

Youth Institute:

Meeting the Needs of Quaker Youth
At Powell House Quaker Conference and Retreat
Center in Old Chatham, NY
March 27-29, 2015



This is the first in a series of Youth Institutes offered under the auspices of New York Yearly Meeting's Youth Committee. The institutes are open to anyone interested in making their meeting a multigenerational faith community.

Many of us want vibrant multigenerational meetings. For those of us who are parents we want a place that will support our children's spiritual, emotional and physical development. We want our kids to be happy, good people.

Some of our monthly meetings excel at this; most of us struggle a little or a lot at this. So we say let's get together, roll up our sleeves, and really tackle the question of meeting the needs of our youth.

The **Friday** night plenary session will focus on the "Why" of this work.

- Why are we personally Quakers? What do we experience in Meeting for Worship and within our faith community?
- Why do we want our children to participate in Quaker Meetings? What do we hope that they experience in Meeting for Worship and within our faith community?

Saturday plenary sessions will focus on:

- Sharing among ourselves what is working in monthly meetings and regions
- Exploring ways through the difficulties encountered
- Discussing frameworks for thinking about programming for youth.

There will also be breakout sessions (workshops) for hands on training in various aspects of youth work.

During the **Sunday** session we'll look at next steps and close with experimental worship leading into traditional worship.





Workshops and Facilitators

1. Art as a spiritual medium

How does creativity connect with our lives? Where does creativity reside within us? And how do we stifle creativity? When we think of the word “Creativity” we sometimes imagine bursts of energy exploding around us, and as this may be true, we can also create from a quiet place, from a place where words and thoughts aren’t needed. All that is needed is an open mind, open heart and the willingness to let your hands lead for a little while as we work and play.

Mark LaRiviere (15th Street MM)

is an artist and founding program director of the Children’s Arts Guild, an in school program that supports children (and adults) in becoming emotionally intelligent, socially engaged, and productive citizens of the world through creativity-education that help them resist limiting expectations, especially those based on gender stereotypes, and build emotional competence, confidence, and social skills. He works at encouraging children to embrace, value, and express their own experiences, and in the process discover the joy and excitement of learning.



2. Avenues for Spiritual Growth in Youth

How can we be present to encourage spiritual growth in our youth and ourselves? If our spirituality involves continuing revelation, and not a creed, what tools are useful to practice and pass on? We will look at listening, in its many forms as a spiritual practice. We will consider the ministry of listening. How can we listen to our youth to hear them deeply and make them feel cherished? How do we help them learn the spiritual joys of listening?

Julie Glynn (Brooklyn Meeting) is a mother of three teens and a long time First Day School teacher. She grew up in Brooklyn Meeting and likes to bake and ask questions.



3. Teens and Quakerism Today

In a world that often asks youth to define themselves as religious or atheist how can a religion that may embrace both become part of a young person's identity? Do adult Quakers recognize that of God in our teens? What parts of Quakerism appeal to teenagers and what aspects cause hesitation? Join a conversation with Quaker teens about life as a Quaker teen.

Julie G., Natalie and Nora Mattson



Natalie Mattson (Brooklyn Meeting) is in the throes of selecting a college for next year. She is involved in the Coalition of Immokalee Workers' Fair Food Campaign and joined the People’s Climate March

Nora Mattson (Brooklyn Meeting) is a sophomore and voracious reader. She has served NYYM on the youth committee.

4. Exploring Sex & Gender Issues

In this workshop we will be taking a creative look at how we approach sex and gender issues with youth in our communities. Through discussion and activities, we'll challenge some of our preconceptions and have the opportunity to share experiences and ask questions. Open, flexible, and fun, this workshop will be designed for the participants who come.

Natalie Braun (Old Chatham Meeting) has a Master's of Public Health in sexual and reproductive health and maternal and child health. She has worked as a peer sexual health educator and youth worker with a variety of groups over the past 10 years, including as a Young Friend in Residence with New York Yearly Meeting. In her work, she strives to create safe spaces for youth and adults to learn, grow, and question.



I had been taught, and come to believe in my own experience, that taking Quakerism seriously and listening for the leadings of God could potentially change my approach to everything: what kind of media I consumed, what I ate, what kind of student I was. Now I wanted to know how to have sex like a Quaker—not because I expected there to be one correct, seal-of-approval way, but because I suspected there was some potential connection, and I wanted to uncover it.

-Kody Hersh, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting



5. Community Building Activities, The Use of Games in Spiritual Work

Designed to explore the art of community building and broaden your repertoire of group activities. It will be tailored to meet the needs of those who come. It's a play as you go workshop where you'll learn a variety of games and other activities and how they foster spiritual growth in a group. We'll evaluate how and why the activities work and look at ways to modify them for specific situations. Discussions will center on what you're trying to accomplish in the groups you are part of and obstacles that you have or may encounter along the way.



Chris DeRoller (Old Chatham Meeting) is a Youth Director at **Powell House**, NYYM's Conference and Retreat center. She has spent the past 15 years there working with children, teens, young adults and older adults to create supportive, happy, spirit-filled spaces.



6. Identifying opportunities for and leading service-learning programs

Community service can be an important part of our spiritual, social and academic development. We will:

- Look at the opportunities within our meetings and our local communities, as well as further a field and in other countries.
- Share our experiences and issues in providing opportunities that are meaningful for the youth and the people they work with.
- Go through the many things to consider and prepare for whether you are going down the block for an afternoon or to another country.

Mike Clark (Old Chatham Meeting), a Powell House (NYYM) youth program director since 2000, has designed and led experiential learning programs for Peace Corps volunteers, Guatemala Ministry of Agriculture workers, and parents and staff in Head Start and migrant pre-school programs in Florida. He has led two NYYM high school service-learning trips to Honduras and is planning an El Salvador trip in 2015. He also took a group of 30 youth to the people's Climate March in NYC.



Powell House Quaker Conference and Retreat Center is located at 524 Pitt Hall Road, Old Chatham, NY.

There are two residential buildings, Pitt Hall and the Anna Curtis Center, on 57 acres of grounds with hiking trails and two ponds. The Wilson Powell Bird Sanctuary is within walking distance, offering numerous trails and views of the Catskills.

Accommodations include linens and towels. Pitt Hall has rooms with private or shared baths. Two rooms downstairs share an accessible bathroom. The Anna Curtis Center has a fully accessible first floor including bedrooms, bathrooms, meeting room, dining room, library and game room. Single rooms are available for an additional fee on a first come basis.

We serve home-style meals and breads baked on the premises. Vegetarian and vegan options are available if noted on the registration in advance. As part of our commitment to create community and be a place that is affordable, guests bus their own tables and assist in mealtime chores.



**Cost for the Youth Institute
(Includes shared accommodations, 6 meals and program)**

Register by Mar. 15th:

\$220 adults, \$110 ages 13-22, \$55 infants-12

After March 15th: \$240/\$120/\$60

Childcare will be provided with 3 weeks notice

Register on line at www.powellhouse.org or e-mail info@powellhouse.org or call 518-794-8811