and leadings of most individuals in the yearly meeting. We hope that many feel led to spend time and energy to move these concerns forward. What skills do you have that can keep our beloved yearly meeting alive and vital? Might you be open to exploring your talents, perhaps to discovering a gift you have left untapped?

We can use help in many areas: Ministry (including such committees as Conflict Transformation, Ministry and Pastoral Care, Worship at Yearly Meeting Sessions and the Task Group on Racism), General Services (Nominating, Communications, Financial Services, Personnel, Sessions, Development), Nurture (Aging Concerns, Junior Yearly Meeting, Oakwood Friends School, Powell House, Youth, Young Adult Concerns), and Witness (Alternatives to Violence Project, Black Concerns, Conscientious Objection to Paying for War, Earthcare Witness, Indian Affairs, Prisons, Right Sharing of World Resources, National Religious Campaign against Torture). The current members of the committee are listed in the Yearbook, and the yearly meeting office staff can help with contact information (office@nyym.org, 212-673-5750). For a full list of the many committees, most not listed here, check your NYYM Yearbook. A current copy of the Yearbook should be available at every NYYM meeting house and others can be obtained from the yearly meeting office. The information is also on the NYYM website.

Fortunately, today, conference call meetings and videoconferencing often allow us to do our work with

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An Invitation to Join YEAR TWO of NYYM'S Outreach Practitioners' Circle*

Nearly 15 monthly meetings recently completed Year One of a two-year initiative to nurture more effective outreach. The focus of Year One was "Becoming a More Welcoming Community" (i.e. improving how we welcome and engage new attenders and seekers). It was a very exciting and, we feel, productive year and we invite you to read more about it in the Outreach Working Group's report to 2017 Spring Sessions, online at nyym.org/content/minutes-spring-sessions-2017#2017-Spring-Reports-OutreachWorkingGroup

Here is what one of the participants said about Year One:

...perhaps the most important, if intangible, change I see is a growing mindfulness of the possibility for new people in our community...

When I [joined the OPC], my conversations with some other members centered around the difficulty of outreach. Understanding outreach as readiness or openness, and giving a bit of thought to small things that might make a big difference, has opened up a space for outreach in our meeting.

But now...for Year Two!

Our topic is "Becoming a More Inviting Community," focusing on how we can more effectively reach out into the community around us to invite others to experience Quaker worship and community. Topics under consideration include: how to plan and implement an effective outreach event; writing attention-getting press releases; how to craft messages that speak to different groups; tips for improving your meeting website and using social media; and techniques for increasing your meeting's visibility.

Wherever your meeting is in the outreach process, you are welcome to join the conversation. As in Year One, the approach will be to support one another, encouraging each meeting to proceed as it is led, while also challenging ourselves to try new approaches.

WHAT YOU NEED TO DO if you feel your meeting is OPC-ready:

1. Bring this invitation to the attention of your monthly meeting or refer it to the appropriate committee for consideration.
2. Include the document "To Discern If Your Meeting is Ready for More Active Outreach," available online at <http://www.nyyym.org/sites/default/files/MeetingDiscernment-QuakerOutreach.pdf>.
3. Shepherd the process along if you feel so led!

THERE ARE THREE SIMPLE REQUIREMENTS of your monthly meeting in order to participate in the OPC:

1. Designate at least one person—but preferably two—from your meeting to participate in 90-minute conference calls held every other month between November 2017 and June 2018.
2. Agree to undertake at least one inviting/welcoming activity—large or small—from a long list of suggested options or from your meeting's own unique list.
3. By June 2018 provide a one-page summary of your meeting's experience and learnings.

DEADLINE:** We request that your meeting respond no later than **October 15**. Hopefully this allows enough time for this invitation to be considered in good order by your monthly meeting.

CONTACT: please contact one of the OWG co-conveners (see below) with your decision as well as with any questions you might have.

With enthusiasm for sharing the Light,

Co-conveners of the Outreach Working Group

Robin Whitely

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*Read more about the Outreach Working Group and the OPC on our webpage on the nyym.org website. The name Outreach Practitioners' Circle reflects that we are learners together and that we approach Quaker outreach as a "practice" rather than as an event or occasional activity.

**We expect that a fair number of the monthly meetings who participated in Year One will be continuing their participation. This limits the number of new meetings who can join. If the interest is there, we encourage your meeting to act now to join the OPC process.

Bridging the Divide

White Privilege: A New Way of Looking at a Very Old Condition


Linda Clarke
Brooklyn Meeting

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evident in the area of family wealth accrual. While the proof that this is the case is abundant and that white privilege is more than a mere idea, remedies are nonexistent. History has shown that charity, government “handouts” and tokenism have failed to produce any substantial or lasting change. Are there other remedies? And why are we so reluctant to talk about reparations?

Perhaps the shortage of remedies and the reluctance to talk about reparations has something to do with concerns about “white fragility.” This concept holds that white privilege can be viewed as unstable racial equilibrium and that when this equilibrium is challenged, the resulting social/racial stress can become intolerable and trigger a range of defensive responses. Does white fragility explain the poverty of meaningful responses to what we well know to be injustice of monstrous proportions? The concept of white fragility raises the issue of whether or not white privilege becomes just another impotent model for the study of racism with no tangible solution.

Maybe the time has come to move beyond analysis and into a deeper human dimension.

If we view racism as a spiritual disease, it becomes incumbent upon Friends to define a spiritual basis to fund the necessary passion for meaningful social change. Just as Quakers who fought for abolition forged a spiritual and political alliance between the Bible and the Declaration of Independence to create and maintain the necessary moral fortitude to stand up to slavery, we can bring our faith into the modern world. Most, if not all of us, agree that we are one in the light. From this faith we might ask ourselves how our behavior is at odds with the deepest truth of who we are and be guided individually and corporately toward more real and sustainable improvement. 

Exploring Being and Needing Allies

6th-8th Grade Group
with Chris DeRoller &
Robin Rainwater
Powell House

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- Who they're friends with
- Height
- Body (how they look)
- Whether they wear a safety pin or not
- Ideas/opinions
- Their weight
- Immigration status
- Family situation
- Parenting

We had them look at the circles they travel in, since those are the places they can most readily have an impact, and asked them to share about things they wanted to confront but didn't know how to.

This is their list:

- Transgender friends coming out and being afraid
- Age gap between 6th and 8th grade
- Harassing
- Bullying
- When other people are saying things you don't agree with
- Judging
- Slut shaming
- Labels
- Racial slurs
- Body insecurities
- Coming out to your friends
- Gun violence
- Peer pressure
- Pollution
- War
- Holding a lot of secrets for your friends
- Being honest about the situation
- Hunger

**We all, old and young,
were reminded of the power
we have to make a difference
in our communities...**

We asked them what keeps them from getting involved when someone is being harassed:

- The person doesn't want help
- Not sure what is needed
- Afraid of being taken advantage of
- Size—physically not able to help

- Fear of retaliation or violence
- Becoming a target myself
- Not being taken seriously
- Not being the one needed and the person who is wanted isn't helping
- Fear of making things worse
- Need more people to help
- Need to do something but not an opening to do it


Then we had them reflect on times when they themselves were harassed and what they wanted in that moment. They responded:

- Somebody to listen
- Somebody to hug me
- Somebody to notice
- Somebody to help me understand why
- Someone to intervene
- An adult to step in appropriately

As they looked at this last list many realized that they could actually do a number of the things mentioned, particularly the first three or four. When it came to intervening (responding directly to an aggressor) we explored the difference between aggressive (denying others'

rights) and assertive (respecting others' rights without denying your own) ways of interacting and the subtle but important difference between standing up for someone and standing with them.

We handed them a list of personal rights to discuss so that they might recognize when their rights or others' were being violated (see sidebar). For many it felt good to be reminded that it was OK to make mistakes, to change one's mind, to take time to slow down and think, to ask for information and (gasp) to do less than humanly possible.

The deep conversations and focus on being aware of others spilled over into free times and improv moments, filling the weekend with laughter and drawing us together. We all, old and young, were reminded of the power we have to make a difference in our communities and also, that it is okay to reach out and ask for help when we need it. 

Are you hiding your Light under a bushel?


Jeffrey Aaron
NYYM Nominating
Committee

(continued from page 3)

little or no travel, and committees are finding other new ways to do our work more readily. When travel is necessary, YM funds are available.

Through service on a committee we learn about Quaker process, the focus and concerns of the committees, and ourselves. Many active Friends, including the author of this article, will testify gratefully to the personal growth and satisfaction that they experience serving the good works of our beloved yearly meeting. If you sense that you have a leading to offer to the yearly meeting, contact someone on the nominating committee. We will be happy to talk to you about committee service and help you discern the best match for your gifts. It is likely to give you a sense of pride that you are sustaining the viability of our beloved historic community.

Nominating Committee members:

Jeffrey Aaron, jephreyaaron@aol.com
Elaine Learnard, elearnard@gmail.com
Deb Dickinson, debdickinson2@gmail.com
Deb Wood, dnbwood@aol.com 

Personal Rights Handout

You have –

1. The right to act in ways that promote your dignity and self-respect as long as others' rights are not violated in the process.
2. The right to be treated with respect
3. The right to say no and not feel guilty.
4. The right to experience and express your feelings.
5. The right to take time to slow down and think.
6. The right to change your mind.
7. The right to ask for what you want.
8. The right to do less than you are humanly capable of doing.
9. The right to ask for information.
10. The right to make mistakes.
11. The right to feel good about yourself.

From *The Assertive Option: Your Rights and Responsibilities* by P. Jakubowski and A. J. Lange

My Sudden Understanding of Early Quakers' Mysticism

Laurence Clarkberg
Ithaca Monthly Meeting

Quakerism is mystical. Sitting in silence is mystical. And yet you won't find any Quaker guide to mystical experience. We offer no gurus who will guide you on a path of advancement. We are all on our own together. There are good reasons for this. But I suspect that something is missing from contemporary Quakerism. Something that the early Quakers had in spades. Early Quakers were flagrant mystics.

Last October I had an intense mystical experience. It began when a spiritually charged person came up to me on the street and touched me. Their touch triggered in me what was the most powerful event I have ever experienced: for many seconds I felt intense blissful energy coursing through my body. I felt like my body was suddenly a volcano while at the same time I had just been struck by lightning. This event was followed by weeks of extreme emotions. I found myself skipping for joy one day and then sobbing uncontrollably the next day. And that in turn was followed by a weird urge to try to make myself a better person, which lasted for months.

I was baffled by what was happening to me. A Friend explained that I had had a "spiritual awakening," a sudden release of spiritual energy that coursed through my body. Was my experience similar to that of the early Quakers? Certainly they describe similar conversion events, which they called "convincement". By this they didn't mean being intellectually convinced of reasons to convert to Quakerism, they meant an inward experience that affected them deeply, like mine.

Here's another possible similarity. Since my awakening, my spiritual energy sometimes grows unbearably intense and makes my body contort and shake. It's possible that Quakers (and Shakers) got their very names because they were observed to quake from their spiritual energy.

My awakening was followed by months of self-examination and change similar to what George Fox called "regeneration". He said that during regeneration people "neither sin nor are able to sin." That speaks to my experience. I suddenly became unable to lie. I became a vegetarian. I was unable to watch violent TV shows. My righteousness really annoyed my family. The early Quakers had similar annoying righteous urges: the whole Thee and Thou thing, the refusal to doff their hats, the refusal to swear oaths, etc. Their actions seem random and bizarre today, but in the context of a spiritual awakening they make sense to me.

Awakening people report having paranormal experiences. I've experienced some myself. A few were frightening, but most were kind of cool. In his Journal George Fox reports that he had many premonitions, performed healings, and had mystical experiences. And John Woolman in his Journal describes an uncanny premonition of the Civil War. Contemporary Quakers downplay this history.

What happened to Quaker mysticism? The children of the early Quakers were not mystics. They attempted to replicate the outward appearance of their previous generation's mysticism with rules and regulations. As a result Quakerism entered into a decline that we still have not recovered from. Can a new exploration of mystical experience bring us back to our roots, and provide a way forward?

Read a longer version of this essay at <https://medium.com/@laurenceclarkberg>

I welcome people asking me more about my experience and sharing their experiences with me. You can contact me at laurence@clarkberg.org

Three Light holders at Summer Sessions.
By Lucy Sikes.

A Newcomer's Guide to Today's Pacifism

Michael Meade
Chappaqua Friends Meeting

Recent events have drawn stark contrasts and exposed contradictions in Quakers' reaction to the new doctrine of knee-jerk military response to global conflicts. The philosophical underpinnings of "pacifism" are brought up for discussion when the moral justification of recent events is questioned in news reports. How are Quakers to frame "pacifism" in a new global paradigm? Is rejection of a "justified war" model the same as "pacifism?" When commentators find military response to humanitarian crises appropriate (or not) do they assume a stance on "pacifism?" The application of a "pacifist" standard can tend towards "absolutism" or "relativism," and an understanding of the difference helps us navigate today's troubled waters.

The political discourse in our United States of America has drawn sharp contrasts between the opposing views on this subject since William Penn set up shop in what is now Pennsylvania. Inherent to this influence is the doctrine of "justified war," which held, until George W. Bush declared the so-called "Bush Doctrine," that the USA would not engage in aggressive war-like behavior unless it was an in-kind response to attacks against America. The "justified war" doctrine, however managed or manipulated, drew the USA into many wars and state-sponsored acts of violence throughout our history. Much of the time, Quakers found it suitable to their consciences to object in various ways to this violence. It has become understood, since becoming a more sharply drawn issue in WWII, that Quakers can seek an exemption from fighting in the military with a Conscientious Objector (CO) status. Being close to my generation, I knew several young men during the Vietnam draft era (not Quakers) who went to great lengths to achieve this status to varying degrees of success. The only guarantor of receiving a CO status was a lifelong participation in Quakers. Since the Korean conflict a relativist accommodation has been made in official USA policy which allows CO's to serve in support roles that emphasize saving lives, such as nurses, doctors, medics, rescue swimmers

and the like. But, an increase in jingoistic "patriotism" has pressed Quakers into reconsidering the contradictions and dilemmas within a generalized ideal of "pacifism."

....A commitment to "pacifism," by all accounts, begins within the conscience of an individual and translates to action either by oneself or within a social order. Individuals can maintain a commitment to "pacifism," sometimes at a cost, by honoring a Biblical admonition to "turn the other cheek." The dilemma arises when a social order (nation), is challenged and a response is required (as perceived by policy makers) to keep the peace. (This concept enabled Ronald Reagan to give a missile system the oxymoronic name "Peacekeepers.") An "absolutist" response holds that the only valid adherence to a pacifist principle is complete disavowal of any association with violence. Indeed, many Quakers hold that this "absolute" belief is the only true expression of the historic tradition of the faith.

But a more thoughtful consideration begins to flirt with what is known as "relativism." Relativists hold that a proper response to threats or violence is measured and calibrated. Volunteering for military service as a CO is widely accepted among Quakers and is the most visible form of "relativism." Voting for politicians who believe in aggressive postures in order to "keep the peace" can be argued as being consistent, in a "relativist" manner, with Quakers....

Read the rest of this article at nyym.org/content/spark-2017-09-newcomers-guide-todays-pacifism

Soliciting articles on OUTREACH for November's Spark

Do you or your meeting have experience in some aspect of outreach that you would like to share with Friends? The possibilities are many—from speaking your own truth as a Quaker to strangers, to making your meeting more welcoming to visitors. Please contact co-coordinators of November SPARK to indicate your interest and proposed topic: Arlene Johnson (arlene_johnson@verizon.net) or Robin Whitely (rlwhitely@comcast.net)

Submission deadline: Oct. 10.



The Seed of God is the Quaker Message

Karen Tibbals

Rahway-Plainfield Meeting

Today, the phrase “that of God within” may be the closest thing to a creed that Quakers have. Notable 20th century Quaker Lewis Benson wrote about it, as Steve Davison reviewed in his blog, Through the Flaming Sword. (Read that post at throughtheflamingsword.wordpress.com/category/early-quaker-theology/that-of-god/page/2/)

Steve feels today’s Quakers don’t think about or even really understand what that phrase means. I have talked with Friends about this phrase and have come to understand that what is underneath it, for some Quakers, is a reverence for the sacredness of life. This is similar to the metaphor of the world as God’s body, as conceptualized by the theologian Sallie McFague. (For those interested in this concept, I recommend her book *The Body of God*.)

But I think what the early Quakers meant by the term “that of God within” goes beyond both Sallie McFague’s Body of God metaphor and the current Quaker understanding of the phrase. Not only is the phrase not fully understood, but our understanding lacks the power that early Quakers assigned to the phrase.

To understand the power behind the phrase, we need to know what other words or phrases early Quakers used. British Quaker and theologian Patricia Williams developed a helpful list of terms that she found used interchangeably for “that of God” in writings of early Quakers: “living bread, teacher, voice, peace, lamb, morning star, that of God within, Christ within, Word of God within the heart, witness, anointing, grace, covenant, measure, cross, life in Christ, the life in the world, and confusingly, the gospel.” Not on her list, but also used, were “spark,” “the Light within,” and “seed of God.”

Robert Barclay (1648–1690), the first male Quaker systematic theologian (for the first female, see below) used the concept when questioned by opponents of Quakerism about the existence of evil people. Williams explains Barclay’s thoughts as follows: “In some it (that of God or the Seed of God) remains undeveloped. In some, it is rejected. ... It can be,

and is, resisted. However, in people who do not resist it but receive it, it matures.” (All quotes from Patricia Williams, Quakerism, *A Theology for Our Times*, 2008, p. 14.)

That Seed of God is not natural to humans, as Barclay says: “Adam did not retain in his nature any will or light capable to give him knowledge in spiritual things...for whatsoever real good any man doth, it proceedeth not from his nature...but from the Seed of God in him, as a new visitation of life, in order to bring him out of this natural condition.” (Barclay’s *Apology*, p. 97)

Elizabeth Bathurst, the first female Quaker theologian (1655–1685), who was probably writing after Barclay’s *Apology* was published in English in 1678, agreed with Barclay that humans had both the Seed of Sin and the Seed of God within. As she wrote in her seminal work, *Truth’s Vindication*, “the Seed of Sin, which Satan hath sown in us, ...defiled...our first and fallen Nature.” In her clearest description of the Seed of God, she doesn’t say those exact words but uses related terms: “God hath communicated and given unto every man a measure of the light of his own Son, a measure of grace, or a measure of the Spirit, which the scripture expresses by several names, as sometimes of the Seed of the kingdom....the light that makes all things manifest.”

According to Bathurst, our goodness doesn’t come from our human nature; it comes from the Seed of God. Echoing Barclay, she says: “for whatsoever real good any man doth, it proceedeth not from his nature, as he is man, or the son of Adam; but from the Seed of God in him, as a new visitation of life, in order to bring him out of this natural condition: so that, though it be in him, yet it is not of him.”

She agrees that the Seed of God can be resisted: “this may be resisted and rejected in both, in which then God is said to be resisted and pressed down... And to those who thus resist and refuse him, he becomes their condemnation.”

A Biblical example of resisting the Seed of God is the rich young man who resists giving away all his worldly goods to follow Jesus. (Matthew 19:22)

Learning about the concept of the Seed of God has enhanced my worship practice. My prayer for myself each day is that I am open to God’s will. The Seed of God matures in me when I spend time in worship

and other spiritual practices. It is my choice, my free will, whether to be open to the Seed of God.

Most importantly, the Seed of God is transforming. Bathurst and Barclay both call its fruits a “new visitation of life.” Bathurst says it brings one “out of this natural condition.” Marcelle Martin covers the topic of the transformation experienced by Quakers (both historical and contemporary) wonderfully in her book, *Our Life is Love*. How many of us Quakers today can say we have been changed by an encounter with the Seed of God? Or are we just relying on “that of God” in the sacredness of life and not encountering the power to be found in a relationship with God?

Personally, I have experienced this power. When I am open to the Seed of God, I receive leadings and messages from God. This Seed of God doesn’t lead me in a worldly way, and doesn’t give me rational messages; instead, it leads me in a way that makes sense to God. For example, several years ago I left my well-paying job and went to study Quakerism at the Earlham School of Religion, which made no wordly sense. At the same time, I have become more open and able to listen to others. This happened because of the transformation I experience as I open myself to the Seed of God. As a wise person recently said to me, “God doesn’t call the prepared, God prepares the called.” I believe I am being prepared for my ministry of helping to birth the Quakers & Business group.

This concept is particularly useful when someone’s behavior is upsetting to me. Focusing on negative energy is unhelpful. Instead, I pray for God to open that person’s heart to the Seed of God in them. This prayer relieves me from the desire to judge or change that person.

Finally, to me, the concept of the Seed of God represents a core message of Quakerism. The message that the Seed of God is transformative resonated with the early Quakers and is still true today. It is my belief that our job as Quakers is not to carry the message about how we think others should act. The core message needs to be that everyone can be changed if they spend time experiencing the Seed of God. We can change the world if we convince others to open themselves to the Seed of God within them, and not close themselves off from it—whatever they choose to call it.

For those who are interested in reading Elizabeth Bathurst’s *Truth Vindicated*, an online copy can be found at the Digital Quaker Collection of the Earlham School of Religion Website.



Powell House Looks to the Future

The Powell House Committee continues its work on a strategic planning process to identify the challenges Powell House faces over the next five years. Many of you have participated in this process by responding to the surveys we distributed. We are deeply grateful and are working to integrate these thoughts into the strategic plan.

At the May Powell House Committee meeting we approved the following as working versions:

- **Mission statement:** To foster spiritual growth after the manner of Friends and to strengthen the application of Friends’ testimonies in the world.
- **Vision statement:** To be the place of heart-felt welcome, where all are empowered to live authentically in the world and to recognize truth and call it forth from one another.
- **Values statement:** Friends believe there is that of God in every person. Each of us has the capacity to experience and respond to the movement of Spirit in our lives. We honor the upwelling of Spirit and its expression in one another, including children, the aged and all in between. Grounded by this Spirit, we:
 - recognize the dignity of every person
 - accept our responsibility to care for the earth and all its inhabitants
 - reject violence of any kind
 - strive to conduct ourselves with integrity and to focus on what is essential, and
 - embrace community through active listening, shared work and joyful connections

We plan to revisit these statements throughout the process and would appreciate any comments you might have.

Work on the strategic plan continues. In September, the Committee will hold a retreat to finalize it. Please hold us in the Light.

In Peace,
Heidi Kelly, Clerk; Regina Baird Haag and Dennis Haag, Co-Executive Directors

For the full report, see nyym.org/content/spark-2017-09-powell-house-looks-future



The 2017 New York Yearly Meeting Fall Sessions is being hosted by All Friends Regional Meeting*. Everyone is welcome and encouraged to attend!

Friday's dinner and evening event will be held at Chatham-Summit Friends Meetinghouse, and the Saturday and Sunday events will be at Caldwell University. A detailed schedule will be available in the October InfoShare and online by the end of September. The Host Task Group looks forward to meeting you!

We on the Host Task Group (HTG), listed below, want you to feel welcome, whether you are an experienced participant in these Yearly Meeting sessions or are a newcomer to the world of Friends. At the beginning of our weekend, Friday night, we hope to create a deep sense of connectedness. We want you to be comfortable and we wish to anticipate your needs, so be sure to let us know what they are! We want you to share healthy meals with friends old and new. We want families to feel especially welcome and reassured that their children—from infants through teens—will be well cared for and engaged in a meaningful program. In sum, we want the mechanics of the places and the spaces to go smoothly so that you can experience the aliveness and the Spirit moving through the life and work of New York Yearly Meeting.

HTG members are working hard towards these ends. We would like to engage you in helping make all of this happen. The most important thing you can do in that regard is to make a commitment to coming, and to let us know you're coming by the registration due date, which is Monday, October 30th. We are Setting the Table for you, and we need to know how many spoons to provide! So please do honor the registration deadline.

Is there an obstacle that keeps you from being able to attend? We encourage you to seek the help of your meeting community or of your committee clerk to smooth the way! Remember that resources are available to help with the cost (NYYM Equalization Fund, for one). Finally, please don't stay away because you

can't be there for everything. Come for whatever time you have: each person is a part of the whole.

NYYM Committee Clerks:

Please register by October 30th, and remind your members to do so as well. Also, please submit your requests for room space for your committee meetings and for your displays by this same due date. If you have a display or handouts, try to arrive early on Saturday to set up. Be sure to assign someone to close up displays and remove extra materials before leaving.

Clerks of Monthly Meetings:

Encourage members to attend Fall Sessions, remind them to register by the due date, and be sure to forward any NYYM email announcements to your Meeting's email list. Those who feel led to attend may require Meeting assistance, both financial and physical.

Parents: We hope you will come and bring your children. Please read the article in the October InfoShare about the Children and Youth Programs, so that you can see that plans are in place to care for your children, whatever their ages. Contact either of the Youth Program coordinators with any questions or needs that you foresee. Please register promptly, so that we know how many children and youth will be attending, and note that a filled-in and signed Medical Information Form is required for each child. Finally, we welcome Friendly Adult Presences (FAPs)! Again, contact the Youth Program coordinators.

Everyone! Below are details about the registration procedures, meals, fees, and lodging. Directions will be online. For who-to-call-about-what, we have provided a list of Helpful People and their contact information. Visit nnym.org/session/fall-sessions-2017 for further information, including advance reports and other updates.

Sustainability: We ask participants to consider their environmental impact when attending any NYYM gathering. Carpool with other local attendees, for instance, using the most fuel-efficient vehicle of the group. Bring a travel mug and water bottle with you—some even bring their own utensils and plates! Bring a warm sweater, so

that we don't have to turn up the heat in the entire building for the comfort of two or three people. Instead of printing out the advance documents, save them to your computer or tech device and read them electronically. If you do print them out, be sure to share! Return your nametag holder when you last leave the venue, so they can be used again. Whatever ways you can think of to lower your carbon footprint, reduce, and reuse, will be greatly appreciated.

Hospitality: Hospitality is available with local Friends for Friday and/or Saturday nights by request on a first-to-ask, first-assigned basis. The Hospitality Coordinator is listed below, along with a link to a list of local hotels and motels.

We look forward to welcoming you to the 2017 NYYM Fall Sessions!

Schedule & Locations

Friday, Nov. 10:

Dinner and evening event

Chatham-Summit
Friends Meeting
House
158 Southern Blvd.
Chatham, NJ 07928

Contact: Melanie-Claire Mallison,
MsMellie@gmail.com, 607-280-8182

Saturday and Sunday, Nov. 11-12:

Meetings, child and youth programs, and meals

Caldwell University
120 Bloomfield Ave.
Caldwell, NJ 07006
973 618-3000, www.caldwell.edu

Contact: Melanie-Claire Mallison,
see above

FOR DIRECTIONS: Please use Google or check nnym.org/session/fall-sessions-2017.

Host Task Group & Other Helpful People

Host Task Group Co-Clerks:

Alice Coulombe and Claire Simon
(*contact information below*)

Audio-Visual Arrangements: Rob Garber, rob.garber@verizon.net, cell 973-420-3943. (Also, Caldwell University is supplying an AV Tech.)

Caldwell University Liaison and Food Coordinator: Melanie-Claire Mallison, MsMellie@gmail.com, cell 607-280-8182

CSMM Meals Coordinator: Jill Nanfeldt, home 908-834-8288, cell 908-405-6313, jillnanfeldt@mac.com

Committee Meeting Space

Requests: Claire Simon, quaker-artist@verizon.net, 973-292-0834

Display Space Requests: Hal Haydock, 973-334-2576

Hospitality Coordinator: Rae de la Cretaz, catsingr@aol.com, 973-226-0328.

Hotels: See www.caldwell.edu/parents/lodging — this link gives details on local hotels/motels.

Registrar: Alice Coulombe, aa.lleenn@verizon.net, 845-638-1864. Cell: 845-893-1709.

Transportation Coordinator:

Jotham Bailey, jothwadel@gmail.com, home 973-763-4054, cell 973-207-9537.

Friday Night meal and program, CSMM: Jill Nanfeldt, *see above*

Volunteer Coordinator: Contact: Melanie-Claire Mallison, *see above*

Youth Program: Sylke Jackson (sylkej@gmail.com, 845-300-9779) and Jim Mandala (jmandala@verizon.net, 908-889-0706). See October InfoShare and nnym.org/session/fall-sessions-2017 for more information.

PLEASE REGISTER BY MONDAY, OCTOBER 30

Please return one registration form for each household.

Please call or email Alice Coulombe, Registrar, if you have any questions on registering for Fall Sessions: 845-638-1864, aa.lleenn@verizon.net.

Register online at: <http://nnym.org/session/fall-sessions-2017>

OR: print out the registration form found at nnym.org (or use the form on the back of this issue of *Spark*), fill in the blanks, and mail it to: NYYM, 15 Rutherford Pl., New York NY 10003.

If you need a paper copy of the registration form, please call the NYYM office at 212-673-5750 as soon as possible with your street address, so we can mail a copy to you! Please mail the paper copy back to the YM office well before October 30.

Please pay online using the registration link above, or mail a check to the NYYM office (address above) payable to NYYM. Include your check with your mailed registration form.

*AFRM is composed of Chatham-Summit, Montclair, Ridgewood, Dover-Randolph, and Rockland Monthly Meetings.



Registration for Fall Sessions • Friday–Sunday, November 10-12, 2017

Friday: Chatham-Summit Meeting, 158 Southern Blvd., Chatham, NJ 07928

Saturday & Sunday: Caldwell University, 120 Bloomfield Ave., Caldwell, NJ 07006

REGISTRATION DUE DATE: MONDAY, OCTOBER 30, 2017

Please return one form for each household to: New York Yearly Meeting, 15 Rutherford Place, New York, NY 10003.

You can also REGISTER AND PAY ONLINE. See nyym.org/session/fall-sessions-2017

Please call or email Alice Coulombe, Registrar, if you have any registration questions: 845-638-1864, aa.lleenn@verizon.net

ADULT REGISTRATION

NAME(s)			
Address			
Home phone #:		Cell phone #:	
Email address			
Meeting			
Are you a NYYM committee clerk?			

YOUTH REGISTRATION (0-18 YEARS)

Please note, children and youth programs will be arranged **only if registered by October 30**. Parents may be responsible for any youth not registered by then.

Parents MUST fill out a medical form for each child, downloadable here: www.nyym.org/sites/default/files/NYYM-Youth-Medical-Form.doc

Child/Youth Name(s)	Age	Arrival Date/Time	Departure Date/Time

HOSPITALITY

Please be sure to request hospitality by October 30. Requests received after October 30 may not be honored.

You may call Rae de la Cretaz at 973-226-0328 or email catsingr@aol.com with any questions.

I will make my own arrangements					
I would like home hospitality for:		Fri. night		Sat. night	Can bring sleeping bag?
I would like to be housed with:					
I am traveling with:					
Willing to room with another Friend?					
<input type="checkbox"/> Stairs a problem		<input type="checkbox"/> Allergies		<input type="checkbox"/> Smoker	
Other special needs:					

REGISTRATION and MEAL FEES

# of people	Meal	Cost	Total
	Friday evening soup & salad at Chatham-Summit	\$10	
	Saturday light breakfast at Caldwell University	\$5	
	Saturday lunch at Caldwell University adult & youth (13 years and older) child (12 years and younger)	\$11 free	
	Saturday dinner at Caldwell University adult & youth (13 years and older) child (12 years and younger)	\$18 free	
	Sunday light breakfast at Caldwell University	\$5	
	Sunday lunch at Caldwell University adult & youth (13 years and older) child (12 years and younger)	\$11 free	
	Registration fees (Until October 30) per adult (18 years and older) per child & youth (17 years and younger)	\$25 \$15	
	Late registration fee (after October 30): Add \$10 per adult		
Request from NYYM Equalization Fund (subtract amount):			
Contribution to the NYYM Equalization Fund (add amount):			
TOTAL (Enclose a check payable to NYYM):			