



SPARK

New York Yearly Meeting
The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

Volume 48, Number 4

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September 2018

Spirit-led Structures

**“God So Loved
the World that
He Didn’t Send a
Committee”**

Herb Lape
Westbury Meeting

Recovering a Spirit-Led structure in NYYM has been a New York Yearly Meeting concern for many years now. In 2001, I served on an ad hoc “Committee on Committees”—you have to love the ironic wisdom of naming it this. It was “charged with bringing forward recommendations on ways to simplify and strengthen the yearly meeting’s committee structure.”

In addition to listening to current thoughts and testimony, we sought guidance from the past, from Friends who have gone before us and wrestled with the same problem of finding that elusive balance between energetic spirit-led service that can at times “out run its guide” and structures of accountability that can become rigid and stifling of Life. This has been a delicate balancing act throughout our history. We were born in an enthusiastic outburst of Spirit that “turned the world upside down.” Early Quaker leaders saw little need for structure. George Fox described his early ministry as simply, “turning people to their Inward Teacher and leaving them there,” and many responded, discovering a life-giving transformation within and social transformation and justice without.

However, Quaker leaders soon realized that “some are so great pretenders to inward motions and

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**Does Structure
Equal Hierarchy?**

Lori Heninger
Shrewsbury Meeting

As a Quaker with 25+ years’ experience in non-profit management, leadership, and consulting, I can say that the way Quakers are organized and how we link worship and structure has been a beacon to me in my thinking about how to help organizations function more successfully. That said, revisiting and rethinking the systems and structures of New York Yearly Meeting can lead to new ideas, new relationships, and greater clarity of purpose within the group.

For many groups, one of the most difficult concepts to tease out and, hopefully, leave behind, is that of conflating structure with hierarchy. Quakers have done a great deal to uncouple these two, and have shown that effective decision-making can be accomplished and action taken without power being invested in an individual “leader”. A step beyond this is an organization committing to the idea that organizational structures and practices must reflect the mission or purpose of the organization—because if we want sustainable change, the systems and structures we develop and use to create that change must reflect the world we want to see.

Nonprofits don’t often operate internally in ways that reflect their mission. A group working on women’s rights may have a meager maternity leave policy. One focusing on children may not allow flex time for staff with children. International development groups have been

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The end of a meeting for worship with a concern for business at New York Yearly Meeting’s Summer Sessions. The Junior Yearly Meeting came into the Auditorium singing “River.” The gathered adults joined in the singing and added some silent Quaker applause.

Join us for
Fall Sessions!
see page 7

Invitation to Fall Sessions November 9-11

Dear Friends,

Some years back, I suggested that in the interest of clearness, we change the name of our Spring and Fall “Representative Meetings” to Spring and Fall Sessions for two reasons: because many meetings are unable to send a representative or neglect to name one to report back, and because all Friends are welcome to come and participate, not just individual representatives. Fall Sessions is when we consider our upcoming budget, so the presence of Friends from our many local meetings is critical. The budget plan may be very different this year.

We will also hear an update on Pay as Led for Summer Sessions 2019, which will involve a totally new registration process, and we expect to hear some powerful proposed minutes on immigration and climate change. A travel minute will be presented along with a report that is likely to be inspiring.

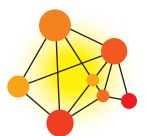
Many of our servant leaders,

including me, are new to their jobs. We are looking forward to your gifts and your support to help move forward matters that are important to all of us. I hope you will be with us in Spirit if you cannot be there in body, but your presence is critical to our beloved community. In an otherwise deeply stressed world, it is a joy to spend time together with Friends. And consider pressing your meeting to name a representative to report back!

In the Light,
Jeffrey Aaron
Clerk, New York Yearly Meeting

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Notices

New Members

Suzanne Beaumont—Saranac Lake
Kevin John Buckley—Rahway-Plainfield
Linda Griggs—Ithaca
Henry Hoffman—Purchase
Mareike Larsen—Farmington
Jill Marie—Ithaca
Michael Roberts—Montclair

Births/Adoptions

Mira Ellen Haines, born on May 30, 2018, to V. Isabelle Haines and Alexander Haines-Stephan, members of Mohawk Valley

Transfers

Phyllis Rantanen Bunker, to Poplar Ridge from Guatemala Friends Meeting.
Thomas Houghton, to Cornwall from Woodstown (PYM).
Elisa Stewart, to Poplar Ridge from Palm Beach Monthly Meeting

Deaths

Edna Aldrich, member of Farmington, on May 16, 2018
Joan Maude Beers, member of Rockland, on July 15, 2018
Anne Clyde Birdsall, member of Rahway-Plainfield, on April 11, 2018
Irene Neye Butler Briggs, member of Easton, on June 30, 2017
Shirley Collin, member of Adirondack, on November 2, 2017
Ruth DeVol, member of Adirondack, on June 2, 2018
Jean Dixon, member of Adirondack, on June 25, 2018
Lorraine Fezer, member of Ithaca, on August 10, 2018
Ella Gelling, member of Rahway-Plainfield, on October 6, 2017
Naomi Paz Greenberg, member of Flushing, on August 7, 2018.
Betty Hoffis, member of Adirondack, on April 10, 2018
F. Raymond Jenkins, member of Saranac Lake, on January 10, 2018
Mary Victoria Jenkins, member of Saranac Lake, on August 16, 2017
Joyce Kerr, member of Collins, on July 9, 2018
Susan Roberts, member of Old Chatham, on May 30, 2018
Margaret Smith, member of Albany, on July 11, 2018
Donald Van Blake, member of Rahway-Plainfield, on June 5, 2018
Richard Voigt, member of Rockland, on July 4, 2018

Around Our Yearly Meeting

NEWS

Peacemaker Awards

Veterans for Peace and the Binghamton Community Friends Meeting (Quaker) presented \$350 Stu Naismith Peacemaker awards to four graduating high school seniors, two at Chenango Valley and two at Chenango Forks High Schools. Kelly Smith, Kelly Thompson, Alexander McRoberts and Kate Flynn received the awards, given annually in memory of Stu Naismith (1927-2011), who served in the Navy in World War II, taught in both school districts, and was a founder of the local chapter of Veterans for Peace. The students earned the awards by working for peace in everyday life, preparing for further education, and writing an essay on peacemaking.

New Peace Working Group Listserv!

The NYM Peace Working Group invites Friends to join our new listserv! Its purpose is to share information among the NYM community about potential peace witness, and to prompt discernment about peace witness that the working group might recommend the yearly meeting support as a body.

To join, visit this page: groups.google.com/forum/#!aboutgroup/nyym-peace-working-group and ask to be added as a member of the group.

World Quaker Day is October 7, 2018

Join the Quaker family around the world in worship and celebration for World Quaker Day, now in its 5th year. The theme is *Crossing Cultures, Sharing Stories*, celebrating the diversity of expression within our shared experience of worship. See www.worldquakerday.org/ for more info, ideas, and resources.



Peacemaker Awards: Cheryl Naismith Ryder, Peggy Naismith, awardees Kelly Smith and Kelly Thompson, and Joyce Thomas of the Quaker Meeting, at the Chenango Valley awards ceremony on June 4, 2018.

UPCOMING EVENTS

DrawDown: Comprehensive Plan to Reverse Global Warming
Monday, Sept. 24, 7:00–9:00 p.m.
 at the New York Society for Ethical Culture, 2 West 64th Street at Central Park West. DRAWDOWN: THE MOST COMPREHENSIVE PLAN EVER PROPOSED TO REVERSE GLOBAL WARMING, presentations & panel discussion moderated by Bill McKibben. The DrawDown Project demonstrates conclusively that we do have the means at hand to reverse global warming. The evening gives participants an opportunity to sign up for action teams to begin planning to implement the Drawdown solutions. Tickets (\$10) at: drawdown-ethicalnyc.eventbrite.com

Obadiah & Friends Coffee House
 Purchase Meeting will be holding an Obadiah & Friends Coffee House **Friday, September 28, 2018**. Doors will open at 7:00 pm; open mic at 7:30 pm; music by Jeff Domenick at 8:30 pm. Suggested donation: \$15 Adults; \$10 Students and Seniors. For more information, visit our website: www.purchasemeeting.org

Powell House Conferences

Powell House is NYM's retreat and conference center in Old Chatham, NY. Upcoming conferences include **Rest for the Weary** with John Calvi on October 5-7; that same weekend is **Super Hero YOU!** for 4-5th graders. The annual **Fall Work Weekend** (with contra dance and storytelling!) is Oct. 26–28. Visit powellhouse.org for more!

OPPORTUNITIES

Funds Available for Friends' Publications and Projects

The Mosher Committee announces that there are limited funds available to assist Friends in the publication/creation of pamphlets, books, recordings, films or any other media. Proposals that have been approved by monthly meetings, worship groups or yearly meeting committees should be submitted to Anita Paul (anitalouisepaul@gmail.com) on behalf of the Mosher Fund Publications Working Group.

Editor's Note

Everyone is invited to write an article for *Spark*. Articles should be spirit-led and are considered a form of ministry. Aim for 400-600 words, please, and include your full name and meeting.

The theme for the November issue of *Spark* is: Cultivating Quakers. How do we increase our Quaker skills—both in practice and in faith? Can we “Quake” harder? How can we encourage the sharing of our (and others’) Quaker gifts?

Please send your submissions for *Spark*, including news from your monthly meeting, to communications@nyym.org by **October 9, 2018**.

In between issues of *Spark* we distribute InfoShare, NYM's emailed newsletter. **Send your meeting's news and events** to communications@nyym.org. Sign up to receive InfoShare—or any of NYM's newsletters—at www.tinyurl.com/nyymconnect.

Keep up to date at facebook.com/newyorkyearlymeeting/ & at twitter.com/NYYMTweets. Peace to all! —Sarah Way

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End Draft Registration

Bill Galvin

Although no one in the US has been drafted since the Vietnam War era, young men have been required to register since 1980. Two years ago, the Senate passed legislation that would extend this requirement to women, but the House did not. Instead, Congress established the National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service as a compromise. The Commission's mandate is to consider issues of national service, both military and civilian, including important questions about Selective Service registration: should it continue, should women be required to register, and are there changes that should be made to the Selective Service System.

It has been decades since there has been a serious national conversation about Selective Service. This is a great opportunity to lift our voices to call for an end to Selective Service (draft) Registration. All branches of our government have affirmed that the primary purpose of Registration is to be prepared for war.

Many young men were not registering for the draft as the law required, so Congress has passed several laws to coerce people to register. Non-registrants are not eligible for federal financial aid to attend college, or most federal jobs or job training. If someone fails to register by his 26th birthday, he is permanently barred from these things. Selective Service lobbied states to pass similar laws, and many states did. More recently, states are linking draft registration with obtaining a driver's license or photo ID. Currently over 40 states have such laws.

In NY and CT, young men are automatically registered with Selective Service when they apply for a driver's license or photo ID from the state. (NJ does not currently have such a law.) Those filing the online FAFSA form to determine eligibility for college financial aid may also be automatically registered.

Such automatic registration presents a problem for those who feel that registering with the Selective Service System is a form of participating in war. It is also a problem for those who are compelled to declare their conscientious objection to war at the time they register for the draft.

The National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service is at work right now to determine the fate of Selective Service (Draft) Registration, and they need to hear from people of conscience! Please submit your written comments by **September 30, 2018...**

...through the Commission's website: www.inspire2serve.gov/content/share-your-thoughts
...or by email: national.commission.on.service.info@mail.mil using the subject line, "Docket 05-2018-01"
...or by mail: National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service, 2530 Crystal Drive, Suite 1000, Room 1029, Arlington, VA 22202. Attn: RFI COMMENT—Docket 05-2018-01

More information is available from the Center on Conscience & War: centeronconscience.org/co/conscientious-objection-and-the-draft/353-commission-on-military-national-and-public-service.html



NYYM's ARCH Program: Aging is What We All Do.

Carl Blumenthal
Brooklyn Meeting

NYYM's Aging, Resources, Consultation, and Help (ARCH) program is a "radical experiment, a major shift in the way Quakers care for each other," according to director Callie Janoff.

How so? Quakers are better at giving than receiving help. ARCH levels the playing field between generosity and gratitude. Like me (age 67) most of the volunteers who visit our older and disabled Friends in their homes are also "of a certain age."

As volunteers listen to the concerns of these Quakers and help them find resources that meet their needs, we begin to confront our own "stuff"—how to thrive in the last third of life. Such reciprocity allows our spirits to grow even as we age. This is what ministry is all about.

As an ARCH volunteer, I am trained in "motivational interviewing." Like us, our peers are challenged by decision-making, especially to maintain independence.

I explore ambivalence by listening in empathy to older Friends'

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Who's the New Clerk?

Jeffrey Aaron
New Brunswick Meeting

One of the great joys of spending time among Friends is listening to personal stories from new and old F/friends about themselves, their interests, their life experiences, their personal histories. It occurred to me many years ago that if we knew more about each other, we could relate to each other more closely in many ways. Wouldn't it be wonderful to know who has what expertise among us, if we need a doctor, a lawyer, a plumber or an electrician? We do some of that, but not nearly enough.

With that in mind, I decided to introduce myself more fully as your new NYYM clerk. I hope that in the future, we can all read many more personal stories about our fellow Friends.


I have been a member of New Brunswick Friends Meeting since I first became a Friend as a young adult about forty years ago. I was raised with many of the values I now call my Quaker values, in particular seeking the best in everyone and cherishing diversity as one of the more delightful experiences of being human. The home in which I was raised is now the New Brunswick meetinghouse, which is a separate story that I would be happy to share with anyone, as long as I get to listen as well.

On entering college at Rutgers in 1963, I expected to follow a career path of opera singing or acting. Although I did not have an operatic voice and became uncomfortable with the world of actors, I have sung all my adult life, mostly in classical choirs, with some occasional solo work. I have been blessed by amazing experiences singing choral works in many different languages at Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center in Manhattan, at the Vatican, at Canterbury Cathedral in England, the Duomo in Florence, Italy, St Mark's Cathedral in Venice, Italy and many other venues, including the Heineken Brewery in Amsterdam! I was privileged to sing the Brahms "Song of Destiny" and "German Requiem" in German, with the Philadelphia Orchestra, recorded and played on television during the funeral proceedings for John F. Kennedy after his assassination. But I ended up spending thirty years as an owner of a large NJ plumbing, heating, and cooling supply house. I retired in 2002.

Before going into business in my late twenties, I was employed as a high school French teacher and a yoga instructor and briefly taught in elementary school. I read poetry on Channel Thirteen as a teen and was drafted into competitive story telling just a few years ago. I performed with guitar as a folk singer from before high school well into adulthood. In my retirement, I have studied linguistic taxonomy and experimental neurology. I speak some Italian as well as French and dabble in several other languages, but I am now rusty in all of them. I love to write and have written autobiographical sketches for my descendants, inspired by my grandfather's autobiography. But don't be impressed with this list of interests; it is all dabbling. I am a true dilettante with little real expertise in any of these areas.

The areas of my greatest dedication during my retirement are being a good spouse to my wife, whom I met on the way to a march on the Pentagon in 1967, a good father of two accomplished daughters and an actively involved grandfather of two beloved pre-teens, and my work as a Quaker. My grandchildren live nearby and I spend quality time with them most days, as I have most of their young lives. We are very close, and I am deeply privileged to share with them their discoveries of the wonders of our astonishing world. I am the only active Quaker in my family, although I have great family support for my work, for which I am grateful.

I agreed to serve as clerk of our beloved yearly meeting when asked because I understand how hard it is to find someone who knows the yearly meeting well, its practices, its members and its issues, someone who has clerking experience and reasonable skills, is available and is willing to serve. And I wanted to give back to an organization that always found and brought out the best in me and helped me become a better person, a place where I came to know so many remarkable people.

I am hoping that this will be the beginning of a series of similar articles by other Friends, in particular those who stand before the body of gathered Friends regularly, and of others, especially our young Friends. Let us get to know each other better; it is always delightful to learn about F/friends. We are blessed with many wonderful stories. Most of them we do not yet know—but we should. 



Spirit-led Structures

Spirit-led Structures for Quaker Meetings

Steven Davison
Central Philadelphia Meeting

A Quaker meeting's structure has the same purpose as the meeting for worship—to channel the movement of the Holy Spirit: to nurture its experience by individuals and the gathered community, and to facilitate its expression in individual and corporate action.

In the late seventeenth century, instead of creating committees, Friends created “meetings” for various purposes—monthly meetings to conduct the community's business, the Meeting for Sufferings to distribute support to Friends in jail and their families, the Monday Morning Meeting to oversee public ministry, etc. They also developed the faith and practice of Quaker ministry, which eventually matured into a culture of eldership for vocal ministry in which ministers and elders were “recorded” and supported by the meeting.

The rise of the liberal movement in Quakerism around the turn of the twentieth century brought a consequential shift to a new structure for meeting life—standing committees.

We now take our committee structure for granted. In some areas of meeting life, particularly in administration and finances, they have served us well. In other areas, I see evidence that committees obstruct the movement of the Spirit, hindering the work of the Spirit in some ways, while often serving it in other ways.

In the areas of outreach, religious education, and witness—that is, for committees organized around a specific concern—the committee structure can lead to a negative outcome. For these functions, I think we should eventually stop using committees and return to a reimagined version of the traditional faith and practice of Quaker ministry.

Here's why I think committees obstruct the work of the Spirit.

In theory, at least, “concerns” rise up because the Spirit has tapped someone on the shoulder. Most of the time, this call from the

Holy Spirit raises in the Friend a concern, an emotional and spiritual feeling about something that seeks to impel them into action. Sometimes, this feeling gels into a more or less clear leading, a call to do something specific about the concern. Sometimes a leading keeps growing, or it multiplies—it leads to other leadings or to a broader call into ministry beyond the original specific task laid upon the Friend by the Spirit.

The meeting has important roles at every stage of this development. For a heart-felt concern or leading, the meeting is called to provide discernment as to whether the leading is of God—whether it's a true leading or not—and clarity about what exactly one is called to do about it. Once the truth, weight, and character of the leading has been established, the meeting needs to support the minister in her calling in whatever ways it can.

When a Friend has been called into the ministry—say, as a gospel (vocal) minister, or as an activist, or in some form of pastoral care—then the meeting needs to establish some form of sustained eldership for the minister, perhaps in the form of a support committee. Central Philadelphia Meeting has established a Gifts and Leadings Committee just for this kind of support.

Committees usually work against the Friend and her concern, leading, or ministry, and against the meeting's proper roles in relation to the call, at virtually every step of the way. For example, probably everybody on a Peace and Social Concerns committee feels a concern. The committee's role, then, would be to help each member of the committee move from a general feeling of concern to the clarity of a call to action. They should hold clearness committees for discernment for their members. Instead, the focus is on what the committee should do, rather than on what the individuals should be doing.

It's even worse for those with clear leadings or a call to some ministry. In a committee, your leading or ministry must compete with those of the other members of the committee (assuming they have a clear calling) and with the main function of a committee, which is to figure out what the committee should be doing. If

other members of the committee do not have a clear leading, then you compete—for time, attention, and resources—with the committee's internal management needs (budget, nominating, etc.) and with whatever its visioning process is. In addition, the various committees organized around a concern have to compete with each other for the meeting's time and resources.


And that's if your leading naturally falls within the purview of one of the meeting's existing committees. If you have a leading that doesn't, the meeting almost always tries to cram you into one anyway, the one that seems the closest to your concern. This brings to the committee a new, relatively unrelated concern, but one felt strongly by someone, when the committee's members already have their own agenda. The result is often conflict, or at least suppression of the new leading.

This dynamic tends to quench the spirit behind new leadings. All of our testimonies, and continuing revelation in general, start out as new—that is, prophetic; that is, Spirit-led—concerns and leadings. They deserve Spirit-led attention and eldership, not a bucket of cold water. I watched all this happen to the earthcare concern in New York Yearly Meeting. Committees quench the Spirit and suppress continuing revelation.

For Friends who are called into a ministry as a life calling, carrying one's ministry in the committee framework is a kind of purgatory, a lifetime spent struggling against the constraints imposed by the structure—or going on alone without the support that God's work really needs.

The alternative to the dysfunctional committee structure for

support of concerns is to return to a reimagined version of the traditional faith and practice of Quaker ministry: to answer that of God in emerging ministers with personal discernment, support, and oversight. Many meetings are not equipped to do this because they don't know or don't understand the tradition well enough to take responsibility for it. But there are gobs of resources in our heritage for the learning.

In the meantime, the committees already organized around a concern should conduct clearness committees for each of its members to discern their leading. As each member becomes clear about what they are called to do, the committee should help the meeting understand its role as support system for the newly identified leadings and ministries. In other words, the existing committees should serve as laboratories for the exploration of a new and revitalized infrastructure for the eldership of Quaker ministry. 

Does Structure Equal Hierarchy?

Lori Heninger
Shrewsbury Meeting

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structured so that headquarters were in developed countries, field staff were from the same developed countries, and programs developed without input from those being served were applied to the area and people served. Today, many international development organizations are decentralizing, establishing country-led bases that are staffed by local people who know the culture. This is at least part of an uncoupling of structure and hierarchy, and is more reflective of the change devel-

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Staff members Chad Gilmartin and Helen Garay Toppins wore bow ties at a NYYM staff “meet and greet” event at Summer Sessions 2018—and posed for a photo with Bronwyn Mohlke.



opment organizations were created to achieve.

My experience has shown me that it is in the best interest of the mission to allow those within an organization and those served by that mission to create and/or contribute to the creation of organizational systems and structures. I know that's not everyone's favorite answer to the question "What does an ideal version of NYYM look like?" but the collective creation of systems and structures, grounded in the values that underpin the mission/purpose, creates a mutual understanding that can result in a deep trust and better, more effective and impactful working/worshiping relationships.

Defining the specific components of the mission or purpose of NYYM is a first step. Considering and lifting up the shared values that underpin these components, and thinking through how each of us defines and relates to those values, is a second step. Looking at the ways in which our beliefs and values impact our views of the best way to get to the mission/purpose leads to an agreed-upon understanding of what we are, together, working to achieve. That understanding allows the group to determine systems and structures so the ends (the mission/purpose) and the means (systems and structures) become one and the same.

"God So Loved the World that He Didn't Send a Committee"

Herb Lape
Westbury Meeting

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revelations of the Spirit that there are no extravagances so wild, which they will not cloak with it." (William Barclay's *Anarchy of Ranters*). Quaker leaders responded by setting up structures—monthly, regional, and yearly meetings, and publishing a Book of Discipline to provide the support and discipline needed to knit a community together on a firm spiritual foundation.

These structures were minimal at first, but institutions inevitably take on a life of their own to the point where they become bureaucratic and rigid and inhibit or even replace Spirit with Forms. The

creative balance between Spirit and Structure gets lost. When NYYM formed the Committee on Committees in 2001, it was evident to all that a bureaucratic structure had grown that was sustained more by money in the budget and an often desperate pleading by Nominating Committee to fill nearly 500 committee slots than it was by Spirit-led individuals with gifts and callings to serve the body. The recommended action was to set up criteria for determining whether a committee had life and was bearing fruit. If it did not demonstrate this, it would be laid down to free up the energy and resources for a Spirit-led task or working group to rise up. The coordinating committees were envisioned to be oversight bodies for these task groups in their area of concern. Task groups would be centered around individuals with recognized gifts and callings and would be free to add others without an official nomination. The coordinating committees would control the money allocated and exercise the necessary oversight to guard enthusiasm from outrunning its leading.

I've been pleased to see many of these recommendations implemented over time. Last year, Nurture Coordinating Committee was laid down because no clerk could be found and energy was clearly lacking, and the tasks formerly under its care are being apportioned out to other coordinating committees and oversight bodies. At summer sessions, Ministry Coordinating Committee embraced a new clerk, Emily Provance, despite the fact that she will be absent in Palestine for much of the fall, because she has clearly demonstrated spiritual energy and a calling to this work. I also heard an exciting proposal from a laid-down Advancement Committee reborn as a task group, led by Robin Whitely and Arlene Johnson with some much needed energy and openness, to reach out and invite others called to this work to join in without waiting for a bureaucratic nomination.

There's an unattributed statement often quoted in committee-laden organizations that captures this yearning for more spirit-led structures—"God so loved the world that he didn't send

a committee!" At this time in our history, we clearly need the energy of individuals on fire with the Spirit who feel called to use their gifts to serve the body and the world. Our task is to clear the ground of dead wood that sucks community resources but no longer bears fruit, and plow up the ground so new seeds can be planted; when we recognize gifts and support callings of individuals to a service that will bear fruit because it is centered in God's living spirit, not our own human wills.

What is "Clerking Consciousness"?

Jeffrey Aaron

New Brunswick Meeting

What is the first responsibility of a "clerk"? Many Friends might say *to facilitate decisions by the body through sense of the meeting*. We use the humble term "clerk" because decisions are not the clerk's; in fact, the clerk is the one person whose opinion does not usually count in the decision of the gathered body of Friends. His or her opinion is often not even known or asked or expressed. This practice is totally radical and entirely different from other usual decision-making practices because it is meant to value everyone's view. It is not consensus, which is a secular practice of finding a way forward that everyone can buy into, even if the consensus means significant compromise or is not what any given member of the body may think is best. Consensus is a practice that encourages positive interactions among people. It is a good thing, better than voting, which can leave 49% of the voters as losers. Any other form of decision making is usually based on hierarchy. Designated or self-designated individuals are in control. Our American representative form of government is hierarchical. If those voted into power make a decision that we do not like, we have little power other than our next opportunity to vote for a new representative. We can express our opinions about decisions to our representatives through the media and "on the



Friday night bonfire at Summer Sessions, Silver Bay YMCA.

streets" for what that may be worth, which may sometimes be a lot, often not so much. But unlike our Quaker practice, those voted into power can ignore the concerns of their constituents.

If all the world interacted on the basis of consensus, the world would be a far better place. But if all the world functioned on the basis of sense of the meeting, as Friends do, the world would be a very different place altogether. Everyone would have full responsibility to find the best way forward for everyone. Society would be on its way toward resolving its most pressing problems because people would look for what is best for everyone. Decision making would often be difficult, as our business meetings can be, but the process would be everyone's responsibility: either accept the responsibility to labor together in peace and compassion, or do not participate. If these Quaker ideas were understood and used by humanity, it would make for a brave new world requiring that we all value everyone. Unfortunately, our Quaker business practices are unknown to most people and are often misunderstood even by many Friends. Some even refer to "seeking consensus" in our meetings.

So, if it is the clerk's responsibility to help the body find the best way forward—sometimes referred to as "the third way" or "God's way"—what is the responsibility of the individuals who make up the body? I would say it is exactly the same responsibility as the clerk's, despite the clerk's specific role: it is the responsibility to find the best way forward for everyone. What does this mean in practice? I would suggest that it means that everyone is responsible to be the best possible listener s/he can be during business discernment, if

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Spirit-led Structures


What is “Clerking Consciousness”?

Jeffrey Aaron
New Brunswick Meeting

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not at all times. It also means that any spoken contribution reflecting the opinion of the speaker should be as concise as possible and presented as humbly as possible. If one Friend speaks too often or too long, s/he may be preventing others from speaking or making the work together harder for everyone. Angry opposition or placing blame, right or wrong, is counter to good practice. The presentation of an opinion with an air of “I have the obvious answer” is counter to good practice. Presenting points contrary to what was presented for consideration for approval is good practice, but is better if it is presented with a suggestion how to get around the problem that the speaker is concerned about. Outright rejection of a valid proposal can be simply counterproductive. “I think there

is a problem with the proposal,” a Friend may offer, “which I feel led to point out, but perhaps there is a way around this problem. Here is my suggestion” (if I have one) or “I am hoping someone is able to suggest a way to get around the problem I am concerned about.”

A problem-solving attitude and approach, with consideration of others, is what some Friends refer to as *clerking consciousness*. As we proceed with our deliberations, we are likely to find the best ways forward if all Friends function in our gathered body with full and loving *clerking consciousness*. If there is any body of people that is likely to succeed in this kind of stressful situation, it is Friends, because basic Quaker principles teach us to value everyone. I am grateful to labor together in love with those who understand that our way of doing business, when we do it right, is an amazing gift that we give ourselves, whether or not the rest of the world is aware of it and of its enormous spiritual value. 

NYYM’s ARCH Program: Aging is What We All Do.

Carl Blumenthal
Brooklyn Meeting

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concerns, inviting consideration of pros and cons with tender questions, and validating whatever they can do no matter how small the action. If this means asking for help, I encourage them to do so but don’t respond without their OK.

Here are some anecdotes by ARCH volunteers:

Despite initially resisting assistance, a heart attack survivor feels supported enough by her ARCH visitor to help care for her neighbor’s garden.

One ARCH volunteer learns, “Dying people often hang on until their care-givers grant them permission to die.”

An ARCH meeting for worship in an elder’s home demonstrates the spiritual power of communal prayer.

Building on AVP, ARCH visitors share the hopes and fears of Friends being released from prison.


A man in hospice describes the cars he loves and asks his ARCH visitor to make copies of the list for the sons he never mentioned.

One Friendly visitor sits quietly with a Roman Catholic lady as she fingers her rosary beads. In the end they say “Amen.”

Another one honors her deceased parents by advocating for older Quakers—to age with dignity at home rather than without respect in hospitals.

While we at ARCH gain momentum in our 10th year, the program is still “a revolution in the making.”

Our goal is to renew Friendship as an everyday connection, not just a meet and greet on Sundays. ARCH also aims to involve all generations in a program that can rejuvenate meetings. As one visitor put it, “Aging is what we all do.” ARCH is a model for both spiritual and secular nurture of our elders.

For more information: ARCH c/o NYYM, Callie Janoff, director, (347) 249-8470, 15 Rutherford Place 10003, nyym.org/content/arch, arch@nyym.org. We invite you to request a workshop or program at your meeting, become a volunteer, and/or contribute financially. 

Powell House Youth Reunion 2014-2017

Andy Haag and Chris DeRoller

The Powell House Youth Program has always been a place in which the youth of New York Yearly Meeting can come and create life-long relationships that are deeply rooted. The friends that you make and the relationships that you form are unshakable. Then when it comes to Earthsong of your senior year of high school you find yourself asking when you will see these truly remarkable people again. You try to stay connected over various social media platforms, but nothing is like sitting in the ACC Common Room or up at Dorson’s Rock and hearing the joyful laughs of your friends or finding the comforting bliss of deep contemplative worship together.

This summer the PoHo community welcomed home a group of former youth who graduated from the program in 2014-2017. 18 young adults came to catch up with one another. We looked forward to conversations where we could be vulnerable and ourselves, the comfort and warmth of connecting physically through hugs, massage and Wink’em, being in the middle of nowhere, walking to Dorson’s rock and having a place to reflect. By late afternoon of our first day, as we lay on the common room floor following 3-way massage and a guided meditation, we felt truly connected and amazingly comfortable. No one wanted to break the mood and move on. As the time went on though, our bellies began to rumble and we went to a yummy dinner made by Tony.

Later we would forget for a moment what was going on in the world outside and revert back to a childhood of PoHo weekends. Filled with food and a second wind, it was time for tag games from the days of our youth. Watching the realization sweep over the faces of one another that they were being chased, brought laughter to the group. It was good to be a kid again.

At coffee house we laughed at jokes, listened to beautiful music, & held in our Heart beautiful stories told. This was a time to just live into the gifts of others and be reminded of how Powell House helps foster and let grow the talents in all. Outside under the stars we contin-




Friends dancing at Café Night, the fund-raising talent show at Summer Sessions, 2018.

ued to reconnect around the fire. We settled into a reflective worship and shared out of the silence some of the hard things we were experiencing. Then as a group, we held hands and released the pain into the night with a primal yell. After a long day it was off to bed with love in our hearts and a recharged battery of togetherness in our soul.

Our last morning together, we talked about the world we want to create. There would be more active listeners so that we were not so divided. It would be more open-minded, kinder, whole. We would see others and be seen by them. There would be a shift to a more communal practice of living together that creates less harm to the environment. There would be more selfless-ness, trust and platonic touch. We reflected on the work we are already doing to make this vision real: working with children and the elderly and taking the time to listen to their stories; living in a cooperative on campus, sharing household duties, cooking meals; being conscious of the way we speak, using inclusive language, being aware of people’s backgrounds and intentional in our words; modifying a major to include sustainability, pushing the educational system to accommodate that. We thought about what would help us in this work:

- The opportunity to share stories and experiences with older people, more experienced people, or differently experienced people
- People who are asking questions of us and listening to us
- Someone to unload on at the end of the day

We finished our short time together with blindfolded trust on the path, worship on the rock, snack at the pond and good-byes on the lawn. Though we knew in our hearts, it was not “good-bye” so much as “until next time, dear friend.” 

Fall Sessions 2018 • November 9–11 • Farmington-Scipio Region (Rochester)

2018 NYYM Fall Sessions Friday–Sunday, Nov. 9–11 at the HOLIDAY INN 70 State Street, Rochester

YOU ARE INVITED!

The 2018 NYYM Fall Sessions is being hosted by Farmington-Scipio Regional Meeting (FSRM). We encourage as many Friends as possible to come and share the worship and fellowship of the gathered yearly meeting. The FSRM Host Task Group has been hard at work creating a cohesive program for all participants centering especially around the Commemoration of the 224th Anniversary of the Canandaigua Treaty, celebrated every November 11th. We encourage all participants—especially our young Friends—to attend the commemoration events on Sunday. We'll have more information online on how that will fit within our schedule as plans progress.

We'll begin with dinner on Friday evening and a multigenerational presentation, "Quakers, Indigenous Peoples and the Land" by Mattie Schmitt and Mike Farrell of the Rochester Friends Meeting. Please join us!

We ask that you forward any NYYM Fall Sessions email announcements to your meeting's email list to encourage everyone to participate. Keep in mind that those who feel led to attend may require meeting assistance, both financial and physical.

PLEASE NOTE, we are asking for a "Suggested Registration Fee" in an effort to make our yearly meeting sessions even more affordable. Those who can pay more than the suggested amount are encouraged to do so, via the Equalization Fund donation line, to help offset costs for others who might find it a hardship to pay a fixed fee. Please do not let money stand between you and attending Fall Sessions! Pay what you can for registration and meals, and request Equalization Funds for what you cannot pay. All who feel led to attend Fall Sessions will find welcome among us

2018 NYYM Fall Sessions Venue & Hospitality

Fall Sessions will be held entirely in the Holiday Inn Rochester, 70 State Street, Rochester, NY 14614; 585-546-3450. We have a small

block of rooms reserved as part of our conference reservation. If you want one of our guest rooms (\$125 a night), call the hotel and ask for a room in the "Religious Society of Friends" room block. We are also soliciting hospitality options from local Friends for Friday and/or Saturday nights on a first-to-ask, first-assigned basis. Finally, assistance with finding a motel or other accommodation can be requested. Our Hospitality Coordinator is Bronwyn Mohlke: bjqmohlke@gmail.com.

Registration is Due Monday, October 22

You may register in one of two ways. Either fill out the paper registration form on the back page of this *Spark* and mail it to Bronwyn Mohlke along with your check made out to NYYM OR you can register and pay online at nyym.org/session/fall-sessions-2018. The registration deadline is Monday, October 22.

If you'd like to receive your printed copy of the *Yearbook* at Fall Sessions, please indicate that on the registration form. Otherwise, your copy will be mailed to your monthly meeting after Fall Sessions.

Committee Meeting Space and Display Space

Requests for committee meeting space and display space should be directed to Melanie-Claire Mallison, MsMellie@gmail.com. Coordinating Committees are welcome to begin meeting over dinner; please notify Melanie-Claire if you plan to do so.

Sustainability

We ask participants to consider their environmental impact when attending any NYYM gathering. Carpool with other attendees from your area, 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, to reduce and reuse, will be greatly appreciated.

Volunteer!

We have many opportunities for participants to volunteer. Please consider spending a few hours of your time (or more!) to help us host the Yearly Meeting Sessions. We primarily need folks to open their homes to our participants. Many of our attenders cannot afford to stay at the hotel and so they depend on our generosity in sharing our living spaces. Bronwyn Mohlke is coordinating host offers and hospitality requests, so please email her as soon as possible to help out. She has a form for you to fill out to facilitate matching requests to hosts. bjqmohlke@gmail.com If you are interested in any of the other volunteering opportunities (greeters, registration table, microphone runners, clean up, etc.) please contact Melanie-Claire, at MsMellie@gmail.com—she has a volunteer Google doc to share.

We look forward to welcoming you to Fall Sessions!

FSRM Host Task Group:

Melanie-Claire Mallison, Bronwyn Mohlke, Dawn Pozzi, Rebekah Tanner

Youth Program with Rebekah Tanner

For all teens, ages 13-17
Youth Program for Saturday: **Words Matter**. A day long experience of examining and engaging with Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems. What we say, and the words we select to say it, matter. The more clarity demonstrated in our choice of words, the better we will be able to represent our ideas to others and the better they will be able to understand us. When persons of differing perspectives interact together, it is especially important to be sure what has been said by one is what is understood by the other. Because this has so often failed to occur in the shared history of Euro-Americans and Native Americans, the consequences have far too frequently been tragic and traumatic. High stakes decisions and nation-to-nation treaties have failed to meet with success, because of such misunderstandings. By actively

engaging through dialogue, activities, and media presentations we will consider what Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems might have to offer Quaker youth as they face their own personal, educational, and other high stakes decisions and how best to articulate their thoughts about those decisions to others.

For more on Rebekah Tanner, please visit nyym.org/session/fall-sessions-2018

On FRIDAY, the teens will join the evening presentation by Mattie Schmitt and Mike Farrell, and on SUNDAY, the teens will take a bus to Canandaigua in the morning to participate in the events surrounding the Commemoration of the 224th Anniversary of the Canandaigua Treaty. We'll have more details on those events online!

Children's Program

Children between the ages of 0 and 12 will be provided with a baby sitter and or a Friendly Adult Presence during meeting and committee times. Parents are responsible for their children during meals. Please note your needs on the registration form, which must be received by October 22, to be included in the Children's Program arrangements. For the younger children, please plan to bring your child's favorite snacks, a few toys, and a change of clothing / diapers. If appropriate, the participants of the Children's Program will also get on the bus to Canandaigua on Sunday morning. Deciding this option will require a one-on-one face-to-face discussion with each child and parent.

We always welcome **Friendly Adult Presences (FAPs)**! We especially need overnight FAPs and Sunday Going to Canandaigua FAPs. All volunteers who would like to work with children and youth must complete a CHILD PROTECTION REGISTRATION FORM online. Contact the Youth Program Coordinator and Melanie-Claire Mallison to be a FAP!

Child/Youth Medical Form

A medical form must be completed for all children and youth attending sessions. The medical form is available on the NYYM website (nyym.org/committee/sessions-committee, NYYM-Youth-Medical-Form-2018August.pdf).

REGISTRATION for FALL SESSIONS 2018 – November 9-11

Fall Sessions will be held **entirely** in the **Holiday Inn Rochester**, 70 State Street, Rochester NY; 585-546-3450, or Google “Holiday Inn downtown Rochester NY”

REGISTRATION DUE DATE: MONDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2018

Register online at nyym.org/session/fall-sessions-2018, mail this form to Bronwyn Mohlke, 52 Gray Road, Ithaca, NY 14850 or send it as an attachment to Bronwyn at FallSessions2018@gmail.com. Registration questions? Please email Bronwyn or call her at (607) 220-3219.

ADULT REGISTRATION

NAME			
Address			
Home & cell phone			
Email address			
Meeting			
Are you a NYYM committee clerk?			
Emergency contact name and phone number (someone not at Sessions)			
Would you like to receive your copy of the <i>Yearbook</i> at Fall Sessions?			

CHILDREN AND YOUTH REGISTRATION

Children and youth programs will be arranged ONLY if registered by October 22.
Find the mandatory medical form online at nyym.org/committee/sessions-committee

NAME	Age	Arrival day/time	Departure day/time

HOSPITALITY

Please request hospitality by October 22. Questions? Contact Bronwyn Mohlke; her info is above.

I will make my own housing arrangements					
I/we would like to stay at the Holiday Inn on:		Fri. night		Sat. night	NOTE: you must also make a reservation with the hotel.
I/we would like home hospitality for:		Fri. night		Sat. night	Can bring sleeping bag
I would like to be housed with:					
I am willing to room with another Fall Sessions participant:					
	Stairs a problem		Allergies		Smoker
Special Needs:					
MEALS		Vegetarian/vegan		Gluten Free	Allergies? (Please specify)
<i>Meal fees are for adults and youth 11 and older. Younger children are free.</i>					
Meal		Fee		# of people	Total
Friday dinner		\$20			
Saturday breakfast		\$8			
Saturday lunch		\$15			
Saturday dinner		\$20			
Sunday breakfast		\$8			
Sunday lunch		\$15			
REGISTRATION AND OTHER FEES					Amount
Suggested Adult Registration Fee** (\$35 per adult/youth)					
Suggested Child Registration Fee** (\$15 for ages 0-12)					
AFTER 10/22: Suggested Late Registration Fee, add \$10 per adult					
Total Meal Costs					
Contribution to NYYM Equalization Fund					
Assistance requested from NYYM Equalization Fund (subtract amount)					
TOTAL					
Enclose check payable to NYYM or pay online at nyym.org/session/fall-sessions-2018					

NOTE: Those who register by paper will get a call/email to ask about their participation at the Commemoration of the Canandaigua Treaty on Sunday, Nov. 11. For more information on the Commemoration, see nyym.org.

Fall Sessions Schedule

November 9–11, 2018

Farmington-Scipio Regional Meeting

All events will be held at
Holiday Inn, 70 State St., Rochester, NY
Friday, November 9

6-6:30pm Registration
6:30-7:30pm Buffet Dinner
7:30-9pm *Quakers, Indigenous Peoples and the Land*

Saturday, November 10

8-9am Registration, display set-up, and continental breakfast
8am-9pm Youth Program throughout the day
9-9:45am Meeting for Worship
10am-12pm Children's Program
10am-12pm Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business
12:15-1:15pm Buffet Lunch
1:30-6pm Children's Program joins Youth Program for Arts & Crafts
1:30-3:30pm Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business
3:45-4:45pm Committee Meetings [Section 1]
5:00-6pm Committee Meetings [Section 2]
6:00-7pm Buffet Dinner
7:00-9pm Coordinating Committee Meetings
7:00pm Youth Program: Movie Night! (In Youth Suite)

Sunday, November 11

7:30-8:30am Registration and continental breakfast
8:30am Children's and Youth Program participants leave for Canandaigua*
8:30-9:30am Meeting for Worship
9:45am-12pm Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business
12:00-1pm Lunch (Box lunches. Friends are welcome to stay or grab-n-go)
1-2pm Clean up, pack up displays, and farewell!*

*Youth Program parents may be asked to meet their child(ren) in Canandaigua. Transportation details may change as youth register!