



SPARK

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

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November 2024



Music in the Meetinghouse

Elation — Elegance — Exaltation

Marianne C. Corbino
Scarsdale Meeting

The four-part musical suite “A Love Supreme,” written by John Coltrane in 1964, mirrors the expression of my faith. This technically and lyrically elegant “whispering prayer” has been a conduit for worship and a pillar in my daily life.

The composition was a spiritual declaration, depicting his quest leading to a peak of devotion. In words and music, he incanted a poem to God. There are countless layers of praise, gratitude, love, redemption and revelation. This piece set the stage for my becoming a Quaker.

Both Coltrane and I credit to God the process of musical creation. We have shown appreciation towards the Divine Spirit who granted us the gift of channeling love through music. He thanks God for vibrations and breath. As a wind player myself, his heartfelt praise hits a high note with me.

His suite has a universal spiritual quality. If played with excellence, the piece brings happiness to listeners by lifting them and myself up to a higher level. With joy, I referenced this piece in meeting for worship when moved by its playing in my

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Group Singing as Communion

John Scardina
Purchase Meeting

I started singing with Peter and Annie Blood-Patterson (co-creators of *Rise Up Singing* and *Rise Again*) at Friends General Conference in 1989. In 1991 — as a response to the first Iraq War — I began joining them in their home once a month for a community sing as an artistic response to war. Since then I have led such sing-along sessions in many places, including NYYM’s Summer Sessions.

As Robin Williamson of The Incredible String Band (one of my musical mentors, along with Michael Heron, Pete Seeger, Joni Mitchell, Bela Bartok, and John Prine) once said, “Music is prayer, everything else is interesting in an infinite sort of way.” That’s how I feel, whether we are singing Julian of Norwich or Dancing with Bears! Indeed, when we “lift every voice and sing” something magical happens.

As an educator I learned that there is a discrete “musical intelligence” (Howard Gardner in *Frames of Mind*). As a psychologist I learned from Oliver Sachs that “music (is) continually forcing itself on my attention, showing me its effects on almost every aspect of brain function — and life.” (*Musicophilia*).

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From the Plantations to the Projects to the Prisons

Helen Garay Toppins
Morningside Meeting

Music has sustained me throughout my prison ministry. Going into penitentiaries where everyone looks like you and meeting worship members as they come out of solitary confinement necessitates strength. Raised AME (African Methodist Episcopal) I knew how to manifest strength through song.

I would listen to music recorded by John and Alan Lomax in 1933 at the Angola State Penitentiary in Louisiana. Before it was the Angola penitentiary it was the Angola Plantation — named after the enslaved Angolan people. White men on horseback with whips rode up and down the cotton fields. Before Emancipation they were overseers; after Emancipation they were prison guards. They come to mind when I read about overseers in our New York Yearly Meeting *Faith & Practice*.

There are many prison songs that inspire me and keep me keeping on. “Let Your Hammer Ring” is a prime example.

Marvin Gayle’s “What’s Going On” is as apropos today as the day

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Fall Sessions December 6-8, 2024

The next gathering of New York Yearly Meeting Friends for business, worship, and fellowship will take place entirely online, December 6-8, 2024. See **page 12** for more information.

NYYM PLAYLISTS

Listen to the music mentioned in this issue!

Many of the songs recommended by the authors of these articles (with the exception of the songs from Summer Sessions; see below) have been put together into a YouTube playlist. Go to www.youtube.com/@NewYorkYearlyMeeting/playlists and click on “NYYM Fall 2024.”

Many of the individual songs recommended by Friends at Summer Sessions (see pages 11-12) are in an audio-only **Spotify** playlist, which can be played online or via the Spotify app. To access the playlist, **click here.**



**Music
in the
Meeting: pp. 4-12**
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Notices

New Members

Ian Hurley — Morningside
Madeline Johnson — Morningside

Deaths

Tom Fee, member of Shrewsbury, on October 13, 2024
Jimmy Titus, member of Jericho, on October 15, 2024

NEWS

ARCH Meetup Groups

ARCH Groups are Zoom meetup spaces for mutual accompaniment, peer support, and community building based on shared interest, experience, and wisdom. Groups include Caregivers & Caregiving; Seasons of Life, 60-80 and 80+; Aging Without Children; and more. For the full list and registration instructions, email ARCH Director Kevin Lovelady at arch@nyym.org.

Sarah and Marty Glazer Stepping Down as Powell House Youth Program Directors

Sarah and Marty will be leaving their positions as PoHo Youth Directors at the end of February 2025. They have committed to making sure Earthsong 2025 takes place. Look for a job announcement soon.

Powell House Executive Directors Leave; Interim Period Begins

The outgoing Executive Directors, Regina Baird Haag and Dennis Haag, moved from Powell House to their new home in Troy, NY, at the end of October. Regina's gifts in ministry and spiritual leadership will continue to spread joy and care as she takes up service as Pastor at West Stockbridge Village Congregational Church. The Executive Director Search Committee is conducting interviews with several qualified candidates and expect to recommend a candidate for the Executive Director position in December. The Powell House Committee will make the final selection. For this interim period, the rest of the Powell House staff will carry the Executive Director responsibilities until a new Executive Director comes on board.

NYYM's Weekly Update Email

An email newsletter is sent to NYYM Friends each Friday. Past editions are available at nyym.org/weekly-updates. To subscribe, visit

Around Our Yearly Meeting

nyym.org/subscribe.

Transforming White Organizational Culture — a workshop for NYYM Friends

New York Yearly Meeting is offering **Transforming White Organizational Culture**, a racial justice workshop by the Center for the Study of White American Culture (CSWAC) to Friends throughout the yearly meeting. Wednesdays, **January 8, 15, and 22, 2025**, at 7:00-9:00 pm ET. Workshop costs will be covered by NYYM. Please register by Dec. 1. Email office@nyym.org for more information.

UPCOMING EVENTS

The next gathering of New York Yearly Meeting for business will be **Fall Sessions**, held online **December 6-8, 2024**. See page 12.

SAVE THE DATE! Spring Sessions 2025 will be held at Oakwood School and online, **April 4-6, 2025**

Friends' Decision-Making and Clerking

At Pendle Hill, PA, Nov 22-24
with *Steve Mohlke and, O*

A weekend workshop on liberatory clerking skills, particularly valuable for meeting clerks and others doing decision-making work within a spiritual setting. **Click here.**



Powell House Workshops

Powell House is the retreat and conference center for NYYM. Visit powellhouse.org/event-list/ to register, or call 518-794-8811.

Living into Prophetic Quakerism: Three Spiritual Nurture Working Group Retreats at Powell House

Facilitated by Lu Harper and Anne Pomeroy

In each of the retreats in this series, we will be listening for our personal and collective truth and leadings.

1. Continuing Revelation: Moving Beyond Form into a Living Quakerism, Nov 22-24, 2024

In this retreat we will make space to hear what we are experiencing as Quakers and what we sense is needed. We will look at Quaker forms that have life and evolutionary potential. What supports a sustainable faith?

2. Transforming Quaker Culture: Building Authentic Spiritual Community, Feb 14-16, 2025

3. Stepping Forward Faithfully:

Answering the Call and Becoming the Solution, April 25-27, 2025

New Year's Eve Celebration

December 30, 2024-January 1st, 2025. A family-friendly retreat and celebration.



A gathering of a previous years' God's Promise Fulfilled cohort in the library at Powell House.

Embark on a Spiritual Journey with God's Promise Fulfilled

Are you seeking a deeper connection with your faith? "God's Promise Fulfilled," a two-year residency program from the School of the Spirit Ministry, invites you to embark on a transformative spiritual journey, beginning May 2025. With hybrid participation options, this program welcomes seekers from diverse faith backgrounds.

You will join a supportive community of two dozen individuals exploring the idea of an "Inner Teacher," who promises us "life more abundant" (John 10:10). Over the course of two years, you'll dive into residencies deepening your spiritual understanding and learning how to live out God's call in the world.

The first year, **Inhale**, focuses on personal spiritual growth, while the second year, **Exhale**, helps you embody grace and serve your community. This program provides an opportunity for reflection, growth, and a chance to respond to today's spiritual and worldly challenges with courage and love.

Applications are due by December 31, 2024. Don't miss your chance to experience this transformative journey.

To learn more and apply, visit www.schoolofthespirit.org/gpf.

FOR YOUNG ADULTS

Children, Youth and Young Adult Community Director Beth Kelly maintains a list of upcoming YAF events at nyym.org/yaf-events.

Powell House YAF Conference: Beyond Pink and Blue, Jan. 24-26, 2025 (See "For Children & Teens")

Visit powellhouse.org/event-list/ to register.

FOR CHILDREN & TEENS

Powell House Youth Conferences

Visit powellhouse.org/event-list/ to register, or call 518-794-8811.

Worlds Like Our Own for 6th-8th Grade, November 22-24, 2024

Who would you be in a world of fantasy and adventure? Role-playing games can allow us to reflect on ourselves and our world in fun and exciting ways. At this conference we will play games like Dungeons and Dragons, talk about our favorite imaginary worlds, and maybe even design a role-playing game set at Powell House.

WinterSong 2024 for 7th-12th Grade, December 13-15, 2024

WinterSong is a celebration of care and community during the darkest days of the year. As we approach the winter solstice, we will share in fulfilling activities and discussion, and burst with fun and creativity.

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info@nyym.org
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communications@nyym.org
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NYYM Staff

Jennifer Caban: jenc@nyym.org
Chad Giletta: web@nyym.org
Beth Kelly: bethk@nyym.org
Kevin Lovelady: arch@nyym.org
Steve Mohlke: gensec@nyym.org
Helen Garay Toppins:
office@nyym.org
Sarah Way:
communications@nyym.org

We love to have a big group for our song conferences, so please consider registering early for this special weekend!

Beyond Pink and Blue for 11th-12th Grade and Young Adults, January 24-26, 2025

We live in a world that tries to divide people and identities and put them in narrow boxes, when in truth we form a spectrum of possibilities of every kind. We are many rainbows! Come explore your colors together, the nuances and unique aspects of yourself that make you you!

OPPORTUNITIES

Job Openings

These Quaker organizations often have job openings posted online: **Friends General Conference:** www.fgcquaker.org/work-at-fgc/ **American Friends Service Committee:** afsc.org/careers **Friends Committee on National Legislation:** www.fcnl.org/about/work-fcni

NYYM Grants for Earthcare and Climate Justice Projects

These mini-grants (\$50 to \$500 per application) provide spiritual and material support to those engaged in the compelling task of transforming our relationship with Earth, including addressing the climate crisis. Please apply online, at nyym.org/content/nyym-financial-resources-individuals-and-meetings#earthcare



Helen Garay Toppins and Walter Naegle, October 11, 2024. Photo by Sarah Way.

Walter Naegle, NYYM Administrative Associate, Retires

Walter Naegle, beloved Administrative Associate and surviving partner of civil rights icon Bayard Rustin, has retired from NYYM.

Walter worked for NYYM since March 2002, keeping our membership records, helping out with banking, and doing “whatever Helen asked me to do.” If you ever called the NYYM office there is a good chance you spoke to Walter.

15th Street Meeting Friend Barbara Heizman was responsible for introducing Walter to the yearly meeting. Walter met Barbara at 218 East 18th Street, an address famous among peace and civil rights activists as being an incubator for emerging social justice organizations. Several groups met there in the mid-20th century, including the World Without War Council, the Center for War/Peace Studies, and the Bayard Rustin Fund. Barbara worked for the Center for War/Peace Studies and got to know Walter at 218 E. 18th Street. When Barbara left her job, Walter replaced her. Barbara later worked at NYYM, and when she retired, she strongly recommended Walter for her position. He got the job. That was 22 years ago.

Walter’s been a tremendous support for NY Friends for all those years. His dry sense of humor will be particularly missed.

Walter regularly sends emailed updates on events related to Bayard Rustin — museum openings, documentaries, etc. To join that mailing list, email Walter at rustin@rcn.com.

Support Quakers and meetings: NYYM.org/donate

Editor’s Note

I’m writing this note right before the 2024 election, and this issue will be received and read after election day. I am worried about the election, but Quakerism gives me something solid to hold onto. No matter who wins, no matter what happens, **we are called to keep doing the work.** The work of Quakerism is to listen to God/Spirit/Love and to live our lives in accordance with our values, out loud, without fear. No matter who wins we will continue to let integrity, peace, and equality guide our actions. We will continue.

Spark accepts article submissions of **400-600 words**, plus images, poetry, news items, and letters to the editor.

Upcoming Spark themes:
February 2025:
The NYYM Times.

Spark will be transformed into a “real” newspaper this February. What are feeling led to write about? No matter the topic, it’s all fit to print in the NYYM Times. All of the usual sections are possible, depending on what is received: National and International News, Local, Arts and Entertainment, Sports, Business, Travel and Leisure, Food, Opinion, and more. The NYYM Times has an unapologetically religious bias, so there may be some specifically Quaker sections: Living Our Faith, or Gospel Order. Some ideas: report on a recent business meeting; review a potluck spread; write about a recent local event your meeting participated in. Are you led to draw a comic or create a word puzzle? Please share.

Submissions are due by **January 7** to communications@nyym.org.

Please send your meeting’s news and upcoming events for the NYYM weekly email update or *Spark* to **communications@nyym.org**. Join NYYM’s email list at nyym.org/subscribe.

NYYM is on **Facebook** (NewYorkYearlyMeeting) and **Instagram** (newyorkyearly-meeting).

Sarah Way, NYYM Communications Director
communications@nyym.org



Wilton Quakers, left to right: John Anderson, Peter Murchison, Sean Higgins, Irene Corsaro, Michael Murchison, Laura Higgins

Gun Buyback and Gun Safe Giveaway

Peter Murchison
Clerk, NYYM Gun Violence Prevention Task Group

On October 6, 2024, gun buybacks and gun safe giveaways took place in eight cities in Connecticut simultaneously. About a dozen more sites did just the safe giveaways. In Norwalk, where the Wilton Quakers were the civilian partner with the police department, we received 36 weapons including five assault weapons. We also gave away 30 gun safes for free in the first hour. So there was benefit to people giving up guns, getting grocery gift cards, and people keeping guns, who can now store them safely to protect their children and others.



Gun Violence Awareness Weekend

The NYYM Gun Violence Prevention Task Group invited Friends to unite in a call to end gun violence by symbolically wearing orange during the Gun Violence Awareness Weekend on June 9, 2024. Above are some of the meetings that did so. Friends interested in gun violence prevention can contact the Task Group’s clerk, Peter Murchison, at pdmurch@gmail.com.

World Quaker Day Celebrations
Democratic Republic of Congo



Pastor Innocent Nunda sent in a photo of a celebration of World Quaker Day 2024 from the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Brooklyn Meeting



Friends at Brooklyn Meeting gathered for a photo after worship on Sunday, Oct. 6, 2024, for World Quaker Day.



Elation — Elegance — Exaltation

Marianne C. Corbino
Scarsdale Meeting


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head. Ministry resonated and appreciation was voiced. Quite interestingly, Coltrane played his composition using twelve keys. The artist seemed to be saying that obtaining Grace is common to all religions, all people, everywhere as represented by all keys.

The musical narrative has been analyzed repeatedly and has been found to contain spiritual overtones. My individual interpretation of the four sections depicts my spiritual experience. It follows. Part #1: Acknowledge what is right and true. Part #2: Resolution to want to do what is right. Part #3: Pursue what you acknowledge to be right. Part #4: Sing a Psalm in gratitude. Divine Love is the playbook.

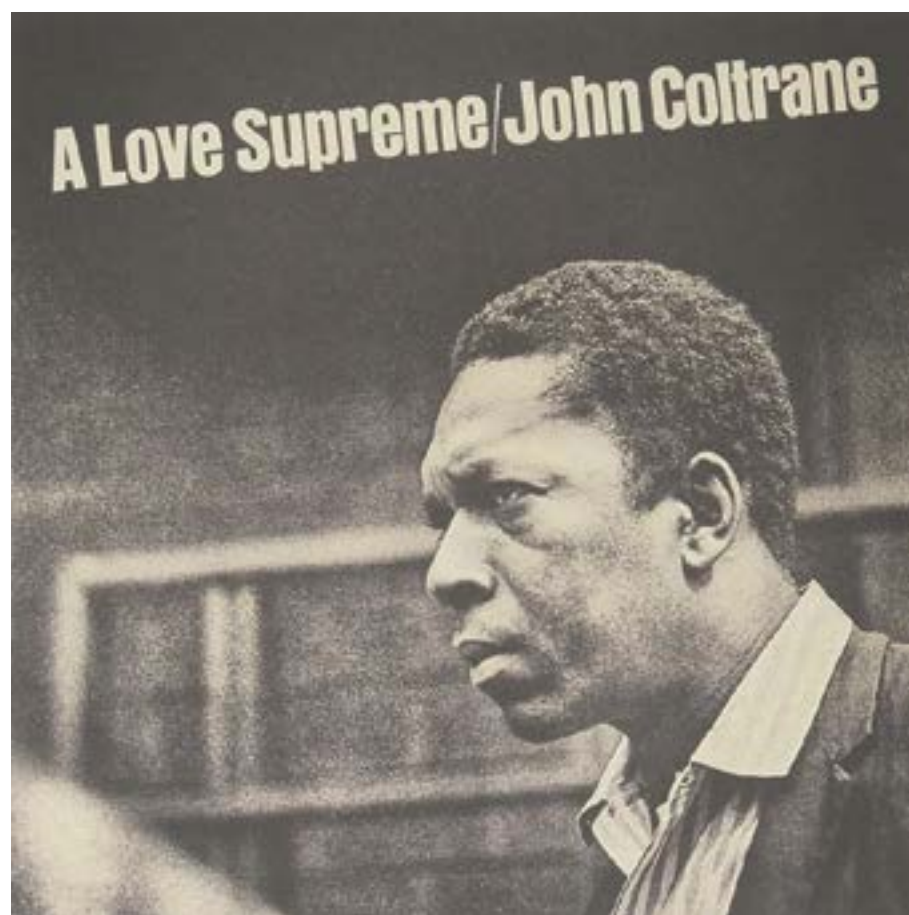
It had the power to change the trajectory of my worldly life too. I first heard “A Love Supreme” when my brother practiced his sax all day and all night in the room next to mine. As a result, one day, I was overwhelmed with emotion when I encountered a busker in NYC blowing “A Love Supreme” through his horn. It was the catalyst to run away to New Orleans and get married. It has been the common hymn in my life as a human and musician.

In the ending he states his anthem, “It is with God. He is Gracious and Merciful. His Way is in Love, Through which we all are. It is Truly — A Love Supreme.”

Read John Coltrane’s prayer, “A Love Supreme,” on the next page. 

Meeting for Singing. The entire community gathered in the meeting house to sing on a Thursday morning. All of the songs were taught and learned by the children (from pre-K through fifth grade) so there was no need for song sheets or songbooks. After a very short time we began having nearly as many parents, grandparents, and extended family members show up, a testament to the power of group singing. Many times adults came up to me afterwards with tears in their eyes, saying that the experience had moved them deeply. Singing together was filling a void in their lives.

At NYM Summer Sessions, I contribute my two ministries as best I can — driving a golf cart and singing after dinner. I play for the contra dance and watch all of you dance with joy and spirit. I cannot imagine my life without music. Can you?



Album jacket for John Coltrane’s *A Love Supreme*, released by Impulse! Records in January 1965.

From the Plantations to the Projects to the Prisons

Helen Garay Toppins
Morningside Meeting

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it was released in 1971. It also gives me hope to keep going.

Mother, mother

There’s too many of you crying

Brother, brother, brother

There’s far too many of you dying

You know we’ve got to find a way

To bring some lovin’ here today,

yeah

Father, father

We don’t need to escalate

**You see, war is not the answer
For only love can conquer hate**

You know we’ve got to find a way

To bring some lovin’ here today

Committed’s version of “Lift Every

Voice and Sing” — our “Black

National Anthem” — fuels me with

determination for my social justice

work. It was written as a poem

by NAACP leader James Weldon

Johnson in 1900. His brother, John

Rosamond Johnson (1873-1954),

composed the music for the lyrics

(*retrieved from naacp.org, 10/7/24*).

Lift every voice and sing,

‘Til earth and heaven ring,

Ring with the harmonies of

Liberty;

Let our rejoicing rise

High as the list’ning skies,

Let it resound loud as the rolling sea.

Sing a song full of the faith that

the dark past has taught us,

Sing a song full of the hope that

the present has brought us;

Facing the rising sun of our new

day begun,

Let us march on ‘til victory is

won.

Stony the road we trod,

Bitter the chastening rod,

Felt in the days when hope

unborn had died;

Yet with a steady beat,

Have not our weary feet

Come to the place for which our

fathers sighed?

We have come over a way that

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Group Singing as Communion

John Scardina
Purchase Meeting

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Music heals our souls, quiets our troubled inner voices, and sparks our bodies to move and rejoice.

At West Chester Friends School (where I was the psychologist for 35 years) I began a once monthly



John Scardina, in center with blue checked shirt, leading the all-Junior Yearly Meeting singalong at Summer Sessions 2022. Photo by Sarah Way.



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**with tears has been watered,
We have come, treading our
path through the blood of
the slaughtered,
Out from the gloomy past,
'Til now we stand at last
Where the white gleam of our
bright star is cast.**
God of our weary years,
God of our silent tears,
Thou who has brought us thus far
on the way;
Thou who has by Thy might
Led us into the light,
Keep us forever in the path, we
pray.
Lest our feet stray from the
places, our God, where we met
Thee,
our hearts drunk with the wine of
the world, we forget Thee;
Shadowed beneath Thy hand,
May we forever stand,
True to our God,
True to our native land.



Music warms my heart and soul.

Chester Freeman
Rochester Meeting

When I first began to attend Quaker meeting, it was the music in Central Finger Lakes Meeting that kept bringing me back again and again.

There was a gentleman in the group who had a beautiful melodic voice and he often offered the earthy Native American songs and chants in our meetings. His voice was very soft, which, to me, was like a downy feather floating in the air. Each time he sang, it reminded me of the Haudenosaunee Thanksgiving Address.

His singing brought me to a place of gratitude, since the prayer ends with the line, "And now our minds are one." His a cappella vocals were transcendent and were integrated so gracefully into our meeting that I think we all looked forward to his vocal ministry in song.

I especially loved his mastery of the Native American language, the high tense notes, the descending melodic patterns, and the vocables — those terms for which our English language has no interpretation. He captured all of it so fluidly.

There was another gentleman

in our meeting who brought his harmonica from time to time. He too, was a master of his skill that gave me a jazz-like feeling. It took me back to when I would listen to Duke Ellington and Ella Fitzgerald. His playing was deeply moving. We all know that certain frequencies speak to our bodies and his playing always put me in a place of serenity.

These two men gave me the courage to sing in meeting. I reflected on my years of singing in the Chapel Choir at Hampton University. Our Minister of Music taught us all the songs from the Dett Collection of Negro Spirituals, by Robert Nathaniel Dett. When I was moved by the Spirit, I would sing one of those spirituals a cappella. Everyone in our meeting expressed how much they enjoyed my ministry of music and encouraged me to do more.

In our unprogrammed meeting, we always seemed to have time and space for music. Personally, I feel all genres of music resonate with Quaker values. It all depends on the song and who is singing it. For instance, Judy Collins and Joan Baez

bring great depth to their music and that resonates with Friends.

One of my favorites by Yolanda Adams is "Open Your Heart," which captures the gospel nature. Each time I hear that song, it awakens something with me and causes me to reflect on my life and what I can do to become a better person.

I attend one other meeting, the Farmington Friends Church in Farmington, New York. Again, the main reason that I keep returning to this meeting is because of their choir. The music they bring to a service is so uplifting and transformative that I can't wait to sit down in worship. They have a special "Music Sunday" service in which the whole service is given through music, with scripture readings interspersed. This service always takes me to a higher plane. They often have special instrumental solos with violins and piano.

We as Quakers often think that George Fox was not a fan of music. But that is not so.

Music is definitely a form of prayer for me. Music is my go-to place. When I am down, I play

Yolanda Adams. When I am happy, I play Aretha Franklin. When I am in a meditative mood, I play Richard Shulman. Music sets the tone for meditation and I could not live without music. I think music is one of the greatest gifts that we as humans can receive.



I Pray in Song

Mary Lou Peck
Old Chatham Meeting

Recommendations:

- "Farther along"
by WB Stevens & R Baxter
- "Teach Me to Stop and Listen"
by Ken Medema

Yes, I pray in song, I worship in song. The words of the old Hymns are frequently in my head, and I can't remember poetry, but if it has a tune I can remember it and the words I can say while the melody is in my head. Those of us who are a little dyslexic or have Right brain dominance can think in music, and

continued on next page

A Love Supreme

John William Coltrane (1923-1967)

I will do all I can to be worthy of Thee, O Lord. It all has to do with it. Thank You God.

God is all. Help us to resolve our fears and weaknesses. In you all things are possible. Thank you God. We know. God made us so. Keep your eye on God. God is. He always was. He always will be. No matter what... it is God. He is gracious and merciful. It is most important that I know Thee. Words, sounds, speech, men, memory, thoughts, fears and emotions—time—all related...all made from one... all made in one.

Blessed be his name. Thought waves—heat waves—all vibrations—all paths lead to God. Thank you God. His way... it is so lovely... it is gracious. It is merciful—Thank you God. One thought can produce millions of vibrations and they all go back to God... everything does.

Thank you God. Have no fear... believe... Thank you God. The universe has many wonders. God is all. His way... it is so wonderful. Thoughts—deeds—vibrations, all go back to God and He cleanses all. He is gracious and merciful... Thank you God. Glory to God... God is so alive. God is. God loves.

May I be acceptable in Thy sight.

We are all one in His grace. The fact that we do exist is acknowledgement of Thee, O Lord. Thank you God. God will wash away all our tears...He always has...He always will.

Seek him everyday. In all ways seek God everyday. Let us sing all songs to God. To whom all praise is due... praise God.

No road is an easy one, but they all go back to God.

With all we share God. It is all with God. It is all with Thee.

Obeys the Lord. Blessed is He.

We are all from one thing... the will of God...Thank you God.

—I have seen ungodly—none can be greater—none can compare Thank you God.

He will remake... He always has and He always will. It's true—blessed be His name—Thank you God.

God breathes through us so completely...so gently we hardly feel it... yet, it is our everything.

Thank you God.

ELATION—ELEGANCE—EXALTATION—All from God.

Thank you God. Amen.





Music in the Meetinghouse

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words become easier to use. I miss music in Quaker meetings. But I sing in my head during meeting, as my voice is gone



On Hating Music

Daniela Salazar Monárrez
NYC-Religious Friends
Society (www.quakers.nyc)

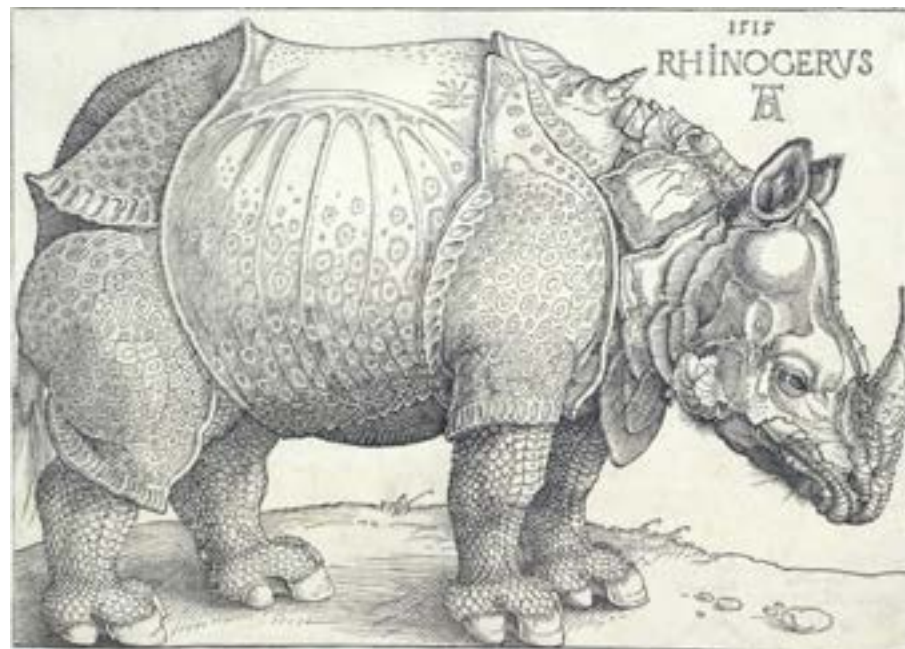
This is an excerpt. Find the entire article and a link to a spoken version at nyym.org/spark-music.

28 years ago, I was born. There are many things I inherited, from my grandfather's eyelashes, to my grandmother's blue-black hair; the one thing I did not inherit from either side of my family was an ear for or a love of music.

Of the most effective gaslights to my self-conception was a boy I liked the first semester of the first year of college, informing me that contrary to my suspicions I couldn't actually be tone deaf because that was a rare thing so I must not suffer from it. He would know—both his parents were doctors. It wasn't until I was 23 that my now-spouse, then-boy-friend said to me, "If you're not tone deaf, I will eat my hat. The way you describe the sounds in music is absolutely bananas."

As 'rare' as tone-deafness purportedly is, someone has to have it. The rarity of something is not contrary evidence to its existence. Perhaps equally misunderstood: perfect pitch was also described to me as "extremely rare." However my immediate and strong reaction when someone tried to correct me, was that of disbelief. No longer a student, now a professor of college, I declared "Is that right?" Snorting, I said, "rare for you, perhaps, but every autistic friend I have has perfect pitch. All of them." The autism, probably related to the prevalence of Perfect — also called Absolute — Pitch amongst my close family and friends, is likely also the reason for my own tone-deafness.

Our autistic denser-than-average gray matter makes for neural overconnectivity locally and hyperconnectivity across specific and repeated cross-brain pathways. Hyperfocus and ultra-specialization comes easier, and certain



Rhinoceros engraving by Albrecht Durer, 1515. "My rhinoceros, my rhinoceros, she has such a beautiful smile; my rhinoceros, my rhinoceros, but she smiles only once in a while." —Ed Lipton

coordinated behaviors gain near-compulsion status quickly. This means that often, autistics are either inept or savant at the same kinds of skills. Social reclusion, but also hyper-sociability are traits in autism, hyperlexia (which I and my father have) or dyslexia (which my mother and grandfather had). Hearing pitch perfectly, or not at all — the two go hand-in-hand; two sides of the same coin.

The ability to correctly hear the absolute pitch of notes, regardless of if you are then able to reproduce them, means that you have Perfect Pitch. It is likely that you cannot become a musical prodigy without the extreme advantages that come with the ability to correctly identify notes, but an ear can still be trained to do so; and the ability to hear the precise pitch of sounds does not at all mean you can then produce those sounds. Often people with perfect pitch are extra-dissatisfied with their own musical ability and will tell me they are 'tone-deaf' because they are certain of their inability to make perfect music. This is how most people use the term; to apologize for poor musical skill, they will call themselves this.

Tone-deafness does not mean that I do not enjoy music. I fully appreciate beats and can hear melody. I have songs I listen to on repeat, albums I adore and artists I follow, but when the best of singers harmonize, a pleasant enough sound turns bitter instantly, an unpleasant buzz in my ears. If I've made my peace with a soothingly

dull church song, it will suddenly be sung in the round and turn into the equivalent cacophony of a garbage disposal. Although I can tell the difference between the thin and pale wails of vocals and the thick, dampness of other heavier notes, their contrast does not seem to bring me the intrinsic joy nor artistic appreciation it has always seemed to for others.

Read the rest at nyym.org/spark-music.



The Sacred Is Where We Choose to Find It

Jeffrey Aaron
New Brunswick Meeting

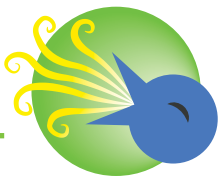
New Brunswick Friends Meeting has always been small, and music has rarely played a significant part in our meetings. Intriguingly, however, words from Brahms' Requiem inspired a meaningful message, reinterpreted from a Quaker perspective.

The first semester of my freshman year at Rutgers, fall 1963, I joined the Rutgers Choir. I was soon in rehearsals for Brahms' Schicksalslied ("Song of Destiny") and Ein Deutsches Requiem ("A German Requiem"), two major pieces of choral and orchestral music. We were to perform in November at Carnegie Hall in New York, in New Brunswick, and in Philadelphia with the Philadelphia Orchestra with professional vocal soloists. Two days after our first performance at

Philadelphia's Academy of Music, something suddenly seemed amiss in the world. Everywhere people had their ears to radios and were talking in quiet tones: a social phenomenon that occurs during a crisis. I soon learned that President John F. Kennedy had just been assassinated. The world was transformed; everything was now different.

That evening, a call came, asking if I could board a charter bus the next morning to the Academy of Music in Philadelphia with the other choir members. We were to make a professional recording of both works, to be played at the televised funerary proceedings during the following days, which all the world would be watching. The choir, orchestra and soloists arrived. We recorded the powerful pieces, emotions painfully enhanced by the circumstances. I was intensely focused on my vocal part to the end, as is standard for any serious musician. But when I looked up at the end, I saw people weeping. The emotion and historicity of the situation landed heavily on my consciousness, and only then the tears came to my eyes, not only for the murdered man, not only for an assassinated President, but for all of us and our broken world, where people do such terrible things to each other, for that is what truly brought on the tears: for you and for me and for people everywhere. The following performances at Rutgers and Carnegie Hall were dedicated to Kennedy and were performed with no applause at Carnegie Hall, at the request of the conductor, or at Rutgers, at the request of Rutgers President Mason Gross, who opened the evening with a reading of the words from the Bible with which the Requiem begins: "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." The solemnity of the final chords of that powerful work, to silence from the hundreds of audience members at Rutgers and to almost 3000 in New York was stunning and overwhelming for everyone experiencing this shared experience. The reviews in the New York Times and other papers reflected the intensity of one-ness that we felt as musicians and audience members. The experience for a young man just out of high

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school was beyond words. The world watched the proceedings during the following days and heard us perform.

Years later, in New Brunswick meeting for worship, words from the Requiem, “Wie lieblich sind deine Wohnungen, Herr Zebaoth” suddenly came to my mind. It occurred to me that the usual translation, “How lovely is your dwelling place, o Lord,” was wrong! It was plural in German: “How lovely are your dwelling places.” In contemplation of that difference, I realized that traditional Friends do not hold any person, place or thing to be any more or less sacred than any other. We gather in simple meetinghouses without icons, not churches. We have no exalted members or leaders; we are all ministers to each other and to the world at large. I soon stood to share a message about the unity of shared experiences, of the sacredness of unity of all people, brought to me that morning from a universal experience in the language of music from decades past. And I reflect as I write how it applies very much in today’s world.

Songs and Dances of Worship

Carl Blumenthal
Brooklyn Meeting

For videos of each song, visit the NYYM Fall 2024 YouTube playlist at: www.youtube.com/@newyorkyearlymeeting/playlists

Recommendations:

“This Is Amazing Grace”
by Phil Wickham

Who breaks the power of sin and darkness?
Whose love is mighty and so much stronger?
The King of glory, the King above all kings
Who shakes the whole earth with holy thunder?
And leaves us breathless in awe and wonder?
The King of glory, the King above all kings
This is amazing grace
This is unfailing love
That You would take my place
That You would bear my cross

You laid down Your life
That I would be set free
Oh, Jesus, I sing for
All that You’ve done for me

“One Thing Remains”
by Jesus Culture

Higher than the mountains that I face
Stronger than the power of the grave
Constant through the trial and the change
One thing remains, yes, one thing remains
Your love never fails
It never gives up
It never runs out on me
Your love never fails
It never gives up
It never runs out on me



An Agnostic Sings Christmas Carols

Howard Nelson
Poplar Ridge Meeting

Our Mennonite neighbors came to sing carols for us. About twenty people, parents and children, out on the porch. Martha was leading, setting the note with the pitch pipe before each song, keeping the rhythm with her hand moving up and down, side to side. They sang in their plainsong style. We stood in the doorway, listening. The people, the singing, the cold night behind and around them... it was beautiful. When they had sung their last song, we handed them a plate of my wife’s chocolate chip cookies, which they passed around. They thanked us, we thanked them... they went off into the dark and got into their cars (all black or gray—they drive no bright colors) and went on to other houses.

The impulse to get rid of music was not one of the better impulses in the history of Quakerism. Our sister sect, or you might say our second-cousin sect (depending on where you are sitting in Quakerism), Mennonites kept music strongly. Hymn singing—what a great way to be together and praise the Lord. Sitting in silence is good, can be more than good—but where are you without some music? It might be a rather dour, brittle place.

Another Quaker impulse—

having no creeds—seems to me a much better impulse. When I find myself in a situation where I’m supposed to say, for example, The Apostles’ Creed, I can’t help saying inwardly, line by line, “Well, I don’t believe that... I don’t believe that...” Which I guess defeats the purpose of a creed. Or, “For God so loved the world, that he gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him shall have everlasting life.” A nice thought, which you can call faith, or a deep dream, or believing what you want to believe. If it helps

you live a good life, and feel better about things in general, that’s great, but... it’s a pretty big claim. Not a theology that I personally relate to, which is one that describes reality as far as I can see it.

The meeting I have been a part of for fifty years, Poplar Ridge Monthly Meeting, has a flexible format that includes three basic elements: words (spoken messages, readings, queries); silence; and music (hymns, piano prelude and interlude, sometimes other offerings).

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A still from the QuakerSpeak video “Carrie Newcomer: The Transformative Quaker Practice of Being,” released on YouTube on Sept. 12, 2024. Filming and Editing by Christopher Cuthrell.

Carrie Newcomer: Being True

Excerpt and Intro From Her Recent QuakerSpeak Video

Sally Campbell, *Morningside Meeting*, refers us to a recent QuakerSpeak video with musician Carrie Newcomer. The introduction:

“In the kinds of spiritual communities I grew up [in], we do a lot of talking at whatever is sacred,” singer-songwriter Carrie Newcomer says. “I really appreciated, when I discovered a silent Quaker meeting, that all I need to do is listen... Something lovely happens when I quiet myself and I quiet my heart and I actually listen to what is coming up from the Spirit.”

Carrie describes how she came to that first Quaker meeting, in the rainforests of Monteverde, and found “something that my heart had been longing for and hadn’t encountered yet.” She has joined Friends in community ever since, and it continues to guide her artistic process.

“...In terms of encountering a work of art, you know, we know

when someone is being really true and authentic. When someone puts their finger on the open palm of something true, it shakes the world just a little bit. And why would I want to write any other way? Why would I want to be any other way? I’ve always written songs because I had a question. And that good questions can be asked more than once. You know, what do I love beyond words and measure? What do I hope for the world? When I pull back all the distractions in my life, what do I find at the very center? When I go regularly to the well — to a deep and spiritual, sometimes mystical well — what can I take from there that will help ground me in my daily life? How do I make my own small difference? You know, because that’s all any of us can do.” Watch the full QuakerSpeak video at quakerspeak.com/video/the-transformative-practice-of-being/





Music in the Meetinghouse

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We have had a string of musicians over the years who have enriched the meeting experience enormously. Week to week, the proportions given to each element vary. I feel fortunate to be in a religious group and practice that has all three. I would not want to give up any of them. Some of the hymns in the hymnal we use, *Worship in Song: A Friends Hymnal*, give me the theology willies, or I could call it “cognitive dissonance,” but I sing anyway. When I stop and think about it, I realize that if it weren’t for our hymn-singing, I might not sing at all through the whole week. And singing is, I think, generally speaking, good for the soul.

Creeds and orthodox theology, when expressed in Christmas carols—that’s a different effect entirely. No problem with “I don’t believe that” while listening to, or better still, singing, “Hark! The Herald Angels,” “Silent Night,” or “Joy to the World.”



Silence and Music

Adam Segal-Isaacson
Brooklyn Meeting

In 1952 John Cage composed 4’33” and it premiered the following year, performed by David Tudor. In this piece, a performer comes onto the stage, sits in front of a piano, and does not play for four minutes and 33 seconds. It is often referred to as “the silent piece,” but this



The hand-drawn cover for John Cage’s 4’33.” The text reads: “For any instrument or combination of instruments.” See “Silence and Music,” above. This, from 1952/3, is one of several versions that Cage created. See www.moma.org/collection/works/163616.

is incorrect. There is no silence, and this was Cage’s intention: one should listen to the sounds that are present, the audience shifting in their seats and coughing, the birds outside the window, etc. One should pay attention to the sounds all around us.

In a lot of ways, this paying attention to what is around us is very much how little children behave, always noticing things and asking “what’s that?” This is precisely what Jesus meant when he said “except as ye become like little children.” We need to pay attention to what is around us all the time, and preserve that attention and wonder that we had as children. William Least Heat Moon, in *Blue Highways*, says, “When I go quiet I stop hearing myself and start hearing the world outside me. Then I hear something very great.”

Elsewhere in *Blue Highways*, William Least Heat Moon visits a monastery and partakes in a service. His comment in the book is “If there is a way to talk to the Great Primeval Ears — if Ears there be — music and silence must be the best way.” Nearly all religious traditions use music in some manner, often singing or chanting. These activities bring people together to be as one, as performers and listeners, especially as performing involves listening.

Cage often told the story of visiting a silent anechoic room, where every sound from outside the room was blocked out. He reported that he still heard two sounds, one very high pitched and one lower pitch. He was told that the high pitched sound was his nervous system and the lower pitched sound was his blood flowing. The presence of sound is all around and inside of us.

When we hear or play music, we are temporarily transported outside of ourself also. We can resonate with a larger world. This brings on a peaceful state, an internal quiet, even if the music is very energetic. Music brings people together, whether they are all playing in unison or harmonizing to create something an individual cannot do alone or even just listening to another person perform. Music is essentially a spiritual exercise, even music that seems to deal in nonspiritual matters.

Quakers have traditionally



Hymn singing at Brooklyn Meeting, October 6, 2024. Photo by Ted Bongiovanni.

put aside music and all the arts as distractions from spiritual life. But we have had great Quaker painters and Quaker musicians and composers, because they recognize the power of the arts to bring us something new, show us something about the world that we missed. Psalm 96 begins, “sing unto the Lord a new song.” We can make up the music we need and it can enhance our spiritual life. As Joe Vlaskamp, former General Secretary of New York Yearly Meeting, said, “We must never be satisfied with our spiritual level. We must always keep working on it.” And music can definitely help with attuning our spiritual attention.



gnawing feeling of life’s futility would ease.

Music has been a bridge over the choppy waters of approaching elderhood. After several years of lumbering along I’m learning a new way of being. Music has helped quiet my mind, slow down, move from frenetic doing to reclaim lost creativity. I see glimpses of a future where I’ll be connected to something deeper, a soulful essence that has inherent value and doesn’t depend on productivity or achievement for contentment.



The Door was Always Open

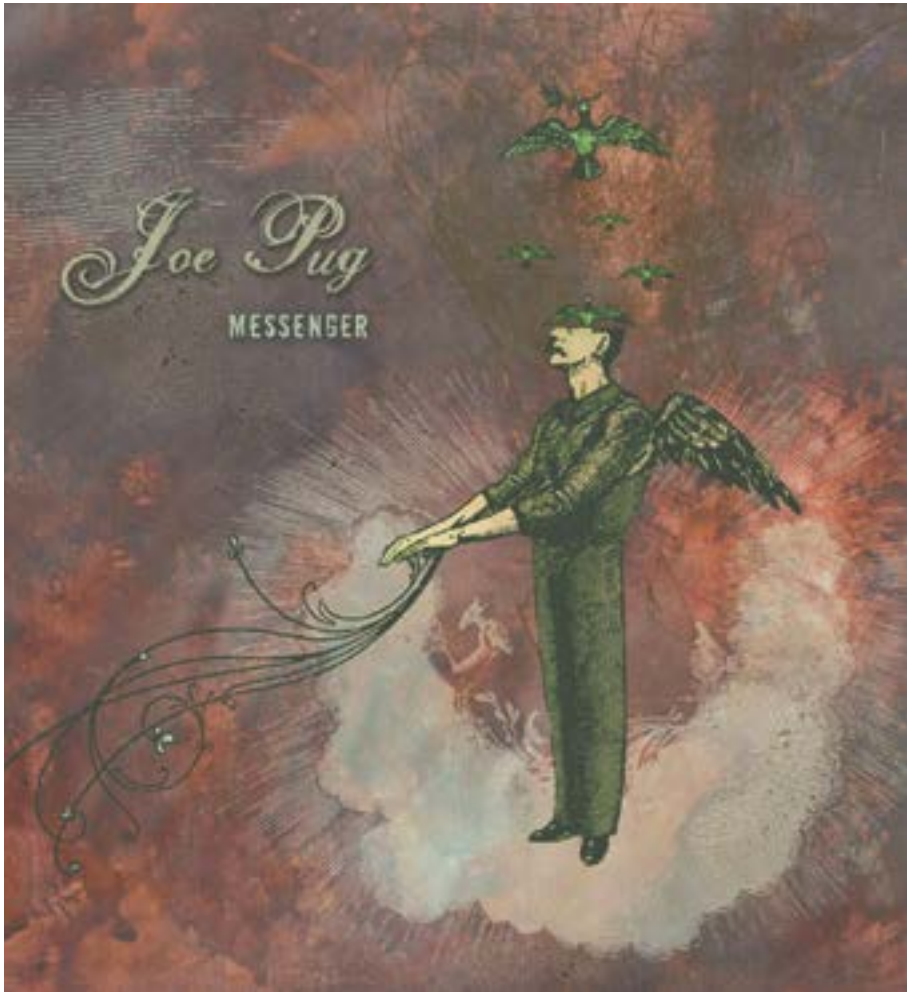
Gary Lewis
Hudson Meeting

Quakers often describe waiting in worship to “hear God’s still voice.” I have learned that stillness of mind is not something just for worship, but rather it is a habit that can be cultivated and experienced at any moment throughout the week. Once a state of sustained stillness is achieved, there are a myriad of ways to experience “God’s still voice.” For me, a very important channel of this universal wisdom comes through song lyrics.

When I first started attending Quaker worship in my early forties, the first message I ever spoke were the lyrics of a John Hiatt song, “Come Home To You”:

There’s a meanness inside and it

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Album jacket for Joe Pug's *Messenger*, released by Lightning Rod Records in 2010, and discussed in "The Door Was Always Open" by Gary Lewis, below.

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shivers my bones
That's the thing about mercy I
guess
There's no man so wicked he
cannot come home
Nor so good he passes each test
As the fire of memories burn me
The grace of your love returns me
To this most traveled of highways
Where I'd do anything just to
come home to you

I was raised in a Christian home and when I gave this message, I would have said it was a message of redemption from sin, a return to Source through grace. Fast forward to my late fifties, I was reading through an issue of *Spark* when I came across an article by Friend Pamela Boyce Simms, introducing a new transformational community, then called Quaker Pathways Forward, Rekindling the Fire of Fox, that she was convening while at Pendle Hill on a Cadbury grant. I joined and have remained an active member of this on-line community, now called Community Supported Enlightenment (CSE).

Through participation in this community, I have come to experience the Source in a whole new way. One of the first things Pamela

introduced me to was the Akashic Records which is something like a database where everything that has ever happened in the universe is recorded and which you can query to obtain spiritual guidance. I was faced with a difficult life decision and so I followed some simple instructions and "submitted a query" to the Akashic Records. The next morning I received a clear answer to that query in a song on a Spotify playlist. I chose the direction the lyrics suggested and it was the first step on a life-changing journey for me within this community. Since then, I have experienced hundreds of clear messages coming to me directly from Source through song lyrics.

As for redemption, I find the notion of "realization" or "waking up" to our True Nature to be closer to my own experience. What I once considered to be a return to God from a separation I caused by sin, has now been replaced by a sense that there never was and can never be any separation from Source. Source is simply who I am and it is who you are too. As I was coming to this realization, Spotify placed a song in one of my playlists from an unheralded singer/songwriter

named Joe Pug. As if to reinforce the point, the title of the album was called *Messenger*, and on the album cover was a man dressed like a messenger with wings on his back and with the top part of his head open and doves flying out towards heaven:

I waited for the sun
But it was already dawn
It was already dawn
Breakin' fast all along

...

So it seems I've spent a lifetime
Arrested and beholden
Standin' on the threshold
Absolutely frozen

Waitin' on some God above
To tell me I was chosen
Instead I spoke myself
The door was always open



Accompanied by the Holy Spirit: Singing in Quaker Worship

Stanford Searl

Santa Monica (CA) Meeting

When I first joined the Quakers at Buffalo Meeting in 1970, I spent the first few years accompanying hymn singing before worship. My second child, Diana, sat on my lap some of the time. Because Diana was profoundly disabled, it felt special to have this three-year-old as part of the playing and singing. Julia, my oldest daughter, sang along with everyone at five years old as did Julia's mother, my wife, Parnel. We had met in music school as piano performance majors and sang in the Hendricks Chapel Choir at Syracuse University for four years.

I loved the Buffalo Quaker worship. I felt at home and sunk into worship, open and listening. Snatches of hymns flowed through me, pressing themselves upon my heart. Hymns came in and out of my consciousness. This music became channels into the Spirit; they entered body and heart, pulsating in the gathering silence.

I imagined being underwater, pumping along with breast strokes. I plunged beneath the freshwaters of the glacial Lake Resue in Ludlow, Vermont, my boyhood home. As I came up for air, gasping, spitting out moisture, breathing in great

heaves, a hymn came into my mind.

My breathing deepened and I listened to the 19th century hymn, "Breathe on Me, Breath of God," emerge. I remembered Genesis 2:7: "And the Lord God formed man [and woman and others] of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul." Genesis and the hymn spoke to me; I became a living soul.

I immersed myself in the gathering silence and heard the hymn's first verse, resonant, full-throated in my tenor voice. My body shifted and the breathing increased its tempo and I stood up and sang the opening verse: "Breathe on me, Breath of God,/ Fill me with life anew,/ That I may love what thou dost love,/ And do what thou wouldst do" (*Worship in Song: A Friends Hymnal*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Friends General Conference, 1995, p.135, words by Edwin Hatch, 1878 and music by Robert Jackson, 1888).

The song and its message flowed out into the room and I felt carried along in a soulful, heartfelt manner. My breath became infused with Spirit's breathing, vibrating, quaking. My body shook with the release of air from the diaphragm. The music fused into a unity, lodged within my heart and lungs. I felt prayerful and whole. The allusion to Genesis touched me. I became filled with overflowing love and gratitude.

This was a message that allowed and encouraged my body to become a resonant chamber, filled by the Spirit's presence. As I sat down, the message said: not my will but thine oh Lord. I felt closer to God's purifying, transforming breath.

For more than fifty years since my becoming a Friend, I have longed to follow in the footsteps of prophetic, God-infused Quakers. I pray that this singing ministry may lead me closer to what George Fox offered in his Journal, that I might "mind the Light" and become "a child of the Light."



Two Songs We Sing

Garry Thomas
Ithaca Meeting

I have two suggestions for *Spark's* list of the songs we sing. One is

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Music in the Meetinghouse

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sacred (as in religious): the hymn “As We Leave This Friendly Place.” This song to a Bach melody is always the last song my wife and family sing at worship gatherings in our intentional summer cabin community in the Pennsylvania woods.

**As we leave this friendly place,
Love give light to every face;
May the kindness which we learn
Light our hearts till we return.**

The other song is profane, as in popular (but sacred to me): “Forever Young” by Joan Baez. Joanie’s is the most beautiful version of this Dylan song, but Pete Seeger’s is charming and beautiful in its own way. As I recall, it was recorded in his late eighties or nineties when his singing voice was not quite so strong. Of course, his voice and presence was strong even in his last years — and to this day. 

My Life is Music

Susan Weisfeld
Scarsdale Meeting

My life is defined by music. Different genres bring to the present the many stages of my life. My parents escaped from Vienna after Kristallnacht, to Ecuador, a strange land with an unfamiliar language and culture. They were determined to make a new life despite the trauma of loss, and brought their deep love of music with them, wherever they went — eventually to New York — where they instilled in their only child a lifelong love for waltzes, opera and Beethoven.

Beethoven — so amazing! Always hearing the Pastorale I see my mom on the day before she passed away, eyes closed, listening enthralled to this incredible piece. And the Strauss Emperor Waltz — an 8-year old joyously dancing with my father on New Year’s Eve, balanced on his moving feet. And Streisand’s spirit-filled version of Avenu Malkeinu makes my heart ache as I feel the warmth of my long-ago Brooklyn family during the Jewish holy days.

Life wasn’t always easy but

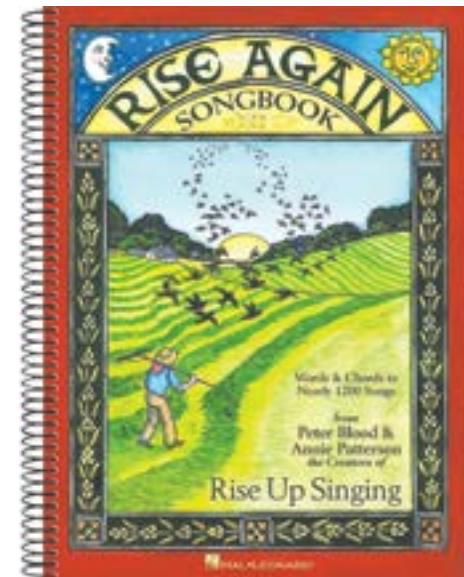
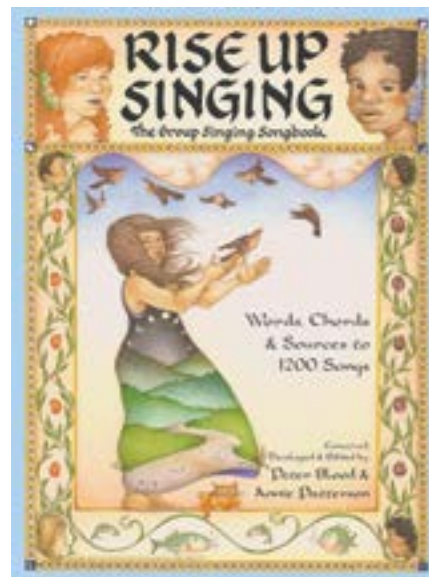
music always was there: Do-Wop music helped me through difficult pre-teen and teenage years — a significant rebellion against my parents. Thanks to SiriusXM satellite radio I can listen (and sing) while I drive — bringing back so clearly the awkwardness, pain and also the fun of those days! My college days were when Freedom bus rides and marches were energized with songs of protest. Hearing them I’m instantly transported back to those scary and optimistic days when our mission seemed reachable.

College years were also filled with romance and wonderful sharing with friends — that past comes into focus and becomes part of my present when I hear the virtuosity of progressive jazz, also on Sirius XM called “smooth” jazz. Who knew years later a wonderful friend would be the wife of Stan Getz, and I would meet and share some time on my recent birthday with Eric Marienthal — wow!

So I think my comfort food is music — food for my spirit. Music is nourishment — in a way it’s my life. I cry when hearing “Ave Maria,” and my heart swells when I hear “Perfect Symphony” sung in amazing harmony by Ed Sheeran and Andrea Bocelli. A prayer of gratitude surfaces every time I watch the YouTube video of street musicians, Playing for Change, performing “Stand By Me.”


Many gospel favorites bring me spirit-filled joy but one special memory is first experiencing “Rocka My Soul In The Bosom Of Abraham” at a performance of Alvin Ailey. One cannot help but be spirit-filled as the song fills the air — I recommend it to the NYYM playlist from “Revelations.” You can’t not sing along and start to dance! No Way!

In this later stage of maturity (where did the years go?) I’m continuously grateful to YouTube and Napster for giving me the opportunity to appreciate, and be introduced to, an incredible world of music which I never would have been able to experience. Through my laptop I am in the audience to applaud Freddie Mercury and Montserrat Caballé as they perform “Barcelona,” and I am able to hear (and see!) Celine Dion’s phenomenal performance at the Eiffel Tower



The *Rise Up Singing* (1988) and *Rise Again* (2015) songbooks are ubiquitous within New York Yearly Meeting. The songs in both books were gathered, developed, and edited by Friends Peter Blood and Annie Patterson. For a list of some of NYYM’s youth program favorites from these books, see “Songs for Powell House Polliwogs” on the next page. You can read more about Peter, Annie, and their thoughts on Quakers and music at www.riseupandsing.org/anniepeter/quakers

singing “L’Hymne A L’Amour.”

I watch and listen over and over — my heart is filled and my spirit renewed, and I remember where I was, and yesterday becomes part of today . . . and so with gratitude I look forward with joy and determination to try to make things better for the world, because I was given this beautiful gift of music and I need to return the favor. 

All is for Joy

Sally Campbell
Morningside Meeting

I have read that Herbert Hoover’s mother was read out of meeting because she sang her father’s favorite hymn at his memorial meeting. Fortunately there was another Quaker meeting in West Branch, Iowa, that took her in.

I am so glad that Quakers have let go of the prohibition of singing which they thought would distract people from proper worship. Instead, we have embraced it as a wonderful way to share the truths we are given.

At the FGC Gathering in 1982 I found myself saying to God “I will be faithful to You,” and then one night as I was praying I heard the words “All is for Joy.” Those words changed my life, for they did not seem to come from me or anything I had ever been taught. I frequently went to the noon sings that Peter and Annie Blood Patterson led and was wearing a t-shirt with a winking Quaker on it and the words “Hug a Friend”. This was the first song that came to me.

Before the end of the week I also heard the first verse of “More beautiful than Song is the Spirit”.

Among the songs that have come to me since then are two songs about songs, “Song from the Silence” and “Give us this Day a Gentle Song”. Here are the lyrics:

Give Us This Day a Gentle Song
Give us this day a gentle song
with the power to cast out our
fears

continued on next page

Upcoming Performance by Friend Sally Campbell

SAVE THE DATE: January 4, 2025, I’ll be performing at People’s Voice Café with Chris Brown, a wonderful musician and friend. It’s an easy date to remember, 6 months from July 4th in either direction.

I would love to see you at the People’s Voice Café, held in Judson Memorial Church’s Assembly Hall, 259 Thompson Street, New York, NY that night. If you can’t come in person you will be able to come by lives-tream. More info coming soon at www.peoplesvoicecafe.org.

In the meantime you can hear me sing at this link:
www.youtube.com/user/scampfriend/videos

—Sally Campbell



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And loving hands to hold us fast
as we heal through laughter and
tears

There are songs that are sung on
the mountaintops
and songs from the valleys below
But the songs that are singing in
our own hearts
are the ones we're to hear and to
know.

Join hands with the joyous singers
so high
and the sorrowful singers so low
Let us each sing the song that is
in our own heart.
Feel the peace and the harmony
grow.

So Friends, let us sing as we are
led to in meeting and out as we go
cheerfully over the world greeting
that of God in all.

Music in the Meetinghouse & in Our Lives

Carol Barclay
Albany Meeting

For some of us, music has been a big part of our spiritual journey. Growing up in a family that sang hymns around the piano at home and being organist in our Methodist church from age 15, lines of hymns have come to mind more often in times of need than have scripture. Once, when driving on an icy road in Oklahoma, I seriously thought I might die. What came to my mind then was "O God Our Help in Ages Past," which is now in our Quaker hymnal, *Worship in Song*, on p. 21.

One that isn't in our hymnal because it had been previously published, but is now on Youtube and in Quaker Peter Blood and Annie Patterson's *Rise Again* song book is Susan Stark's "Live Up to the Light," based on a historic Quaker diary (*Rise Again*, p. 56). Susan was a presenter at a songwriting interest group at FGC's 1994 Summer Session in Amherst, MA, and shared the writing of this song. We used it on occasion at our meeting in the 1990s when we had music with guitars for new member potlucks, memorial meetings, and a once a month half hour of programmed

meeting with songs and a prepared message before the hour of silent waiting worship.

Another Quaker singer/songwriter, Patricia McKernon (Runkle), has five entries in our hymnal: "Holy Love" p.188, "Blessed Are We" p. 228, "Take These Hands" p. 262, "A Garden of My Own" p. 187, and "This Glorious Food" p. 49. She has three entries in *Rise Again* and three entries in its predecessor, *Rise Up Singing*. She has attended a couple of NYYM Nightingale acapella music Quaker weekends which are valued by a number of us, and has also participated at Powell House.

Our hymnal, *Worship in Song*, is such a rich resource. Between hymns old and new are some written specifically for Quaker history: "George Fox" 272, "Ballad of Margaret Fell" 270, "Love Was the First Motion (John Woolman)" 219, "Wear it As Long As You Can (William Penn)" 195, & "Lucretia Mott Song" 281.

Although we have not officially had music during the regular hour of worship, persons on occasion share a song meaningful to them, and there has often been worthwhile music sharing on the side. In the 1990s a group met on Saturday afternoons to sing out of *Rise Up Singing* books available at the meetinghouse and later, in a home on Friday nights. Some now meet on Tuesday nights.

When our hymnal came out in 1996 we started a Hymn Sing on the 4th Sunday for an hour before worship. This group met regularly until Covid. Since then, combined with our worship time changing to be an hour earlier, fewer have been willing to come sing before worship. We have yet to find a new time to meet, but some have been asking.

I hope we can do that. Times like these can use hymns like "Dear Lord and Father of Mankind" 139 and "Holy Spirit Truth Divine" 148. Hymns can speak to so many conditions. My copy of the hymnal has people's names written by the title of hymns they chose, or an occasion for which that hymn spoke to me. "That Cause Can Neither Be Lost Nor Stayed" 264 let me know when it was time to write my letter applying for membership at Albany Monthly Meeting. "In Heavenly

Love Abiding" 200 was the last and most appropriate hymn Margallen Fichter chose at Hymn Sing before her unexpected death in 2002 at age 68, which rocked our meeting to the core. I am truly thankful for music, the universal language, and *Worship in Song*.

Songs for PoHo Polliwogs

Patsy Hayes Myers
Former Powell House
Youth Director

"This Little Light of Mine" – Harry Dixon Loes
"Magic Penny" – Malvina Reynolds
"Circle Game" – Joni Mitchell
"Let it Be" – Paul McCartney
"Hey Jude" – John Lennon
"Johnny Appleseed" – Pete Lounsbury
"Rise and Shine" – public domain
"Peace Like a River" – public domain
"Ripple" – Jerry Garcia and Robert Hunter
"My Rhinoceros" – Ed Lipton
"Bells of Norwich" – Sydney Carter
"Lord of the Dance" – Sydney Carter
"All God's Critters" – Bill Staines
"River" – Bill Staines

Friends' Music At Summer Sessions

Brendan Glynn
Brooklyn Meeting

Brendan asked Friends at Summer Sessions 2024 for their favorite songs. This article is the result. A playlist of the recommended songs, titled "Songs From Friends at Summer Sessions 2024," is available on Spotify. For the link, visit nyym.org/spark-music.

Quakers at Summer Sessions have a diverse relationship to music that mirrors our diversity. We come from so many places so the music we love is just as varied.

Mabel Kidiga energized our Café Night talent show and recommends the music of Munishi from Tanzania. She also likes John Prine's "Fish and Whistle." The sadly missed Mr. Prine's "Hello In There" is also on

our Quaker playlist, selected by Polly Duke of Westbury.

Though Shana Robinson of FGC hails from Minnesota, she hips us to Philadelphia's Japanese Breakfast — try "Boyish" or "Be Sweet."

We are grateful to Emma Condori Mamani for educating us about the harmful effects of climate change in Bolivia and what Quakers are doing to combat these effects. Listen to the music of Los Kjarkas to transform yourself to Bolivia ("Munasquechay" features some beautiful folk flute).

Angela Hopkins was blessed to have known Duke Ellington personally through her mother who toured with him. She listens to the music of Jean-Luc Ponty, an underappreciated French jazz violin master.

Multi-talented King Downing from AFSC was in a group, Xavier, who had an early 80's hit "Work That Sucker To Death" featuring Bootsy Collins and George Clinton. Check it out on YouTube.

Morgan Adcock of Albany had the amazing experience of seeing the Beatles live at the Cow Palace in San Francisco and at Shea Stadium in NYC. She said the songs were hard to hear because of all the screaming fans except during "Yesterday," which had not yet been released. Friends' favorite Beatles songs were "Let It Be," "Yellow Submarine," and "Here Comes The Sun." Other Fab Four choices were "Strawberry Fields" (Marty Glazer); "Fixing A Hole" (Jordan Valdina); "I Wanna Hold Your Hand" (Deb Dickinson); "A Day In The Life" (Margaret Lew); and "I Am The Walrus," (Fred Dettmer).

Nina Simone and Pete Seeger finished ahead of Beyoncé and Taylor Swift in our unscientific poll. nova sturup chose Ms. Simone's "Young Gifted and Black" and Avery J picked her "Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood." Deb Wood's favorite Pete Seeger song is "Get Up and Go" and JC Calderon of Cornwall Meeting loves Pete's "Quite Early Morning."

Bill Staine's "River" is an all-time favorite wherever we gather. Some other folkish recommendations are Carrie Newcomer's "Gathering of Spirits" from Bridget Bower, The Crane Wives "The Moon Will Sing" from Sarena Acheson, Alan Doyle's "So Let's Go" from Elise Bacon,

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Joni Mitchell's record *Ladies Of The Canyon* from Diane Keefe, Kimya Dawson's "Loose Lips" from Marty Glazer, and Joan Baez's "Speaking of Dreams" from Samie Bartul of Cornwall MM.


Some favorite Gospel choices include Reverend Timothy White's "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus," a recommendation from Barbrah Bleecker of Montclair; CC Winans (try her "Goodness of God") from Gloria Thompson, and Pentatonix (particularly their "Amazing Grace") from Richard Yudkiss.

Classical composers mentioned were Tchaikovsky, Bartok, Schubert, Beethoven's "Moonlight Sonata," Vivaldi's "Four Seasons," Mozart's "Requiem," and Bach's "Brandenburg Concertos."

Young Friends give us some insight into music we might not be familiar with. Emmalise Almonte likes R&B artist Rodwave. Maryam Shenouda recommends Avicii's "The Nights." Jasper Bacon enjoys Metallica's "The Unforgiven." Miriam Eustache from Friends Academy chose Lana Del Rey's "White Mustang" and The Smiths "This Night Has Opened My Eyes."

A few last picks for your playlist:

- Peggy Gou — "It Goes Like Nanana" (Columbine Loza)
- Estopa — try "Ya No Me Acuerdo" on YouTube (Nyeri Otero Flanagan of QUNO)
- Claude Bolling/Jean Pierre Rampal — "Suite For Flute and Jazz Piano" (Jeffrey Menoher)
- John Legend — "Wild" (Judy Meikle)
- Belle and Sebastian — "If You're Feeling Sinister" (Sean Jacke)
- Mitski — "Washing Machine Heart" (Taylor Valdina)
- Dave Brubeck — "Take Five" (full version) (Steve Mohlke)
- Chappell Roan — "Good Luck, Babe!" (Beth Kelly)
- The Rascals album *Peaceful World* (Fred Dettmer)
- Stray Kids (K pop) — "Chk Chk Boom" (Cathy Ramey)
- The Shins — "Know Your Onion" (Sarah Way)

Finally, special thanks to John Scardina for leading our nightly singing on the porch, and accompanying JYM's s'mores bonfire on Tuesday night. See you next year! 



On "Farthest Field"

Sarah Way
Brooklyn Meeting


At the campfire on the last evening of Summer Sessions 2024, Friends Greg Kozial and Matt Sunderland brought the call and response song "Farthest Field." We sang it through once, then sang it again. The song is so beautiful, wistful and sweet, it brought tears to my eyes. I took a photo of the lyrics sheet (above). The typed-out lyrics follow.

There is a land | high on a hill
where I am going, there is a voice
that calls to me
The air is sweet | the grasses wave
the wind is blowing, away up in
the farthest field

**Oh — walk with me & we will
see the mystery revealed
When one day we wend our way
up to the farthest field**

The sun will rise | the sun will set
across the mountains, & we will
live with beauty there
the fragrant flowers | the days &
hours
will not be counted, & peaceful
songs will fill the air

I know one day | I'll leave my home
here in the valley, & climb up to
that field so fair
And when I'm called | & counted in
that final tally, I know that I will
see you there

Oh my dear friends | I truly love
to hear your voices, lifted up in
radiant song
Tho through the years | we all
have made
our separate choices, we've ended
here where we belong 



NYYM Fall Sessions Online December 6-8, 2024



The next gathering of the New York Yearly Meeting community for business, worship, and fellowship will be **Fall Sessions**. Find out what's happening with other Quakers in our region, and hear reports of committees' good works. There will be items that require discernment from the "body" of the yearly meeting — decisions to be made under direction from the "inner source."

If you care about Quakers, Quakerism, or the Quaker community in the NYYM region, you are warmly invited and encouraged to attend these business sessions. All events will be online, making these sessions accessible to anyone with a computer, tablet, smartphone, or regular phone.

Registration

Visit nyym.org/Fall-Sessions-2024 to find out more details and to register. Registration will begin

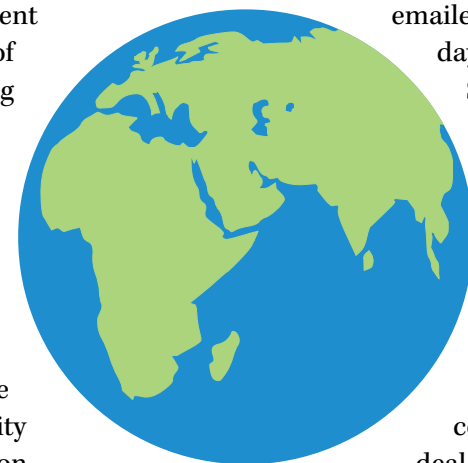
soon, and will be announced via the NYYM email list. If you're not already on the NYYM email list, you can sign up at nyym.org/subscribe. Note that **you will need to register in advance to receive the Zoom links** for Fall Sessions. Zoom

connection information will be emailed to registrants a day or two before Fall Sessions begins.

Though the costs associated with online sessions are lower than in-person sessions, there are still direct costs and a great deal of staff time spent preparing. When you register, you will be asked to consider making a registration contribution. Registration contributions are "pay as led." That means you choose the amount, if any, that is appropriate for you. Please know that your presence is more important than your dollars.

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nyym.org/Fall-Sessions-2024 



Fall Sessions Schedule December 6-8, 2024 • Online

Friday evening, December 6

7:00-9:00 p.m. TBD — will be announced online and via email

Saturday, December 7

8:30-9:30 a.m. Meeting for Worship
9:30-11:45 a.m. Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business
1:30-2:30 p.m. Meeting for Worship
2:30-4:30 p.m. Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business
7:00-9:00 p.m. TBD — will be announced online and via email

Sunday December 8

Morning off so that folks can join the worship of their choice.

1:30-2:30 p.m. Meeting for Worship
2:30-4:30 p.m. Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business