



# SPARK

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

Volume 51, Number 5

15 Rutherford Place, New York, NY 10003

November 2021



## Fall Sessions December 3-5, 2021

**Welcome to Fall Sessions, Friends** — Everything is fully on-line so you can easily come to all that interests you. I always hope folks will come to share in discernment on our business (this Fall that will include considering the budget, receiving reports on committee work, and hearing from staff) but please, take a look at the whole schedule on page 12 and join in on some of the work and some of the play. Register so we know to expect you. Come be with Friends.

—Elaine Learnard, NYYM clerk



Elaine Learnard, Clerk of NYYM, at Fall Sessions 2019, Powell House

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## An Adventurous Friendship

**Rene Lape & Herb Lape,  
Kaitlyn Pawlukojc &  
Adam Waywell**  
Westbury Meeting

Herb and Rene Lape met Kaitlyn Pawlukojc (and eventually her partner Adam Waywell, now her husband) when she attended a Westbury Meeting for Worship. In conversation at hospitality, it became clear that we all shared a common love of adventure: the physical kind — sailing, hiking, camping, etc — as well as the spiritual kind too; a life of faith that transcended our differences in age and life stages. Whether we are on the sea, in the woods, or just sharing meals, we feel connected to the same Spirit that animates and sustains all life, and we feel close because of it.

An early bonding experience

*continued on page 4*

## Sharing Between Generations

**Heather Buchan**  
Brooklyn Meeting

I have a message to share about communicating across generations. Communication across generations is less about giving or seeking/taking advice and more about sharing. It's about finding out how the pieces fit together, learning who/where the people are, and who they might become. That perhaps not coincidentally also helps us do the same for ourselves. I would like to encourage meetings and worship groups to actively seek opportunities for Friends of differing ages to mix. Perhaps they could even actively promote an activity to facilitate a wider range of activities beyond oral histories and technology help.

Think about what interests people. Are you a sports fan, a history buff, nature adventurer, an artist? Whatever floats your boat, it's likely there are both older and younger Friends who share that interest and it might be really interesting to see how different generations approach the same topic. Are you a YAF (young adult Friend) just starting your independent life, maybe griping about finding an apartment or worried about car payments or establishing a career? You've finally "broken free" from the people who raised you, yet perhaps on occasion there was some good

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## Correspondence

**Chase Baldwin**  
Flushing Meeting

**Jerry Reisig**  
Morningside Meeting

Dear Friend,  
We've been having conversations for a while now. I'm so happy with how the NYYM mentorship program was able to connect us. So much of it is because we are so similar in some fundamental ways and it gives us common ground to connect on all the ways we're not.

For the purposes of this public letter — I have a question about how you handle this internal issue I keep having.

It's the issue of being queer and religious. Especially people who moved away from the south, and that I meet here in New York. There's this attitude of wanting and lacking a church for many reasons. But you

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## Communi- cating Across Generations

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## Notices

### New Members

**Richard Russell** — Old  
Chatham

**Christopher Thomas**

**Woodward** — New Bruns-  
wick

## NEWS

### NYYM Anti-Racism Statement

A Draft NYYM Statement on Becoming an Anti-Racist Faith Community, written by a multi-racial and multi-generational task group, was presented at Summer Sessions 2021 for Friends' reflection and the initiation of an extended period of discernment. Over the coming year, you and your meeting are invited to focus on how you can truly become an anti-racist faith community, and discern what that will mean for you and your meeting. The task group is sharing queries and resources that you may find helpful. You can find these resources at [nyym.org/anti-racism-statement](http://nyym.org/anti-racism-statement), or by requesting a copy from the office at 212-673-5750.

At several points over the next year, NYYM will offer the chance to participate in anti-racism workshops especially arranged for our yearly meeting. These training sessions are typically around 20 hours over a few days. Please let the planning team know of your general interest by filling out the **Antiracism Training Expression of Interest** form, linked to at the top of the [nyym.org/anti-racism-statement](http://nyym.org/anti-racism-statement) page.

### Do You Receive the Weekly NYYM Email Update?

Each Friday an email newsletter from NYYM is sent out to over 1600 people. Past editions are available at [nyym.org/weekly-updates](http://nyym.org/weekly-updates). To subscribe, email your name to [walter@nyym.org](mailto:walter@nyym.org).

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### NYYM Fall Sessions

**ONLINE, December 3-5, 2021**

All are welcome to participate. See page 12 in this issue for all details.

### Coordinating Committee Weekend Online, Jan. 28-30, 2022

Coordinating Committee Weekend is a time when all YM coordinating committees have the chance to meet. Join people from around the

## Around Our Yearly Meeting

**What does "NYYM" or Yearly Meeting mean?** NYYM stands for New York Yearly Meeting, which represents and consists of all the Quaker meetings within New York state, north New Jersey, and part of Connecticut. It is called a "yearly meeting" because the entire community is called to gather together once a year.

yearly meeting to hear about what's going on in the committees and how the work gets done. Be part of considering how the yearly meeting might use everyone's gifts and leadings and how each of us, all of us, can reimagine how we build this community every day. Registration will be online at [nyym.org](http://nyym.org).

### Powell House Workshops

Powell House is the retreat and conference center for NYYM, located at 524 Pitt Hall Road, Old Chatham, NY 12136. Visit [poho.org](http://poho.org) to see the full list of upcoming events and to register.

Second Thirds  
December 3-5, 2021

Are you in the second third of your lifetimes? Do you long to make more connections with other Friends in your age range? The culmination of this Fall's online Second Thirds series will be an IN PERSON retreat at Powell House! We'll be in conversation about Quaker traditions and visioning for the future, with a large portion of celebration (!), as well as opportunities for informal social connections. Bonfire, delicious meals, and lots of smiles are included too :) For anyone who is intending to participate by Zoom in New York Yearly Meeting's Fall business sessions that weekend, we're making sure that's doable within our weekend schedule.

Dwelling Deep: a Contemplative Retreat

January 14-17, 2022 — Save the date

### Upcoming Workshop from the Center for the Study of White American Culture, Inc.:

White Accountability and Organizing

A live, interactive online workshop in 3 parts, Thursdays Dec 2, 9, 16, 2021, 7-9 p.m. Eastern. This workshop is intended to give white people some basic knowledge about why accountability is important for white people in anti-racist organizing; the basic dimensions of accountability; barriers to being accountable; and putting accountability into practice. Learn more and register at [cswac.org/white-](http://cswac.org/white-)



accountability-and-organizing/

## EVENTS FOR YOUNG ADULTS

The interim Young Adult Field Secretary, Marissa Badgley, organizes gatherings, workshops, and worship designed for young adults (ages 18-35-ish) but open to all. Please visit [nyym.org/yaf-calendar-2021](http://nyym.org/yaf-calendar-2021) for more details.

**Upcoming online events:**

**Community Thanksgiving Dinner** — November 23, 7:00-8:00 p.m.

**Worship Sharing** — December 2, 7:00-8:00 p.m.

**Holiday Game Night** — December 22, 7:00-8:00 p.m.

## EVENTS FOR CHILDREN & TEENS

### Upcoming Powell House Youth Conferences

Register for conferences at [poho.org](http://poho.org).

**WINTERSONG 2021**, 9-12 grade  
December 10-12, 2021

Our usual wintertime celebration will be held at limited capacity this year. As such, we are inviting just 9th to 12th graders. Even with a smaller group, we plan to let our light shine as we join together as a community. There will be deep small group discussions, interesting workshops, and many more delights to share!

## ONLINE WORSHIP

Many of the local (monthly) meetings in the New York Yearly Meeting area are holding online or hybrid online-and-in-person meetings for worship every week. Visit [nyym.org/online-worship-opportunities](http://nyym.org/online-worship-opportunities) for the most up-to-date information.

### Powell House Online Worship Fourth Saturdays at 6:00 p.m.

Powell House holds a meeting for worship via Zoom on the fourth Saturday of each month at 6:00 p.m. For info on how to join, contact Regina at [regina@powellhouse.org](mailto:regina@powellhouse.org)

### Friends General Conference (FGC)

FGC maintains a list of online worship opportunities at [www.fgcquaker.org/resources/online-worship-opportunities](http://www.fgcquaker.org/resources/online-worship-opportunities)

### Pendle Hill Worship in the Barn

Members of the Pendle Hill community gather in the Barn for worship every day from 8:30 to 9:10 a.m.

Connection information is at [pendlehill.org/explore/worship/join-us-online-for-worship-in-the-barn/](http://pendlehill.org/explore/worship/join-us-online-for-worship-in-the-barn/)

### FWCC's Worldwide Worship List

Friends World Committee of Consultation (FWCC) has compiled a list of meetings holding worship online around the world: [fwcc.world/kinds-of-friends/online-worship](http://fwcc.world/kinds-of-friends/online-worship)

## OPPORTUNITIES

### Mentoring Program Enrollment

The NYYM Mentoring Program is a ten-month program in which "experienced" Friends are paired with young adult Friends (YAFs), who are looking to deepen their understanding of Quaker practice or who are seeking spiritual accompaniment, guidance, and/or support on their spiritual/life journey. Read the full information packet at [bit.ly/nyymmentoring2021](http://bit.ly/nyymmentoring2021). The deadline to sign up as a seeker has passed but **mentors can sign up until November 30**. You can fill out the interest form at [bit.ly/nyymmentoringinterest2021](http://bit.ly/nyymmentoringinterest2021).



SPARK (ISSN 00240591)

New York Yearly Meeting News  
Published five times a year:  
January, March, May, September, and  
November by

New York Yearly Meeting  
Religious Society of Friends  
15 Rutherford Place  
New York, NY 10003  
212-673-5750  
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Editor: Sarah Way  
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Editorial Board:  
NYYM Communications Committee

*Spark* deadlines are the first week of the month preceding the publication month. Permission is granted to reprint any article, provided *Spark* is acknowledged as the source.

Periodicals Postage Paid  
at New York, New York  
Postmaster: Send address changes to:  
**SPARK**

15 Rutherford Place  
New York, NY 10003

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## Report from the Protect Our Ocean March and Rally

On October 2nd, the “Protect Our Ocean” March and Rally to protest the Japanese government’s and TEPCO’s (Tokyo Electric Power Company) release of radioactive water from the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant was held in Manhattan.

Japan and TEPCO have plans to release 1,250,000 tons of radioactive water from the Fukushima Daiichi into the Pacific Ocean starting in 2023 and continuing for more than 30 years.

The dumping of this radioactive water could cause irreparable damage to our planet, and will affect everything from the smallest sea creatures to our human living conditions and everyday lives.

The “Protect Our Ocean” project was for stopping this radioactive water release. Many friends from Morningside Monthly Meeting attended to support this movement.

The march started from Bryant Park at 11 a.m., and walked on 42nd Street, then 2nd Avenue to Dag Hammarskjold Plaza on 47th Street. Volunteers and police officers escorted us.

The rally started at 12 noon. The messages from speakers were sincere and powerful and touched participants’ heart. Singers energized participants and made them smile. Two Morningside friends were among the performers.

The importance of the message, “Protect Our Ocean,” was deeply engraved in the hearts of the participants.

We also collected 70 signed letters to President Biden to ask to instruct his Special Envoy Kerry for Climate, to raise the issue of the release of radioactive water

from the Fukushima Daiichi into the Pacific Ocean, at the COP 26 conference that takes place from November 1st to 12th in Glasgow, Scotland. We have been asking people to send emails to the White House about this issue.

### Sample letter

Dear President Biden,

I am writing to ask you to instruct your Special Presidential Envoy for Climate, John Kerry, to raise the issue of the release of radioactive water from the Fukushima Daiichi into the Pacific Ocean, at the upcoming COP 26 conference that takes place from November 1st to 12th in Glasgow, Scotland.

We are very concerned that the system being proposed cannot remove all radioactive materials before the dumping. The contaminated water being released was used to cool the melted core of multiple nuclear reactors of the crippled Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear power station.

We request that Special Envoy Kerry urge the Japanese government and the Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO) to explore alternative safer options of long-term storage at the Fukushima Daiichi or near the site to minimize the health impacts on people and all living things as well as to protect the environment of the Pacific Ocean.

Sincerely, \_\_\_\_\_



A photo of the Quaker Day celebration at the Friends Girls School in Sohagpur.

## Quaker Day Celebration at Friends Girls School, Sohagpur, India

Dr. Sanjeev Shukla  
Principal, Friends Girls School, Sohagpur

The Friends Girls School in Sohagpur, India, following COVID safety guidelines, celebrated World Quaker Day on October 4, 2021, in the graceful presence of God. The program started with silent worship, followed by religious songs and messages shared by Primary School Manager Sheela Jacob, Principal Dr. Sanjeev Shukla, and senior members Ganeshram Mandloi, Sunila Masih, Strella Masih, and Vijaya Acharya. First, Sheela Jacob conveyed greetings on behalf of Devdas Shrisundar (Chairman of Friends Schools Governing Board India) and Doreen Robert (Manager) to all for Quaker Day then highlighted Quaker history and social service.

This year the school decided on the program theme, “Awareness for COVID Safety and Vaccination.” Dr. Shukla addressed everyone and said that in our new “normal,” SMS has a new meaning: Social distancing, Mask wearing, and Sanitizing hands. The school feels that its prime responsibility is to make the vaccination program a success.

The program ended with the distribution of masks donated from British friends Mark and Judy Stuart and an oath, taken by all, to spread awareness of vaccination. Posters were made by students with the help of teachers Gudiya Raghuwanshi, Jyoti Verma, Rupa Thakur, and Kiran Sharma.



### Editor’s Note

I’ve been dismayed by some unkind behavior I’ve witnessed recently in our Quaker community. Please remember that everyone has “that of God” within them. When you mock or scoff at someone, you’re ignoring the humanity—the divine spark—in the other person. You’re also harming our community at a time when our community needs to grow. To paraphrase the Powell House Youth Program guidelines, ask yourself, before taking an action: does your behavior nurture the community? **The answer should be yes.**

If you have email access, you should be receiving the weekly NYYM email newsletter every Friday. If you aren’t, you can join the email list by sending a message to [walter@nyym.org](mailto:walter@nyym.org). Past issues live at [nyym.org/weekly-updates](http://nyym.org/weekly-updates).

You are welcome and encouraged to send your writing or images for inclusion in future issues of *Spark*.

### Upcoming *Spark* themes:

**January: Hybrid Meetings for Worship.** Many of NYYM’s local meetings have been experimenting with hybrid meetings for worship, combining in-person Friends and online Friends together. Have you tried this, and do you have advice to share, technical or otherwise? What is your experience of hybrid worship? Please share. Deadline for the January issue is **December 1**. Send article, letter, photo, poetry, and drawing submissions to [communications@nyym.org](mailto:communications@nyym.org). Please limit yourself to 400-600 words. Letters “to the editor” in response to articles are also accepted.

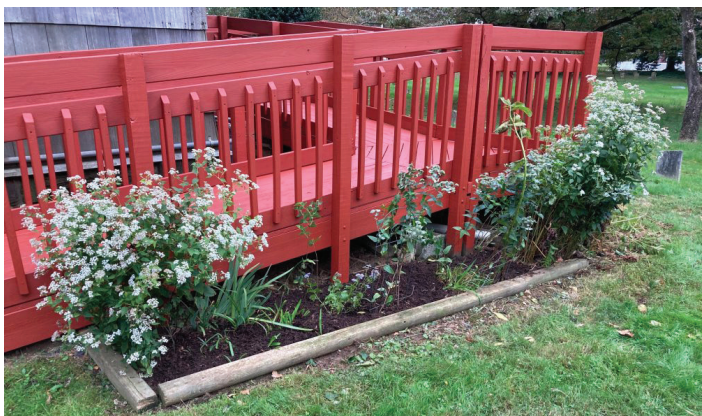
You can also send news or events to that email address so they can be shared in the weekly NYYM email or in the next *Spark*.

Find NYYM on **Facebook** (NewYorkYearlyMeeting), **Twitter** (NYYM Tweets), and **Instagram** (newyorkyearlymeeting).

Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle that you know nothing about.

—Sarah Way, NYYM

Communications Director  
[communications@nyym.org](mailto:communications@nyym.org)



Shrewsbury Meeting recently repainted their deck and refreshed the garden outside of their meetinghouse. Photo by Alan Brenner.





# Communicating Across Generations

## YSOP Connex: Creating Intergenerational Virtual Connections

**Ed Doty**  
Purchase Meeting

I want Friends in New York Yearly Meeting to know about a new intergenerational project YSOP (Youth Service Opportunities Project) has started. Many Friends from my meeting, Purchase, have participated, as have other senior citizens and young people from New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania.

YSOP Connex is a program that connects senior citizens and youth in meaningful, conversations and service projects. Our highly skilled staff facilitators lead group conversations and projects between young people, residents of senior living communities and seniors in their homes.

Started in 1983 by American Friends Service Committee, YSOP has engaged over 80,000 youth serving over 6 million people in need. We have a wide network of schools and youth groups that have participated in YSOP Workcamps. In response to the pandemic, in October 2020 we started an intergenerational project connecting students and senior citizens over Zoom. This past school year, trained YSOP Facilitators have led 150 students and 120 seniors in 90 hours of virtual conversations. The program benefits both students and seniors. Students talk to people with a range of experience and interests beyond their immediate communities. Seniors provide much needed perspective, insight, sense of comfort and calm to youth participants trying to navigate so many new and unknown situations.

YSOP Connex virtual programs involve 4 seniors, 5 students and a YSOP facilitator. The group meets once a week for one hour. The program runs for 3 weeks. The in-person service projects involve groups of seniors and students participating in a variety of activities serving people in need.

Here is what some participants have said about YSOP Connex:



"It was really nice talking to people outside of school and my family. It was really great hearing their side of the story about what they have been going through during this difficult time. I was there, and others, to talk to them, and keep them company. It was really so nice to just get to have a conversation with someone I didn't know, and get to hear their story, and along the way also become friends." — high school Connex participant, 2020

"During the past many months, we have been living very quietly 'safer at home.' This YSOP program gave us a chance to communicate with some thoughtful students and talk with them about their experiences going to school online and their living through this very disruptive time of COVID 19. Our Zoom calls were rewarding, full of vitality and we appreciated the students' leadership and our many positive interactions!" — adult Connex participant, 2020

"YSOP provides a unique opportunity for seniors and teens to build a community based on trust, openness, curiosity, and empathy. During the past two years, we often found ourselves becoming more inwardly focused. YSOP is very much outwardly-focused and fosters a cross-generational dialogue that is both meaningful and enriching." — Connex senior citizen participant

"The Connex program was truly one of the highlights of my weeks from last year. Interacting and talking with the seniors was always fun and educational. I would love to be a part of any group that is held. Thank you!" — Connex student participant

To learn more, visit [www.ysop.org/connex](http://www.ysop.org/connex)

Please reach out to me at [edoty@ysop.org](mailto:edoty@ysop.org) if you are interested in participating in a Connex program!



## An Adventurous Friendship

**Rene Lape & Herb Lape**  
**Kaitlyn Pawlukojc & Adam**  
**Waywell**  
Westbury Meeting

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was a sailing trip we made together in very challenging conditions — strong following winds with 6 foot waves on the Long Island Sound, heading home to safe harbor. We each contributed our gifts in meeting this challenge, the most important being a common faith that the boat, our skills, and God's grace would bring us home safely. It was very exhilarating. Another was our frequent sharing of Shabbat meals that are part of Adam's Jewish tradition. But both of our homes provide opportunities to share our different faith traditions while providing ample time to share with each other how our faith has helped us deal with personal struggles, vocational decisions, communal conflicts, family issues, marriage, political polarization, justice, individual and social responsibility. It wasn't long before we were introduced to members of Kaitlyn's family and became involved with the gatherings that culminated in Adam and Kaitlyn's wedding. We also tried contra dancing together, but not everyone is called to dancing of this sort!

**The tremendous reward  
of friendship across the  
generations is that it reminds  
you that you are still part of  
the great human adventure**

While we have become ever closer, that doesn't alter the fact that our two households are at very different stages of life. The Lapes are retired, both having had a very clear call to being teachers and the satisfaction of having played their part. They have a comfortable life. Adam and Kaitlyn are still seeking greater clarity and stability in this area of life vocations. The Lapes have been married for a long time and mostly worked out or overcome the inevitable tensions. Adam and

Kaitlyn are just starting on this tremendous adventure. The danger for the Lapes is for them to just sit in the comfort of a safe harbor and bask in the memories of their past adventures and for them to be disconnected with the changed world that younger people must confront. The tremendous reward of friendship across the generations is that it reminds you that you are still part of the great human adventure and still have something to learn and to contribute to helping others to build the Peaceable Kingdom.

## Sharing Between Generations

**Heather Buchan**  
Brooklyn Meeting

*continued from page 1*

advice here and there. If only there was some way to find people in an advanced stage of life who can offer sage advice without worrying too much about the recipients, without necessarily following-up to see if they took that advice, or merely just listened. Some lessons you do have to learn on your own, but sometimes the path is easier if you rely on what others have experienced.

I love hearing elementary school kids talk about "when I was in 2nd grade" or telling a story from last week as if it was ages ago (especially if they are telling this to an older person, carefully explaining all the details as in case they need the context of whatever the situation, be it playground, living room, mode of transportation, etc.) Seeing things from a different perspective—like age—is a great asset.

Break the stereotypical images like "young people don't listen," "old people are stuck in their ways." We as Friends are asked to seek that of God in all. Maybe you can see a hint of something God-worthy in that creepy old Friend on the facing bench who smells funny or makes you feel bad because she uses a walker and that reminds you of Uncle Irving who swore he'd die before he was reduced to such.... Perhaps once you realize maybe you overreacted, your toe is probably not broken by the kid

*continued on next page*





who stomped on it running by on the way to... instead, you can look for something else. Why the hurry? Sure it's a beautiful day, meeting or social hour or even first day school, whatever responsibilities tied this person to social conventions were now released and the "go" signal was received; it was ok to run. You were just an unfortunate accident. How did this young Friend respond? How did you respond? What common ground could the two of you possibly have? You know which of the two of you is most likely to initiate a conversation to get something started, even if it might start with the kid's parents/caregivers.

So sadly, I offer no practical suggestions. This piece was merely to remind you of why this is important, spark your imaginations, and encourage people to consider how to go from idea to "let's try this." When you do come up with ideas, even if not implemented, please share them. Perhaps the NYYM en masse can help refine them into something workable.



## Overcoming Stereotypes

Linda Clarke  
Brooklyn Meeting

When I was a very young adult, I sometimes heard adults of an advanced age say things like, "snow on the roof means a fire below," or perhaps "being old doesn't mean being cold." There were many such sayings that were defensive in nature and were meant to deflect or temper the negative images we had of elderly adults (They were still called "old" in those days, or maybe "old folks.") These negative images were a big part of the stereotype we held about senior adults and the stereotype has not changed much, if at all, in my lifetime. Now that I'm one of the old folks, it's easier to see what they were concerned about in those days. Back then, I was only concerned with the negative things the old folks seemed to think about young adults.

Stereotypes. So much of our daily lives is governed by them throughout our lifetimes. I read a popular psychology article a while ago which explained that we need

to make instant judgments about people in order to survive and stereotyping is a strategy or tool we have developed to survive.\* Another theory to explain or justify stereotyping points to "human nature." Both these attempts at explanation result in the conclusion that we are stuck with this way of being in society.

Yet we know how destructive stereotyping is to relationships, even preventing the ability to relate to one another. Anyone who has been involved with antiracist work in recent times is aware of how stereotyping enables "othering," or the objectification of others which allows the denial of humanity to these so-called "others." When employing stereotypes, it becomes quite alright to allow or even commit atrocities based on such criteria as physical appearance, ancestry, religion, gender identity and sometimes even nationality. Modern history is full of examples of these acts of othering facilitated by stereotyping which enables a dominant group to commit atrocities or even genocide against other humans. Of course, these instances show the most extreme result of stereotyping and reveal undeniable violence. Physical, psychological, emotional and spiritual violence are conspicuously displayed in

**It is encouraging to note that some of our social action committees have begun to seek alternatives to the "charitable model" of helping others.**

numerous instances of political and economic violence against fellow human beings. In this context, some social scientists (see Hannah Arendt) have talked about the banality of evil. Asking how it happens that large swaths of a given population are ready to participate in these atrocities (or at least willing to look the other way) has not been a fruitful line of academic inquiry.

Can it be that we are primed to accept the dehumanization of our fellow human beings on the political and economic scale by the lifelong applications of stereotypes in our daily lives? There are so many! And

often so deeply embedded that we are consciously unaware.

Since academic inquiry has failed to guide us and since we have found here the heart to look at the difficulties of communicating across generations, can we go on as individuals to examine the growth of callousness in our lives that eventually result in extreme othering? And having begun to inquire, can we also search for remedies? Or has the search already begun? It is encouraging to note that some of our social action committees have begun to seek alternatives to the "charitable model" of helping others. In this light, Judy Meikle's recent article in *Friends Journal* points to a way of relating to others that strips away stereotypes and recognizes our common humanity. "The mutuality of the Inside Outside Letter Writing Collective is critical. Rather than the outside Friends throwing a lifeline to the person inside, there is a call to experience being together on a journey. When Friends share their joys and concerns, they build trust over time. *Authentic sharing of life experiences, difficult circumstances, and spiritual paths gives correspondents the opportunity to listen deeply and hold each other in prayer.*" [September, 2021, "Get Thee Behind the Walls," emphasis added.] What would it look like to apply this approach to our communications among different generations? And what might happen as a result?

\*For more on this, see David Brooks, "Here's The Mindset That's Tearing Us Apart," *NY Times Opinion*, 10/07/21, [www.nytimes.com/2021/10/07/opinion/essentialism-stereotypes-bias.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/07/opinion/essentialism-stereotypes-bias.html)



The historic Bethpage meetinghouse was open in September 2021 for the first time in two years. The meeting later celebrated World Quaker Day on October 3 with refreshments and many thanks for the volunteers working to revitalize the meeting. Photo by Jayant Singh.

## A Homeschool Year

Charles Weld and Ruth Ann Bradley  
Poplar Ridge Meeting

One of our realities during the COVID pandemic was home-schooling an 8 year old, third grade grandchild. His mother left for work a little after 7 a.m., so we'd be at their home before then, one of us starting the oatmeal downstairs in the kitchen, the other upstairs in the bedroom, supporting dressing, bed-making and room straightening, and, after breakfast, teeth cleaning and hair brushing. The school day began at about 8:15 a.m. with a morning meeting at the breakfast table, and, after that, we covered all of the subjects from his curriculum—reading, spelling, writing, mathematics, geography, history, art, music and science—interspersing naps or body wake up periods, when requested or when academic energies seemed to be fading, and adding field trips and extra-curriculars such as shoe-tying, keyboarding, sewing, and thank-you note writing, as needs presented.

One of our helpful insights during the year was a recognition of what we ask of young people, when it comes to learning. Many of us, as adults, find a specialized area in which we develop skill and knowledge, and we often stick to these areas for years, sometimes decades, comforted by the familiar. On the other hand, we ask children to push up against their limits of skill and knowledge in multiple areas every day, and we ask them, in most educational settings, to experience these challenges publicly, in front of teachers and peers. Demonstrating ignorance in front of others is an uncomfortable activity for most of us, adult or youth. So, for us, developing empathy for the learner, or in John Woolman's words *a feeling sense of the condition of others*, was a positive result of our covid teaching experience.

The eight-year-old is now nine, delighted to be back in school, in a fourth-grade classroom with his friends and peers. We are 68 and 70, delighted not to be setting the alarm for 5:30 a.m. each night before bed.







# Communicating Across Generations

## Correspondence

Chase Baldwin  
Flushing Meeting

Jerry Reisig  
Morningside Meeting

*continued from page 1*

also feel like any and all religion is not yours.

Being queer and religious feels almost as contradictory as being Black and American. Especially when your home flavor of religion is very homophobic. With Black flavors of patriotism—it's like our prophet Chris Rock said 'You got to look at America like the uncle who paid for you to go to college, but who molested you.' We built this country, and we need to be able to take ownership of it and do everything in our power to redeem it, because it's all we got unless you want to emigrate.

Every time I talk about religion with all my LGBTQ+ friends (the Bushwick-burlesque scene types and others) we always end up in the same place. There's a need we have (which is for community and nurture and spirituality) that we don't have a place for.

We do a lot to replace it, we have so much solidarity and mutual understanding among us—but

we're all young and broke and still early in our healing and in our lives. And a whole generation of those who should be our Gay Elders were decimated. So we keep needing to rebuild the struggle bus.

In the South, at least if you're Black where I'm from in Atlanta, church is just where everything happens. There's a lot of churches, and everyone has a home church. It's weird if you don't. The church being the center of the community is so intrinsic to how communities thrive there. There is place for you there because you are part of them and the church is a part of the place that you live. However small, however limiting, however 'don't ask, don't tell' that place is.

**All we want is to live our lives, be socially nourished with partying on Saturday and roll up to church before brunch on Sunday to be spiritually nourished.**

The queer kids are not okay. Especially all the southern ones I know best. I'm not sure if it was different in the past or it was kind of bred that way from the start.

But where are they supposed to go; where are we supposed to go? But really—I guess we're all refugees of spiritual abuse and there's no place for us to go.

You and I keep discussing Spiritual refugees. We usually use a lot more words, but that's what we all are.

For years, I have had these same conversations with different Queer friends. It goes like this—how you're not an atheist but you don't not believe in god. But you can't say you believe in god bc of the whole "god hates f—s" thing? Ugh so what can I do? I'm a gaytheist not an atheist-atheist. How can there be healing where there is not even refuge?

Spiritual refugees. Such a good term for it. For my

own part, I was convinced Quaker on the basis of other convictions I hold and by the commitment to the testimonies of Simplicity and Truth. And yet, it's not a religious place I can invite my friends. I'm Black and queer. If you invite your friends to a place you are responsible for how the white/straight people there treat them there (or at the bare minimum, for giving the option to opt out of such spaces).

Meeting is a place that I feel nourished in going, but not one I feel I can simply invite my lower-case friends. Sometimes, y'all seem to have a lot of trouble not being weird. Ditto for not being so puritanical and shame-y. Especially if we're not from here—the culture shock is off putting enough when we can see there's so much internal work to be done that hasn't been. All we want is to live our lives, be socially nourished with partying on Saturday and roll up to church before brunch on Sunday to be spiritually nourished.

Everything about society and everyone here up north seems to act like those things are not compatible. It doesn't seem very Quakerly (or very Christian) to have to choose between different kinds of needs like that.

In these conversations we never come to any good solutions. I have my ways, others have theirs. But none of them are that great. What do you think about this tension—is it necessary? How far from ready to receive these spiritual refugees do you think New York Quakers are or could be?

TL;DR (too long; didn't read) I guess my question is: How I can gay & god— at same time? Pls send help.

In merry Friendship,  
A Seeker

My younger friend,  
Some years ago, a friend at meeting began wearing an American flag pin. When I asked her about it, she said she refused to give over the idea of patriotism to people who wrapped the war in the flag. She was a patriot who was against war, and America needed that type of patriotism. In many ways, I think the same thing about being queer and believing in God. I refuse to

give over my relationship with God because there are people who use the idea of God as a staff to beat others over the head. I am not willing to give over my understanding of what the Bible says to people who contend that it supports hatred, bigotry, homophobia and all of the other isms. If Quakerism has taught me one thing, it is that we are the church, and the church and God need us. Christianity is not a belief system that began as a way to promote hatred of others; Jesus spent most of his ministry supporting those who had been displaced by the religious system.

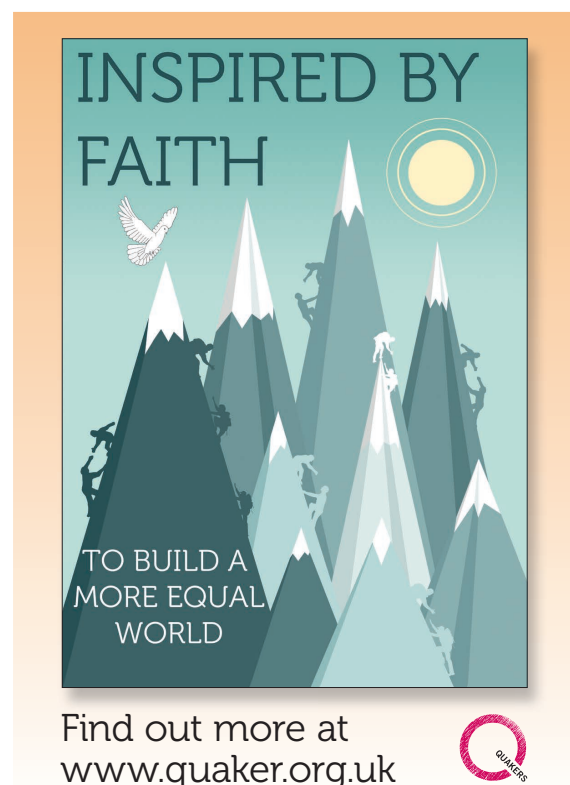
The question is not how one can be queer and have God. For me the question is how can a group of people who are consistently ostracized by the good people of society not have a God that supports them. You have three strikes against you from the beginning: you are young, queer and black. Rather than celebrate that diversity, many in our society and in our churches condemn you for who you are. The easiest choice is that in order to be who you are, you must reject

**I refuse to give over my relationship with God because there are people who use the idea of God as a staff to beat others over the head. I am not willing to give over my understanding of what the Bible says to people who contend that it supports hatred, bigotry, homophobia and all of the other -isms.**

what you seek. You address yourself as a seeker and a seeker does not have a choice. To deny what your heart knows to be true does not make you a seeker; it makes you a follower, a follower of ideas that you find onerous. I am not dull; I know that there are people who would find it easier if you did not come around, always asking the difficult questions. But if you do not ask the necessary questions, who will?

You are a teacher, and I am sure that you are a very good teacher, and that your students respect you. How can you not be honest with

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**Quakers** believe there is God in everyone. We think of this as a **light** shining inside us.



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them and with God? How do you teach without giving over part of yourself in order for others to grow. Every day that you teach, you create and maintain a safe community for others. You are expected to do that; it is your job. But it is also our job to create community with God, especially for those who have been abused by God's representatives. Many people have been hurt by these representatives, many have left in order to find community. But our heart knows that a community without God is built only on mutual interest. There is nothing wrong with this, but the community that we really want is the community of humanity. This is the blessed community, and although we try to build that every week in meeting, we constantly fail because we are all too human, and we sometimes lose contact with God.

So is it always up to those who have been excluded to explain things to people who do not get it, do not get being queer or black or young? In a sense, I think we represent the hope of the community. As outsiders we are experienced at understanding the ways of those in charge, learning how to code switch in order to survive. When someone tells me they do not understand my being queer, I believe them, for they have never had to. On the contrary, I understand what it is like to be straight because I have lived my entire life trying to emulate the walk and talk of the dominant culture in order to thrive. It is tiring, always being the person who is

on committees of diversity, always being asked what it feels like or how I heard things that were said, as if I had special queer powers, but the choice is to not engage with the other, not to understand that they want to understand, but do not yet know how.

I was saddened when you said that you did not feel comfortable bringing your friends of color to Meeting, because of your feeling of responsibility for what some white person would say. But you are not responsible for white people; you are responsible to love and truth. We are responsible to support one another, not against others but for our community, the community of God. Come and bring your friends, and do not put trust in what people may do, but in the God who has called you to sit and worship with others, even those who may never understand or accept you.

As I have said many times, church needs you, your unique and wonderful identities, your honesty and love. That is a big job to fill, but you have strength and humor (Lord, do we need that), intelligence and a desire to connect with others and God. If you do not find God in the community that you are in and you cannot help open that community to God's grace, you may need to move on. In the meantime, connect with someone in that community and hold onto one another, for it's going to be a bumpy ride.

In Friendship,  
Mentor



## Sit, Still, Settle

**Heather Meehan**  
Westbury Meeting  
*in dialogue with*  
**Veronica Meehan**

"I was a kid who couldn't sit still. But in meeting, I settled." This is what my mother tells me when I ask about her first encounter with Quakerism.

My own experiences in worship are inextricably linked to my mother, sitting quietly beside me on a dark wooden porch outside our meetinghouse, trees rustling around us while adults coughed and fidgeted and occasionally rose to speak inside. My mother waiting beside me reminded me to be quiet but let me squirm as much as I needed to. Perhaps she saw her child self, who crawled out of her crib as soon as she could stand up and ran everywhere instead of walking, but felt a magic in meeting for worship that led her to self identify as a Quaker from the very moment she set foot inside.

At the time I don't think I questioned why my mother asked me to sit with her. It was just one of those things we did. It wasn't until I got a little older that I realized other kids weren't sitting in— or even next to— the meetinghouse. They were in First Day School, over in the next building, reading books or drawing pictures or (one memorable time) screaming their hearts out on the playground. My mother, however, had a leading that children belonged in meeting for worship, a practice she attributed to her own mother, who always brought her children along.

"My mother brought us to everything. We went to worship sharing sessions and the adults would ask us our opinion of whatever was being discussed. As a teen a group of my friends came with me and they were awestruck that the adults would listen to what they had to say."

This equal treatment, regardless of age etc., is a central testimony of Quakerism. In our home meeting, I was accustomed to feeling this in practice, being seen as an equal participant with all the adults in our community.

Yet often when we visited other meetings the adults were shocked

and impressed by my ability to sit for the full sixty minutes and would come up to praise me during social hour. I found this highly embarrassing. It was praise for something that I didn't view as an accomplishment. My participation was made possible by the community around me who created the container, a container that could host the holy spirit.

I do not necessarily share my mother's conviction that children should always be in meeting since it's not one I can justify on an intellectual level. But I feel the truth of her conviction that children deserve a place at the table. My mother is a woman who can barely sit still long enough to eat dinner. But she found something profound in the space of meeting for worship that empowered her to do just that.

Also, worship is about much more than sitting still. I recall watching my younger brother, barely two years old, crawling around our meetinghouse, exploring every corner. He greeted each Friend on facing bench and was met with smiles, joy, prayer.

**My participation was made possible by the community around me who created the container, a container that could host the holy spirit.**

"Anytime you kids made noises [in meeting]," my mother tells me, "people would come up to me and thank me for your joyful noise. They realize how beautiful it is."

To put it another way, worship is not about being quiet. The silence is a practice that allows ministry to emerge. But Friends take our common name, "Quakers," from the fact that many of us are moved by the Spirit to speak.

I've only spoken in meeting for worship twice in my life, and I can't remember what I said either time, but in both instances my mother was sitting beside me, a witness.

"The first time I felt moved to speak I was pregnant with you," she tells me, "And my grandmother had just passed away. I can't remember what I said, but I felt connected. It was that simple."







# Communicating Across Generations

## Snappy, One and Two

Regina St. Clare  
Shrewsbury Meeting

At 86 years old, I am remembering my most favorite person from when I was six to nine years old. He is also one of top ten favorite people in my almost nine decades of life.

He is my maternal grandfather, Snappy. I playfully named him Snappy because he was anything but fast; he had a wooden leg. I once asked Snappy how he got his wooden leg. It's not the story I expected. His leg had become badly infected. My great uncle, who was a doctor, decided that the leg would have to be amputated. And it was, on a dining room table, by my great uncle. In 1945 there was no anesthesia, only hard liquor to lessen the pain. Things were very different back then.

My grandfather Snappy lived with my mom and dad and me, an only, lonely child, when I was nine. His wife, my grandmother, was deceased. He was a barber, and to go to the barber shop, he had to walk, with his crutch, up a steep hill in the morning, and down in the evening, after standing all day. He learned to endure much pain.

Snappy would often bring ice-cream home after a long day of barbering, after the up and down

hill climb to the trolley. Today, when I want a feeling of comfort, I am tempted to have ice-cream.

Now, there's another Snappy in my life, named Frank. He's my companion of almost 15 years. He's also slow-paced. When walking together, Frank and I are not compatible. I'm more the road runner—beep beep! You might say, my pace is double time his, if not more when I'm really impatient. Over the years, Frank has slowed more, due to medical issues. I'm forced to slow down with balance issues requiring a walking stick... not a cane.

So today, at 86, when Frank and I went to the gym, I decided to walk behind him. Even today, I'm usually out of the car and up to the gym door, walking stick and all, before Frank begins starting the forty-foot walk.

Walking behind felt immediately different. It was not that I felt I had to, or that someone in front of me was triggering my impatience. It was a profound feeling of peacefulness. Strange! There was no urge to move too fast, too much, too soon. My acquired impatient personality kinda disappeared. It was more peaceful. It gave me time to smell the flowers along the way, not just race to the door, the treadmill, the arm machine, the leg machine and out the door, back home for a snack and back to the computer.

What did walking behind really mean? Getting old, being left behind, can't keep up, inferior, a cultural etiquette? Rather, it was a choice to step back... reflect... not to feel I have to... that I must, won't have time, need to prove something, or need to have my own way, no matter what Jose. What am I running to... or running away from? Certainly not BEING HERE NOW! (a la Ram Dass)

These two Snappys in my life have turned out to be comforters and teachers—both men—one at the beginning and one at the ending of this life. Perhaps they are the bookends that serve to transform all the chapters of my life into one unconditional, loving heart.



Cover image of a pamphlet created by Britain Yearly Meeting and the Woodbrooke Centre containing advices and queries for Friends who have responsibility for eldership and oversight in order to grow an all-age community. This resource is available to order by contacting [cypadmin@quaker.org.uk](mailto:cypadmin@quaker.org.uk) or can be downloaded here: [www.quaker.org.uk/documents/all-are-welcomefinal](http://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/all-are-welcomefinal).

## Communicating Across Ages

Melinda Wenner Bradley  
Youth Religious Life  
Coordinator, Philadelphia  
Yearly Meeting

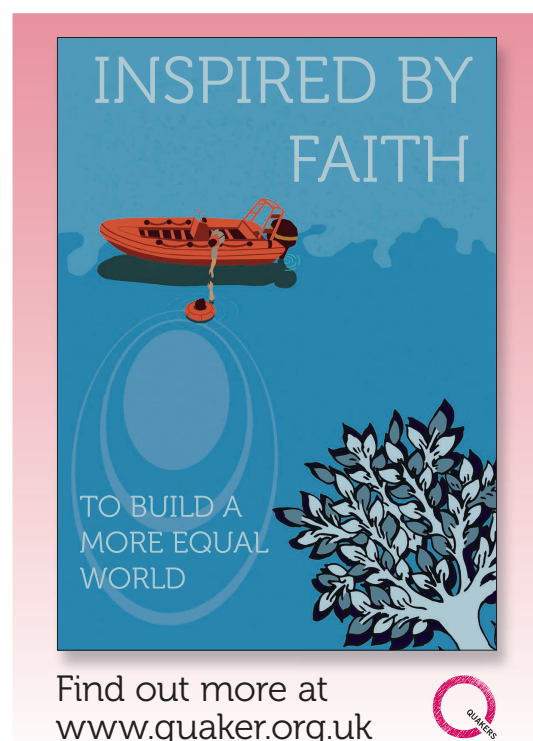
- A first step is recognizing the power and beauty of connecting and sharing across generations. It could not be more vital to the moment we are living in! Elise Boulding wrote:

*"If we want to rediscover human joy and wholeness and creativity, and to learn to care for our planetary household as one earth family, we cannot continue to insulate adults and children from each other. Children need to be present to us, and we to them [...]"*

- *Intergenerationality* is marked by *mutuality* (we all participate and benefit); *reciprocity* (we all give and receive) and *equality* (we are all valued equally). How can we use this as a guide, when planning gatherings with Friends?
- When you meet someone new, particularly if they are from a different generation, don't ask questions with embedded assumptions based on their age (*What grade are you in school? What is your work? Do you have children? Are you retired?*), instead ask questions that indicate your interest in them as a person:
  - *What do you like to do?*
  - *How do you spend your days?*

- *What gives you hope?*
- *What are you looking forward to right now?*
- *What's something interesting that's happened to you lately?*

- Consider hosting "Friendly Gatherings" as an expanded version of "Friendly 8s" so that families with children in the meeting can gather with other Friends across generations. (Groups should be intentionally multigenerational and can be more than eight people.) Share choices for relaxed, optional programming with the groups (see "Home Groups Fall 2021").
- Everyone needs stories, and activism can be a shared interest across ages of Friends. Books like "Holy Troublemakers and Unconventional Saints" offer short biographies of really cool people of faith — share how their stories connect with the witness of adult Friends during their lives, **and** the hopes of younger Friends for their world.
- *Worship and Play together!* Creating spaces to be together in joy and spiritual community nurtures opportunities to know each other in new ways. Sometimes we speak most eloquently and connect deeply simply through being present to one another. Host a game night, make a community meal, plan a time for all-ages to worship together. Invite people of all ages to help make these plans!



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## Servant Leaders and Friends

Carl Blumenthal  
Brooklyn Meeting

Jesus said, “Henceforth I call you not servants...But I have called you friends (John 15:15.) I call my friend Daniel Frey, age 43, and Friend Margaret Carne, age 87, best friends forever (BFFs) and servant-leaders in my field of mental health care.

According to Robert Greenleaf, the test of the servant-leader is: “Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants?”

Dan Frey is a Bronx native who like me was born and raised Jewish and now is a resident of Brooklyn. We both live with mental illness. I met him in 2001 after Ken Steele died, his mentor and publisher of New York City Voices, a peer journal of mental health, where Dan volunteered as an editor and writer.

Dan asked the Baltic Street Mental Health Board in Brooklyn, where I worked as a job counselor, for help continuing the publication, and, with my experience as a journalist, I volunteered, and have continued helping out to this day.

Margaret Carne, who lives in Jersey City, introduced me to Quakers—at the Chatham-Summit Meeting of NJ in 1987. We had been working for Jersey City’s Department of Housing and Economic Development—I as a housing manager and she as a social worker, who also had family members with mental illness.

Dan joined me as a job counselor at the mental health board in 2004 and, in addition to producing the paper, we organized conferences on “The Arts of Recovery” over the years, including one that took place at 15th Street Meeting and Friends’ Seminary.

Dan has created The Friendship Squad to pair caring, trained, and supervised volunteers, who have the lived experience of mental health and/or substance use challenges, with their peers who are reentering the community from institutional settings, such as the criminal justice system. The volunteers support their friends through attentive

listening, mutual respect, and trust while acting as role models.

Margaret, a birthright Friend and refugee from Cornwall, UK, who settled in NJ during World War II, became an immigrant rights advocate, visiting people incarcerated in local detention centers. Since entering private practice as a therapist, including a stint with a group of Quakers who were also counselors, she has focused on the mental health challenges immigrants face adapting to their new country.

Lately, through NYQM’s Inside-Outside letter-writing collective for incarcerated Friends, and as part of a group who welcome formerly incarcerated Friends to Brooklyn Meeting, I have tried to practice our testimony of prison reform, like Dan and Margaret have. And as a sometime ARCH visitor I have aided her in the transition from living alone to moving to an assisted living community.

**I feel like a member of the “sandwich generation” who has mentored a younger friend and is now offering spiritual accompaniment to a Friend who once mentored me and now needs my support.**

Dan and Margaret have never met but I feel like a member of the “sandwich generation” who has mentored a younger friend and is now offering spiritual accompaniment to a Friend who once mentored me and now needs my support.

The principles of mental health Intentional Peer Support and social work are like our SPICES testimonies and the practices of ARCH volunteers. Dan, Margaret, and I are also carrying on the “moral treatment” of folks with mental illness initiated by English Friends in the 1790s and imported to Philadelphia by Quakers who founded the first private psychiatric hospital in the U.S., which is still operating after more than 200 years.

I hope that Jews and Quakers will live by our humble examples for another 200 years.

## Connection

Mahayana Landowne  
Brooklyn Meeting

What personal fears are keeping you from joy?

What helps you feel heard? Included? Valued?

We all have knowledge and experience, and a lot to share with each other.

Can we connect to our curiosity and find connection?

How do we move beyond fear?

Is there a space where we can embrace supportive listening and a lack of judgement?

Intergenerational connection. Hearing each other. Moving beyond fear. Embracing vulnerability.

There is so much to share.

By now most people reading this know that *othering* someone is a way of dehumanizing and creating hierarchy. This allows a culture of oppression. Separation is a way to disempower.

There are ways to lift everyone up without putting anyone down.

Next time you find yourself the “victim” of generational conflict, how can you shift the script? How can you find connection, celebrate difference, have patience, grace, humor, and love?

There is no right way to do this; building your awareness, expanding your range of friendships, looking for connection, building relationships across age, economics, education, experience.

We have an incredible opportunity to grow.

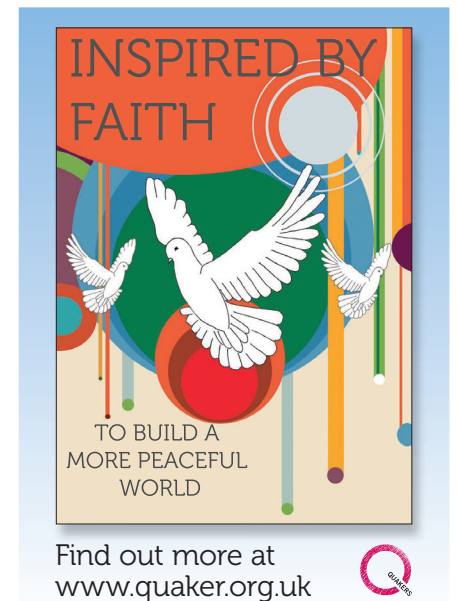
I have grown up in Quaker spaces, spaces where gentle passionate people connect to create community around “that of God” in everyone. Part of my joy of attending is the opportunity to cross paths with people of a variety of ages and life experiences who are interested in being in community with everyone who shows up. Officially, “All are Welcome.”

The tricky part are the layers of invisible culture we carry with us, the places where even if we don’t believe in something consciously, we do it anyway. Yikes.

When you can, please notice your “us” and “them-ing,” notice when you feel unheard. What can you shift to build connection?

How, starting right now, can you transform the world one interaction at a time?

(note: “we” in this article is you the reader and me)



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## A Suggestion

Anita Paul  
Schenectady Meeting

The most delightful cross-generation communication I’ve experienced in a Quaker meeting was at Farmington Friends. The handbell choir was divided between white-haired ladies and teen guys, and they sure sounded great. Past tense because the lads all graduated.

I’ve long thought that meetings should create an intentional 10 month program to usher teens into meeting by assigning each teen a mentor who is not a relative, to meet with the teen monthly, attend worship together and discuss what’s happening there, practice centering and mindfulness, read books in order to talk about Quaker history and procedures, go to a business meeting, and engage in the Quaker service of the teen’s choice. At the end of the 10 months the teen is invited to join meeting. There is no further expectation of First Day School for them, but teen group fun and service would continue.





# Messages from Friends on anti-racism and our yearly meeting

## Context from the Summer Sessions Minutes

*Friends who weren't at the Summer Sessions business meeting referenced in the following few messages may feel a bit lost. The selected minutes, below, of the meeting on July 27, 2021, may provide some context. — editor*

**End of minute 2021-07-27....**In reviewing the minutes related to the general secretary's report, Friends labored over the use of "ouch" in meetings for worship without reaching resolution. A minute of exercise from that work follows the end of these minutes....

**Minute 2021-07-31.** The following minute of exercise was approved on July 30, 2021. A minute of exercise is a statement of what happened at a meeting when we did not reach unity.

### Minute of Exercise:

During the ministry that followed the general secretary's report, someone said: "...we don't have pastors..."

Someone else responded: "Ouch. NYYM has pastors and pastoral meetings."

(We did not hear from the pastors and members of pastoral meetings how this felt to them.)

At an earlier business meeting in these sessions, our clerk had invited us into the practice of saying "ouch" when a harm is noticed.

The recording clerk read the minutes. The "ouch" interchange was included in the minutes as read.

As we began to consider the proposed minutes, the clerk, practicing a technique used in the afternoon session\* of "stacking" or preferencing voices of people who might normally not be heard, invited a Friend of Color to speak before a white Friend who had raised his hand first. The Friend of Color experienced this preferencing as being singled out for being Black.

As we continued considering the proposed minutes, a Friend questioned the use of the "ouch process" in meetings for worship, describing the "ouch process" as harmful to the gathered Body and dangerous to our worship.

Then followed several messages about the "ouch process," whether to include "ouch" interchanges in minutes, and public "eldering."

Other Friends held up examples of practices of responding to harms occurring in the body such as New England Yearly Meeting's noticing patterns of faithfulness and oppression.

Later, another Friend brought back to our attention the unaddressed distress of the Friend of Color who felt singled out by the use of "stacking." The Friend of Color had called us into the unity in the Spirit that the Friend of Color knows experientially. She shared the pain of her experience of feeling silenced in her meeting when she spoke of meeting as a place of sanctuary. The Clerk apologized for the harm caused by his words.

A Black Friend noted that in the afternoon session white Friends were learning how to "call each other in" to greater faithfulness. The reason we practice "ouch" is so we can learn how to "call each other in" in the midst of the body, where the gathered body can witness what has happened and open the doors to healing. The Friend asked us to do our work of naming and noticing when micro- and macro-aggressions occur.

The clerk closed meeting for business without the body approving the minutes. The clerk invited Friends to remain in worship as long as they wanted to stay.

Out of worship, a Friend shared ministry in which she described a vision of a people gathered on a journey along a rocky road, working together to clear the road. Sometimes in their energy and zeal, some sent rocks backwards and injured those behind. Some people moved little rocks and some big rocks, working together to accomplish the goal of clearing the road.

The words spoken in the body reflected differences around whether or not to include in the minutes acknowledgement of hurts that transpire during our sessions. Friends lifted up a desire to discern around the use of this type of process.

*\*a workshop on becoming an anti-racist faith community*



## Ministry & Counsel Gatherings Concern

Mary Pagurelias  
Brooklyn Meeting

Dear Friends,

The following is written by me, and comes from me as an individual.

What is NYYM doing to help our local and regional M&Cs (Ministry & Counsels) and pastors engage in those difficult conversations about racism other than naming a committee to draft a statement on becoming an anti-racist faith community, and then reproducing it in *Spark*?

Was a committee formed by NYYM to initiate conversations regarding concerns and issues directly related to racism and anti-racism efforts at the local levels? We do know, because we read the State of the Meeting reports that spoke to the pain felt by many, many Friends, that, as an institution, NYYM did not spread its wings to envelop and hold with tenderness those Friends who were and continue to be in pain.

During Summer Sessions, we experienced an "othering" that teaches us that we are not yet a sanctuary when a Black Friend was singled out to speak first because that Friend is Black; an "ouching" where a white Friend was way too

eager to "police" the rest of us—certainly, this is not something that would occur in a sanctuary; and the Friend who reminded us all that a meeting for worship, with a concern for business is not the place to "ouch" anyone. It is a time and place for WORSHIP. From comments I have been privy to, that Friend may have been wrongly eldred. Each of these events have torn us further apart and have eroded any sense of "safety" and "sanctuary" while speaking from our places of authenticity.

Not one of us is perfect. Not one of us is an expert on this journey. Why, as a Quaker meeting, we "other" and "ouch" and then wrongly "elder" the Friend who reminds us that we are in WORSHIP. We are all damaged. We are all products of institutional and internal racism on more levels than we can even imagine. I will say that our hearts are pure and filled with love for all. I will even say that I believe that in time we can heal—not in my time, not in Quaker time, not in NYYM time either, but only in the time of that which is eternal.

I am a member of the Ministry and Pastoral Care committee that works with local and regional ministry and counsel committees. It supports these groups in their work of loving and caring for their communities. This committee also pays special attention to those serving the yearly meeting in pastoral roles.

I write this as a member of Ministry and Pastoral Care's sub-committee that is charged with hosting M&C gatherings. We had been ready to have a Saturday afternoon gathering in order to provide a safe space for discussion on becoming an anti-racist faith community. As a reminder, this committee is not a committee of activism. It is about providing "opportunities for Friends who are currently serving on local or regional ministry and counsel committees to speak with one another, pose questions, share best ideas, and provide mutual support."

I am not clear, and surely not easy with undertaking these "anti-racism" efforts based on the incidents described above, and those that I have not described.



Not one of us is perfect. Not one of us is an expert on this journey.



# Messages from Friends on anti-racism and our yearly meeting

## Response

Antonia Saxon  
Ithaca Meeting

I am moved to try to respond to this letter ( from Mary Pagurelias), and especially to the strong emotions of outrage and indignation in it.

Despite the strong emotions, the letter gives me a sense of hope. The person who wrote it regrets the harm that racism causes. She feels deep sympathy with that hurt and she says she is committed to struggling against it. Her indignation is directed towards some of the ways Friends are trying to struggle against it.

The letter also gives me hope because this is a better place for the yearly meeting to be. It says that Friends in the yearly meeting, most of whom are European-Americans, are in conflict about working out ways to address structural racism, racism that's part of Friends' institutions. At Summer Sessions this year, 80 Friends attended the Tuesday and Thursday workshops on anti-racism practices. Friends don't always agree about the words that are used to talk about racial inequality and injustice, or about practices to address them, but they feel the injustice, and they know change is up to us.

The letter charges that New York Yearly Meeting is only interested in writing an antiracist statement and hasn't gone to local meetings and churches to uncover stories and experiences of the pain of racism. It's important to remember the yearly meeting sent out a team of Friends to visit local meetings to hear their concerns about racism as far back as 2014. Those efforts seemed to go largely unnoticed by local meetings at the time.

The letter mourns the incident in which a Friend was singled out in public at Summer Sessions. It was a terrible moment. In trying to address harm, a Friend was hurt, and others saw that hurt. The conflict was immediately addressed in private afterward. A public statement could have been made about how it was resolved, but wasn't; that may not have seemed like the best way to go forward to all who were involved.

Some Friends have said that within the Society of Friends, race

should not matter. In the Spirit, this point of view argues, all Friends are one. Talking about difference creates division.

For me it has felt truer and more illuminating to understand difference as flowing from God. To see and welcome difference is to rejoice in God's endless power to create. I can't grow in faith without difference.

And I can't grow in faith without indignation and anger, either. When I seek quiet, civil discourse, I am almost always shutting someone down. If Friends have to express indignation and anger to bring attention to wrongs they have suffered, I will grow by hearing it.

At a meeting for worship not long ago, a Friend spoke passionately about wanting to feel fully included. "Don't just tolerate us!" they said. Anti-racism work is not separate from growing in the Spirit. It is central to it.

**When I seek quiet, civil discourse, I am almost always shutting someone down. If Friends have to express indignation and anger to bring attention to wrongs they have suffered, I will grow by hearing it.**

## An Elder's Reflection on NYYM Summer Sessions

Anne Pomeroy  
New Paltz Meeting

The theme for NYYM Summer Sessions 2021 was "Becoming a Sanctuary Where Spirit Dwells." The theme names that we are not yet a sanctuary for all. Emily Provance in her plenary address invited us to live into becoming sanctuary. What ways might we carry this invitation into our lives now?

As I reflect on Summer Sessions, I saw us be human and step into the messiness. I heard many voices lift up experiences of exclusion. I heard a real desire to be 'one' body. I also felt how some people did not feel included in that 'oneness' and experienced these words as 'othering.' I saw real work being done to address racism in individuals and as a collective. I heard apologies for harm caused and heard acceptance of apologies. This is all part of the work of becoming sanctuary.

As unique individuals with unique experiences we naturally experience difference. Expressions of difference sometimes harm others. As a yearly meeting we can no longer ignore that we have and do hurt one another, even in our worship together. When we harm one another in public, it ripples through the community. To be 'one' body we need a way to name and address the harm we cause AND we need to learn how to treat one another better. In the article, the author lifts up particular places of harm. I invite the readers to consider who else was affected in these instances. How can we be 'one' without marginalizing others?

One aspect of eldership is naming the truth, guided by the principle that truth without love is violence and love without truth is sentimentality. When we listen generously, with ears of the heart, we hold open possibility and can hear the truth that another is adding to the truth we are seeing. Scolding and shaming in any form is not a function of eldership. We are each responsible for our words and deeds and their impact. Additionally, the journey to sanctuary asks us to notice patterns of faithfulness and patterns of the

**As a yearly meeting we can no longer ignore that we have and do hurt one another, even in our worship together.**

dominant culture that oppress. This naming is also a function of eldership. For me, I need my community to be one which reflects where I might not yet see these patterns. Continuing revelation asks me to be open to how Spirit is leading.

At Sessions, I learned from the messiness, the worship, and the missteps. I am hopeful about the ways we as a community can become a living sanctuary as we truly see and honor each person.

Do you have something to add? Want to continue this important conversation? Please write down your response and send it to [communications@nyym.org](mailto:communications@nyym.org) or to the NYYM office at 15 Rutherford Pl., New York, NY 10003. Your reply may be featured in a future issue of *Spark*. Let's keep the dialogue going. Thanks.

—Editor





## Fall Sessions • December 3-5, 2021 • Online

### Sessions and Committee Meetings

NYYM's Fall Sessions will be held virtually on the weekend of Friday-Sunday, December 3-5, 2021. We will have time for worship, discernment, business, and gathering together socially. On Friday night there will be a Meeting for Gathering to Deeply Listen. Please note that there are no spots reserved in the schedule for committee meetings. Committees should consider meeting via Zoom well before Fall Sessions, so that any business they approve to be brought before the yearly meeting can be brought first to the appropriate coordinating committee for seasoning and approval, also before Fall Sessions. **To request use of a NYYM Zoom account for your committee**, please email your request to [communications@nyym.org](mailto:communications@nyym.org) and include the meeting title, date, starting time, and duration of the meeting.

We need as many Friends as possible to participate and help the yearly meeting discern its way forward. **Registration will be available soon at:**

**[nyym.org/session/fall-sessions-2021](https://nyym.org/session/fall-sessions-2021)**

An announcement will be made via email once registration is open. Email [walter@nyym.org](mailto:walter@nyym.org) if you think you aren't on the email list.

**You must register in order to receive the Zoom links for the meetings.** A registration fee will be suggested but not required. Everyone who is interested in the yearly meeting, Quakerism, or the Quaker meetings in our area is welcome and encouraged to attend. Meet with other NYYM Friends online!

### ...Didn't This Used to Be in November?

Yes. Fall Sessions was held in the beginning of November for many years. Before that, it had been held at the beginning of December, but was moved earlier to avoid the risk of being snowed out. Sessions Committee has decided that Fall Sessions will be held virtually for this year and for at least the next two years. Because we will meet online the weather is no longer a concern, and the switch back to early December was possible. This decision is to be reviewed by the Sessions Committee and the yearly meeting in Summer 2024.

## Fall Sessions Schedule December 3-5, 2021

### Friday, December 3

7:00-9:00 p.m. Meeting for Gathering to Deeply Listen

### Saturday, December 4

8:30-9:30 a.m. Meeting for Worship

9:45-11:45 a.m. Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business

12:00-1:00 p.m. Social Meals

1:30-2:30 p.m. Meeting for Worship

2:30-4:30 p.m. Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business

5:00-6:30 p.m. Social Meal

### Sunday, December 5

*(Morning off so that folks can join the worship of their choice. If your meeting is not hosting a virtual meeting, please visit [nyym.org/NYYM-online-worship-opportunities](https://nyym.org/NYYM-online-worship-opportunities))*

12:30-1:30 p.m. Social Meal: Getting to Know Us; A Time for Community. Friends are invited to share their hobbies, what they are reading, what podcasts they are listening to, what music they are dancing to, and their lunch at this Fall Sessions social meal.

1:30-2:30 p.m. Meeting for Worship

2:30-4:30 p.m. Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business, if needed

*Closing at discretion of clerk as she determines that all business has been addressed.*

## Want to work with our young Friends? Volunteer for JYM!

Plans are underway for an in-person Summer Sessions at Silver Bay! There will be a full JYM (Junior Yearly Meeting) program for rising first graders to high schoolers, with child care available for the younger children.

Are you being led to build community by working with our young people? Do you know someone in your meeting who would enjoy volunteering with JYM?

We welcome Friends of all ages! Whether you're 18 or in your 80s, please consider serving our yearly meeting in this very special way. We're seeking resource people and JYM group co-leaders. For more information, questions, or to volunteer, contact Ellie Rosenberg or Susan Stillman, the JYM coordinators, at [jym-coordinators@nyym.com](mailto:jym-coordinators@nyym.com). 

Visit **[nyym.org/session/fall-sessions-2021](https://nyym.org/session/fall-sessions-2021)**