

NYYM "FACTS"

A BRIEF HISTORY OF QUAKERISM & NEW YORK YEARLY MEETING:

The Religious Society of Friends began in 1652 in England, in a time of civil war & religious ferment. **George Fox** (1624-1691) emerged as the leader of a new religious movement.

After several years of spiritual seeking, Friend Fox experienced the first of many inner illuminations, which he called "openings." He wrote:

"I saw the infinite love of God. I also saw that there was an ocean of darkness and death; and an infinite ocean of light and love, which flowed over the ocean of darkness. In that also I saw the infinite love of God."

Fox's concept of "that of God in everyone" was radical, not only for sweeping away distinctions of social class, wealth, & race, but for including women fully in the religious & social community as well.

Because of their religious enthusiasm & charismatic demeanor, early Friends were derisively called "Quakers" & harshly persecuted for their radical beliefs. But the movement spread with great rapidity in England, & from there to Europe & the American colonies.

The first Friend to have a permanent residence in New York lived in Long Island in 1654. The first known NY Friends meeting was established in Manhattan in 1671. The travels of George Fox through the colonies (1671-73) were a spur to Quaker expansion, & New York Yearly Meeting was established in 1695.

In the early 1820's, there was increasing acrimony between those with conservative Christian beliefs & those asserting the primacy of the Inward Light. This conflict caused the separation of five yearly meetings, including NYYM, into two groups: those who emphasized the Christ Within ("Hicksites") & those who emphasized the historical Christ Jesus ("Orthodox"). By 1828, the schism in NYYM's monthly & quarterly meetings was complete. The roots of programmed (pastoral) & unprogrammed (silent) meetings in NYYM go back to this time.

There were two New York Yearly Meetings until 1955, when, with much Light & Spirit, Friends found the way to merge, ending 127 years of strife.

QUAKER TESTIMONIES:

The traditional testimonies of the Religious Society of Friends are: Equality, Peace, Integrity, Simplicity, & Community. (See Faith & Practice.)

RECENT NYYM HIGHLIGHTS:

- Since the 1970's: minutes support for a Peace Tax Fund
- 1995: celebrates its tercentenary; Quaker Crosscurrents: 300 Years of NYYM
- 1999: files an amicus brief for a Friend who conscientiously objects to military taxation, putting federal taxes in a Quaker escrow account
- 2000: names Year of Jubilee & Sabbath Rest to deepen the worship & spiritual life of the YM
- After September 11, 2001: writes a joint statement with the Quaker UN Office & the AFSC NY Metropolitan Regional Office
- Since September 11, 2001: reclaims the spiritual basis & centrality of our peace testimony
- In 2001: establishes a Committee on Conflict Transformation to develop guidelines & training to mediate conflicts within the YM
- Since 2003: participates in the FGC Traveling Ministries program, in which seasoned Friends visit Meetings & worship groups to help them nurture the gifts of the Spirit.
- In recent years: seeking to connect the monthly & regional meetings more closely with one another & with the YM organization

[From NYYM Faith & Practice, 1998; Friends for 350 Years (H. Brinton); & Quaker Crosscurrents (H. Barbour et al.) all of which are suggested reading.]

NYYM MEMBERSHIP:

There are 3,512 Quakers today in NYYM, which is comprised of nine Regional & Quarterly Meetings, 70 Monthly Meetings, 9 worship groups, & 9 prison worship groups.

The life, activities, spiritual & fiscal health of the Yearly Meeting are the responsibility of all its members.

The following officers are appointed annually: A presiding clerk & assistant clerk; two or three recording clerks; two or three reading clerks; a treasurer & assistant treasurers.

All names & contacts are in the *NYYM Yearbook*.

NYYM STAFF:

The **General Secretary** visits meetings & worship groups to develop & share an understanding of NYYM. His responsibilities include nurturing the life & health of the YM & guiding the YM staff.

The **Yearly Meeting staff** provides services to Monthly Meetings & Worship Groups, the YM Sections, & maintains YM records.

NYYM has several publications including Spark, Yearbook, Faith & Practice & the NYYM Handbook. Electronic communications include the NYYM email listserve, website, (www.nyym.org) & InfoShare.

NYYM STRUCTURE & SECTIONS:

The activities of the Yearly Meeting are carried out by four specialized sections, each with its own coordinating committee:

Yearly Meeting on Ministry & Counsel: exercises general care of the ministry & spiritual life of the Yearly Meeting. (Deb Wood and Beatrice Beguin, co-clerks.)

General Services; provides the main administrative, financial, & reporting services of the YM. (Paula McClure, clerk.)

Nurture; provides for the advancement of Friends' principles & for educational & nurturing services within the YM, & for relationships with the wider bodies of the Society. (Melanie-Claire Mallison, clerk.)

Witness; makes visible the traditional Friends testimonies & newer concerns in ways that extend beyond the Religious Society of Friends. Its work attempts to express inner beliefs through outward action. (Anita Paul, clerk.)

COMMITTEES:

YM does its work through its committees that live out our Quaker Testimonies. Committees are specifically established in Faith & Practice or are appointed as circumstances warrant. Committee descriptions are all contained in the *NYYM Handbook*—available on the web site, or by sending a request to the YM office.

YEARLY MEETING SESSIONS:

NYYM business is conducted during Summer Sessions, held the last week of July at Silver Bay, NY (since the merge in 1955), & during the Spring & Fall Sessions (formerly Representative Meetings), each held over a weekend & hosted by one of the Quarterly or Regional Meetings.

At Summer Sessions at Silver Bay, Friends participate in Meetings for Business, interest & study groups, intergenerational events, Bible study, committee meetings, recreation & family time, worship sharing, and meet & hear invited speakers.

Everyone is welcome to attend these sessions. Information is provided in our newsletter, SPARK.

JUNIOR YEARLY MEETING:

JYM ensures that nurturing sessions with Quaker content are provided for all young people, toddlers through high school, who attend Summer Sessions. JYM also offers a Youth Program at the Spring/Fall Sessions for Junior & Senior High students.

CIRCLE OF YOUNG FRIENDS:

The Circle of Young Friends (CYF) is for young adults (loosely ages 18-35) for sharing friendship, spiritual & social concerns, and joyful play. CFY meets during Summer Sessions.

ELSIE K. POWELL HOUSE INC.

(Under the care of Nurture) Powell House is the NYYM's conference & retreat center established in 1964 & used primarily for religious conferences & similar gatherings of NYYM members & attenders.

NEW YORK YEARLY MEETING BELONGS TO THE FOLLOWING:

FRIENDS GENERAL CONFERENCE (FGC) (Nurture), an association in the unprogrammed tradition of 14 yearly meetings & several monthly meetings in the US & Canada.

FRIENDS UNITED MEETING (FUM) (Nurture) an organization in the pastoral tradition, includes 12 yearly meetings in North America, plus others in Cuba, Jamaica, & East Africa, most notably Kenya.

AFFILIATIONS WITH OTHER QUAKERS BODIES:

ALTERNATIVES TO VIOLENCE PROJECT, INC. (AVP) (Witness): through this international program begun by inmates & NYYM Friends, volunteers, operating primarily in prisons, offer experiential workshops empowering individuals to liberate themselves from the burden of violence. HIP is AVP geared toward high school students.

AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE (AFSC) (Witness): a contemporary expression of Quaker faith & practice which attempts to relieve human suffering & to seek nonviolent solutions to conflict—personal, national, & international.

FRIENDS COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL LEGISLATION (FCNL) (Witness): keeps Friends & others informed on legislation before Congress on issues of concern to Friends, & presents to members of the Congress Friends' views regarding same.

FRIENDS WORLD COMMITTEE FOR CONSULTATION (FWCC) (Nurture): the principal channel thru which Friends in different countries meet & share experiences & beliefs.

THE MCCUTCHEN, YEARLY MEETING FRIENDS HOME (Nurture): a Victorian residence for people seeking a caring & nurturing community for their later years.

NEW JERSEY COUNCIL OF CHURCHES (Nurture): consists of member religious denominations in New Jersey who act together on statewide challenges to do what cannot be done separately.

NEW YORK STATE COMMUNITY OF CHURCHES (Nurture): NYYM representatives bring Friends' testimonies & concerns to the work of this ecumenical community.

OAKWOOD FRIENDS SCHOOL (Nurture): a coeducational boarding & day school in Poughkeepsie, NY, for students, 7-12 grade. Friends' philosophy shapes the purposes & guides the life of the school.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT THE YEARLY MEETING OFFICE:

The YM office is located in New York City; 15 Rutherford Place, NYC, NY 10003; 212-673-5750; Fax 212-672-5750; Email, Office@nyym.org.

[These NYYM "Facts" were produced by The NYYM Advancement Committee for the use of the Nurture Coordinating Committee, May 2006.]