



MONTHLY MEETING NEWSLETTER

A publication of the Brooklyn Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

Annual Meeting of NYQM Corporation on April 15th

Each year in April Friends in the New York area gather at 2 PM to meet as a religious corporation. In these days when “corporation” is sometimes an unpopular word, why would Friends want to be one? The reason is that we want to legally protect our buildings and the income we receive from them as well as the contributions that support them. Being a corporation means that we, as a group of people, are recognized in the state as being having the rights and responsibilities of an individual person.

Our Meetinghouse and the school building next to us are owned and maintained by the corporation. The corporation in turn is directed by trustees who are chosen by Friends at the Annual Meeting. There are nine trustees, several of them coming from Brooklyn Meeting: Ben Frisch, Molly Rusnak, Lucy Sikes, Kirk Smothers and Benjamin Warnke. This year the clerk will be Benjamin Warnke.

Trustees have a Property Subcommittee made up of two members of the Monthly Meetings and two trustees. Also they employ a General Manager and a Property Manager as well as custodians. They plan for the future of our Meetinghouse and maintain it. Our Property Committee is responsible for the oversight of our building and for making recommendations to Trustees.

Recently Brooklyn Friends School separated from the Quarterly Meeting and became its own corporation. That has made no difference in the connection between the school and Brooklyn Meeting. We have a Care Committee and many Brooklyn Friends who participate in BFS as well as in shared activities. Friends Seminary is still a part of the Quarterly Meeting because members have been unable to work out a separation agreement with the school.

—Molly Rusnak



4/15/12 Quarterly Mtg - Steve Smith presents a report on The Cedars Senior Residence in the Bronx

Artwork by Lucy Sikes

New Quaker Residence for Special Needs Families Opens in the Bronx

Report at Meeting of New York Quarter Details Environmentally-Innovative Building, Called “The Cedars”

On April 15 at Fifteenth Street Meetinghouse, Friends from New York City meetings heard a moving report about the service we began and support for housing special needs families in an environmentally exciting building called The Cedars at 745 Fox Street in the Bronx.

The Clerk of the Committee described the social work and community support given to heads of families having mental health and poverty problems in this housing. The report included four case studies of tenants who have moved from being crippled by fear, unable to work and relate to other people to em-

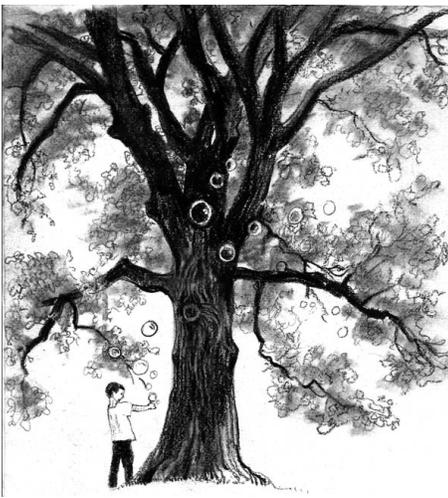
ployment, socialization and overcoming substance abuse. The tenants are a mix of families in need of low income housing and those with additional mental health needs.

The building itself is a model of environmental efficiency with a geothermal heating and cooling system which has been 40% more efficient than New York City requires, even though a few repairs have had to be made in the system. The building also has a green roof and garden.

More information and application forms are available on the New York Quarterly Meeting website. The committee is exploring the possibility of developing senior housing for Quakers in New York City.

Other reports including the Annual Report of Trustees are also available on the website.

—Molly Rusnak



BFS Students Encounter Quaker Testimonies

by Tom Rothschild

Over the past six months, several students in the Upper School at Brooklyn Friends have taken a seminar I offered in which they discussed with Quakers from around our Yearly Meeting (including a number from Brooklyn) what it means to live a Quaker testimony. At the end of the seminar, they prepared an Epistle which I think may be of interest to Friends in the meeting:

Epistle From The Students of BFS Seminar Encountering Quaker Testimonies, 2011-2012

The purpose of this brief epistle is to both document and reflect on the last five months of Encountering Quaker Testimonies. Most of us had no Quaker education past the required freshmen course or none at all. This lack of expectations created an environment in which each week we were enlightened and delighted by wonderful guests who brought with them their reflections and experiences of a Quaker testimony. Over the course of the fifteen sessions, we took a broad stroke of the essential Quaker testimonies, including: community, simplicity, equality, stewardship and education.

The first session was dedicated to Community. Brooklyn Friends School is known for its uncommon community, and it was fascinating to hear what Anita, Gabi and Mike had to share with us about it. They observed that a “true” community is somehow difficult to create, and we reflected on what a community really is.

The testimony of simplicity appeared to be the most tangible. Our guests

shared with their stories of letting go of many of their material possessions. Many of them spoke of how simplicity was at times difficult to achieve, but the freedom it enabled actually made their lives easier, leaving more time for that which was truly important to them.

We dedicated two sessions to the testimony of equality. The first one focused on racism. Vincent and Ernie, the two guests that came to speak, shared their insights on how racism is still a current issue even among Quakers. During our session we also spent time discussing the processes that Friends use in business meetings to take decisions, appreciating the high level of equality in the society. The second element of equality that we chose to focus on was equality in terms of internment. The friends who visited each spoke about how the current justice system in America was much more about arbitrary confinement than rehabilitation. The community of Friends did not seem in support of leaving wrong-doers unpunished. Rather, at least in the most basic sense, they wished that even those who commit heinous acts be treated as people with an internal seed of God. One of the most pointed comments that came out of the afternoon came from a Friend who had spent thirty years in prison. He said “when sometimes I stop liking or I’m disagreeing with someone, I try to remember that everyone is wonderful until proven otherwise, and even then they are still wonderful, but they just don’t bring out the wonderful in me.”

This truly showed the belief of the Quakers that “there is that of God in everyone.” This allowed us to see the actual conviction put into the words and actions of another, providing us with a concrete example of this testament. It helped us to understand that we have to try and see the wonderful in everyone and to see them for who they are instead of judging them based on their past and the actions they may have committed in the past.

The discussion of peace proved to be one of the most dramatic sessions of the year. Perhaps it was the vivid imagery that war and peace creates but, for whatever reason, our discussion was particular vigorous. Much of the session focused on Greta Mickey’s AVP

(Alternative to Violence Program) work in the Republic of Georgia; however, kernels of the conversations lead to more than just her work. One of the most memorable was the generally consensus that war prevents individuals from self-guided thought.

The testimony of integrity was described as the testimony that brings all the others together and the testimony that is “the hardest but the most important.” One of the two panelists, Joanna, lives on a Catholic Workers farm in upstate New York with her family. She shared with us how after living a life she didn’t like and living a life that was not consistent with her Quaker values, she was led to move onto a farm where she could dedicate to what she felt meant to do. Although many tried to talk her out of it, she stayed consistent and followed her desire.

Our discussion of stewardship was particularly energetic. What was particularly interesting was that our guests seemed underwhelmed by the idea of “stewardship” and instead felt that “thrivability” was more impactful. The distinction is still not entirely clear, but it appeared that the key difference was that stewardship was about protecting and conserving while “thrivability” was about making more from what we already have, like an elemental squaring of things.

Peter Laughter from the Board of Trustees of Brooklyn Friends School, along with Nancy Black, a former Trustee, came to our session on education. Being a Brooklyn Friends Alumnus himself, Peter shared with us how he thought a Quaker education advantaged him in his college and working life. Peter was what they called a “problem student” before transferring to Brooklyn Friends School. There, he had a transformation. Some of us who went to different schools before Brooklyn Friends School saw our own experience reflected. Peter told us that here at Brooklyn Friends he felt he was at the same level as his professor, and that this equality allowed him to create even more bonding relationships. He carried this sense of equality with him even after graduation, benefiting from the same advantages in his college and career.

One of us felt that as a student of



Artwork by Lucy Sikes

Quakerism, “Encountering Quaker Testimonies” was helpful in learning about the Quaker Testimonies through people who lived it out from day-to-day. This broke through the barriers of a typical classroom setting since we were taught about another’s meaning of “testimony” which was left open to our individual interpretations. This helped us to understand the Quaker Testimonies and to make our own inferences from this course.

—Students of the BFS Seminar Encountering Quaker Testimonies, 2011-2012

Brooklyn First Day School Celebrates Easter & Spring

All First Day School groups joined together in a rather unusual celebration on Easter Sunday. They planted seeds, then blew bubbles, then made marshmallow structures with toothpicks and decorated plastic eggs. These activities had a special twist, however—learning to cooperate. For instance, with the marshmallow project, some children could only touch the toothpicks and others could only touch the marshmallows. They were forced to work together to get the finished product. This

raises one very important question that remains unanswered: Did all the marshmallows survive the process?

—Molly Rusnak, from the report of First Day School

Brooklyn Meeting Authors: Iris Lee Stoler

Meeting member Iris Lee Stoler is also poet and author of a book of poetry called ‘Urban Bird Life’ published by New York Books, poems that celebrate her love of New York City.

Molly Peacock writes on the jacket, “Iris Lee’s shining collection, “Urban Bird Life” puts her in the ranks of walkers in the city from Walt Whitman to Charles Reznikoff, with elisions and repetitions yet with a vision that shines a direct light on all in her view...”

—Molly Rusnak

April Business Meeting Notes

Clerking:

The interim Clerk, Andy von Salis presided. Friends held Clerk, Jim Morgan in the Light as he recovers.

Library Committee Report:

The Library Committee has become

one of the most active of our committees. This year they have digitized all 573 books on the Librarything.com website, which will also contain reviews of new and old books of interest. The committee bought 14 new books and restored old ones. The new books include “The Complete Works of James Naylor,” “The People Called Quakers,” by Elton Trueblood, and more. The committee follows up on requests for books from members of the Meeting. Michael and Nancy Black donated 30 books from their personal library.

Budget:

A proposed budget of \$76,316 for 2012-2013 was reviewed and approved.

Welcoming:

The Welcoming Committee held two events: a contra dance for the whole Quarterly Meeting and a Game Night.

Faculty Dinner Announced:

The Care Committees have sent out invitations to Mary McDowell Friends School and Brooklyn Friends School for the annual dinner on November 15, 2012.

—Molly Rusnak



Regularly Scheduled Activities

Meetings for Worship

11:00 AM Sundays,
in the Meeting Room
6:30 PM Tuesdays,
in the Meeting Room

Social Hour

12:00 PM Sundays,
Ground-level Dining Room

Hymn Singing around the Piano

10:00 AM, First Sunday of every
month, in the Meeting Room

Worship Sharing

10:00 AM, First Sunday of every
month, on the Third Floor

Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business

1:00 PM, First Sunday of every
month, in the Meeting Room

Readings of Spiritual Texts

10:00 AM, Second Sunday of
every month, in the Meeting
Room

Quaker Studies for Newcomers and Members

1:00 PM – 3:00 PM, Third Sunday
of every month, in the Meeting
Room.

Community Dinner

1:00 PM, Last Sunday of every
month, Ground-level Dining
Room; volunteers are needed and
appreciated for this monthly
dinner that we prepare and serve
to anyone who wishes to join us
for a free, hot meal. Children are
also encouraged to volunteer.

Childcare

Childcare is available every First
Day (Sunday) for children ages
three months to three years in the
care of an early childhood teacher
and dedicated volunteers.

First Day School

11:00 AM – 11:45 AM each First
Day (Sunday) from September to
June. First Day School has three
classes, roughly relating to the
ages of the children:
Bodies (4-6), Minds (7-9) and
Spirits (10-12).

Upcoming Events

May 2012

Sun, May 20:

Occupy Wall Street worship
sharing, at Zuccotti Park, time
TBA; contact Cressa Perloff,
watercressa at yahoo dot com

Sun, May 27:

Bedford Stuyvesant Worship
Group, at Bedford Stuyvesant
Restoration Plaza, 3 PM – 5 PM;
contact Héloïse Rathbone,
hcrathbone at gmail
dot com

June, 2012

Sun, Jun 17:

Occupy Wall Street worship
sharing, at Zuccotti Park, time
TBA; contact Cressa Perloff,
watercressa at yahoo dot com

Fri, Jun 22 – Sun, Jun 24:

Not Just Fun & Games, a youth-
type weekend for adults, at Powell
House; *see* www.powellhouse.org

July, 2012

Sun, Jul 15

Occupy Wall Street worship
sharing, at Zuccotti Park, time
TBA; contact Cressa Perloff,
watercressa at yahoo dot com

Sun, Jul 22 - Sat, Jul 28

New York Yearly Meeting
Summer Sessions, at Silver Bay;
see www.nyym.org

*Send additions to Regularly Scheduled Activities or Upcoming Events to calendar@brooklynmeeting.org; send inquiries or suggestions about the newsletter to newsletter@brooklynmeeting.org. The Monthly Meeting Newsletter is published by the Communications Committee of Brooklyn Monthly Meeting.
Current members: Robert Matson (clerk), Daniel Bodah, Eli Gwynn, Benjamin Hill, Molly Rusnak, and Lucy Sikes*