



# BROOKLYN MEETING NEWS

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

[brooklynmeeting.org](http://brooklynmeeting.org)

January 2014

## **December Meeting for Business: Jim Morgan Retires as Clerk of Brooklyn Meeting**

### **Last Report from Jim Morgan as Clerk; New Clerks Appointed**

After four terms, Jim Morgan gave his last annual report as Clerk. He reported that average attendance at Meeting for Business during the past year was 30, an increase of 6 from the two preceding years. Jim described the responsibility of the Clerk as that of a “servant leader,” organizing the monthly Meeting for Business, preparing the agenda, convening the meeting, composing minutes when decisions are made that “capture the sense of the meeting” and are approved by the membership, and, finally, recording and distributing the minutes (at present 65 Friends receive them). The Clerk also deals with correspondence, invites the schools to attend Meeting for Worship and the School Appreciation Dinner and organizes an annual clerking workshop. (This year’s was designated a “Quaker Leadership Workshop.”) Friends expressed their appreciation of Jim’s service as well as that of Assistant Clerk Joan Malin. The nominations of Ted Ehrhardt as Clerk and Nancy Black as Assistant Clerk for the coming year were approved.

### **Infant is Welcomed Into Membership**

Appropriately for the Christmas season, Juliette, baby daughter of Lara Holliday and James Forrester, was accepted as a member of Brooklyn Meeting. Her parents wrote “We would like to raise Juliette as a Quaker, as the Friends community has been a meaningful element in our lives as a family. We hope to raise Juliette in the Quaker values of simplicity, truth and community.”

### **Nominating Committee Reports on Their Successful Search for Friends to Serve the Meeting**

The committee described their responsibility as “looking and listening deeply to find the spiritual gifts of our attenders and members and matching them with our many committees and their various needs.” This is a challenging task. Brooklyn Meeting has 20 committees comprising 208 positions, plus two recorders, two treasurers and two clerks. In addition, 32 Brooklyn Friends serve New York Quarterly Meeting and 22 serve New York Yearly Meeting. The total number of people volunteering among Friends stands at 108.

### **The History Committee Reports on Its First Book of Quaker Interviews and Other Research**

This year a book of five interviews with five older and long-time Brooklyn Friends was completed and made available. The interviewees were Boyce Benge (artist), Larry Jaeger (publicist), Jim Morgan (architect and professor), Martin Norregard (English teacher at Brooklyn Friends School) and Mary [Molly] Rusnak (teacher and administrator). The interviews give a picture of Brooklyn Meeting in the past as well as of these individual Friends. The book is available at the Book Table every First Day. The committee also continued research into the history of the Quaker Cemetery in Prospect Park. Also, the Meeting Archives, including past minutes, are open and available on the third floor of the Meetinghouse.

*-Molly Rusnak*

## **An Appreciation of the Clerkship and Service of Jim Morgan**

In December Brooklyn Meeting for Business Jim Morgan announced that, after four terms, he feels that it is right to resign as Clerk of the Meeting and make way for a new Clerk. This is in the Quaker tradition of sharing service among Meeting members rather than relying heavily on one or two leaders. Brooklyn Friends who regularly attended Monthly Meeting for Business over these last four years were privileged to experience a very special quality of clerking, which grew more beautiful as time passed. Many Friends, who will be called upon to clerk committees in the future, have had the opportunity to see first-hand some of the qualities that made it work. Most importantly, Jim encouraged participation and really listened to every individual contribution. He shared the process of composing a minute and accepted corrections with humility. He was meticulous about following the agenda and focusing on the subject at hand. He was careful to pace the meeting so that everything was attended to without allowing it to drag on. And no one will forget his sense of humor, which seemed to erupt just when it was most needed. To learn more about Jim Morgan, Friends can read his interview in the book of interviews of Brooklyn Friends now available at the Book Table.

*-Molly Rusnak*



## **Urgent Message to New York Yearly Meeting Friends From the General Secretary**

At the recent Fall Sessions, Christopher Salmon called on all Friends from all Meetings to face hard truths about the condition of Quakerism in New York and adjoining states. He pointed out that Quaker membership has been declining steadily in the past few years and, as a result, financial resources for the Yearly Meeting as well as the local meetings have grown less and less.

While the Priorities Working Group is trying to identify priorities within the Yearly Meeting to search for economies, the decrease in membership over time may defeat these efforts. Perhaps Brooklyn Meeting has some ideas to offer other meetings because it is the Quaker Meeting that is growing every year. There is evidence here in Brooklyn that the silent worship, direct spiritual experience and simple community of Friends meets the religious hunger of many people in today's society. Can that message be brought to others in other places?

*-Molly Rusnak*

## **New York City Friends Invest in Fossil-free Fuel Fund**

At their December meeting, New York Quarterly Meeting trustees approved investing 10% of our portfolio in a new Fossil-free Fund. Friends were reminded that many investment products have fossil fuel components

within them. The Finance Subcommittee of Trustees has been active in forming this new "clean" fund within Friends Fiduciary, which manages investments for Quakers nationwide.

*-Molly Rusnak*

## **Winter Holiday Festival Celebrated**

On Saturday evening, December 21, Brooklyn Meeting presented the traditional holiday party, decorating a tree, bringing food to share and enjoying each other. Though the gathering was smaller than usual, [only eight members and attenders who were not parents participated], the homemade food was plentiful and delicious and the company warm and joyous. Ages ranged from three years old to eighty seven. At the right moment Santa Claus appeared and was greeted with shouts of excitement from all.

Then, in the Meetingroom, a Christmas story was read and the traditional talent show was presented-- this time entirely by children. The variety included, a piano piece, solo songs, riddles, original stories and an interpretive dance. The evening concluded with carols around the piano.

*-Molly Rusnak*

## YAF Potluck

On Decemebr 15<sup>th</sup> the Young Adult Friends group potluck was hosted at Robert Matson's apartment in Brooklyn. It was attended by 8 young adult friends. The format of recent Young Adult Friends' potlucks have begun with worship sharing around an advice or query for an hour, followed by a potluck and socializing. At December's potluck we chose to look at one advice and one query (chosen at random) in order to seek connections between the two.

**Advice #6:** *Parents and older Friends are advised to be sensitive to the insights of younger people and to keep a close and sympathetic contact with them. Children are urged to love and respect their parents that all may be led together to the Light Within.*

**And Query 12:** *Do we acknowledge the oneness of humanity and foster a loving spirit toward all people? Do we honor Friends' traditional testimony that men and women are equal? How do we work to make these ideals a reality?*

Friends considered this advice and query, and many responded, especially to the advice, with passionate agreement. Friends made connections between the two ideals of equality and questioned the ways young people and women were treated in our society and what we did as Friends to combat these inequalities.

Some of the treats for dinner included brussel sprouts, chickpea salad, veggie dumplings, multiple curries, and, of course, Christmas cookies!

To receive emails about Young Adult Friends' events contact: [brooklynnyaf@gmail.com](mailto:brooklynnyaf@gmail.com).

-Anna White

## Paulie Adams – a Personal Remembrance



He will not come again to sit among us or to evoke within us his unerring faith that love is all, that all is love.

I was stunned on Sunday, December 29, as were so many others, when I learned in meeting that Paulie Adams had been found dead at home only one or two days earlier. He had not been well as we commonly understand it for many, many years, but to me he always teemed with life and love and hope.

There was, one has to admit, something faintly ridiculous about his self-presentation, from his crushed straw summer cowboy hat to his ill-advised Hee-Haw style Texas twang when speaking up close to his broad rainbow suspenders, which he always wore. Those suspenders -- were they meant as a direct statement about himself, or as a message of his ecumenical acceptance, or were they just the suspenders he wore to hold up his pants?

But behind all of that was a gentle soul and a loving heart. When he was moved to speak at Meeting he

spoke in full composed paragraphs and beautifully rounded sentences; he spoke from a place that was indisputably authentic and the message was always the same: by love are we formed, with love shall we thrive, in love and love alone lies our happiness and satisfaction in this world.

Paulie had a most excellent and sharply-honed sense of humor; he was a quick-witted punster and could exchange wordplays to beat the band. From the very first time that I was present at Meeting when he spoke, I realized that there was a light shining within him, despite all of the dark and unhappy circumstances of his life, a light which we were privileged to share for this brief time. I am more than moderately skeptical when it comes to New Age nostrums or spiritual jargon, but when Paulie spoke, or read out loud from his notebooks filled with small, neat script, I felt, and I still feel, that I was in the presence of an enduring wisdom.

What shall we do without him? Without his weekly presence in the last seat in the first row on the left-hand side of our meeting room? Without the dignified rise of his shaggy eminence, just before or after the children entered each Sunday, with a grace that belied his true physical condition? What shall we do now that the voice, which spoke such profound truths in our presence, with such simplicity of expression, is stilled?

I always enjoyed crossing wits with Paulie, testing to see if he somehow got my obscure references; he always did and he would not only "see me," but would always raise me as well. I was fortunate in having the

opportunity to tell him jokingly, two weeks before he died, that for me, Meeting for Worship was never complete until the fat man had sung. That concept mightily amused him.

The singer is gone now but the song -- his song -- lingers on for other speakers to take up. May he serve for a blessing on thee, and on thee, and on thee.

-- Philip Stone

## My Journey

*Many meetinghouses around the country have been dealing with the issue of declining attendance, but Brooklyn Monthly Meeting continues to grow while remaining a strong and vibrant community. But why? What has drawn people to Brooklyn Meeting, and what is it that keeps them coming back? "My Journey" represents an attempt to answer this question, as each month a different member or attender will explain the personal circumstances that led him or her to Brooklyn Meeting.*

I grew up in Ambler, Pennsylvania, in suburban Philadelphia, and while I did not attend a Quaker Meeting growing up I was familiar enough with the basics. My mother had attended a Quaker school as a young girl, and upon their retirement my grandparents moved into a Quaker retirement home (Foulkeways, in nearby Gwynedd, where I worked as a dishwasher). Mary Ambler, for whom my hometown was named, was a Quaker nurse who saved many lives in the wake of a catastrophic train crash. Among many other local signifiers was the Plymouth Meeting Mall, even if I never quite

grasped the irony of an area named for its Quaker roots becoming transformed into a mecca of gaudy consumerism.

During adolescence and even well into my twenties I maintained an attitude toward organized religion that bordered somewhere between antipathy and antagonism. But as I grew a bit older I began to feel that such an attitude amounted to "throwing the baby out with the bathwater." I wanted to find a place that was open-minded, welcoming, and philosophically in line with my feeling that God -- whoever He, She or It may or may not be -- was part of all of us and, therefore, we are all part of something larger.

Enter Brooklyn Meeting. I moved to New York City in 2002 and since 2005 have lived in Greenpoint. In February 2009 a conversation about religion with my friend (and, later, roommate) Steve May led to our decision to go check out Brooklyn Meeting. I immediately connected with the idea of an unprogrammed hour of worship, and found the meeting room itself to be warm and welcoming. But establishing new routines are hard and I struggled somewhat in the early going, especially because I didn't feel particularly welcomed (or acknowledged, really) during those tenuous first forays into social hour. But with Steve spurring me on, we continued to attend and eventually established a foothold in the community via the nascent Young Adult Friends group. I still struggle with attending Brooklyn Meetings at times, as many of us do, sometimes as a result of questions that I raise to myself within the meeting room ("Are these really 'messages' we're hearing?") and sometimes as

a result of my own scheduling conflicts and, well, laziness. But I have come to believe very strongly in the fundamental tenets of Quakerism, and am impressed with the Meeting's growing vibrancy and diversity as well as the efforts of those within this community who have worked for decades to help it get that way. Currently I am on the Communications Committee, helping to produce this newsletter every month, and committee work has given me a new perspective and appreciation for the Quaker way of doing things.

I'm still in the relatively early stages of this journey, but I'm glad that my "so close, yet so far away" childhood experiences with Quakerism have evolved into being a regular attender (and now, committee member) at Brooklyn Meeting. It sure beats shopping at the Plymouth Meeting Mall.  
-- Ben Hill

*"My Journey" will run in the Brooklyn Monthly Meeting newsletter every month and all members and attenders are welcome to contribute. If you're interested in doing so then we'd like to hear from you -- [newsletter@brooklynmeeting.org](mailto:newsletter@brooklynmeeting.org)*

## Quotation Corner

"Friends come back from their worship with a new sense of ordination, but not the ordination of human hands. Something has happened in the stillness that makes the heart more tender, more sensitive, more shocked by evil, more dedicated to ideals of life, and more eager to push back the skirts of darkness and to widen the area of light and love."

- Rufus Jones, 1863-1948

---

# Submission Guidelines

---

The Communications Committee welcomes Brooklyn Meeting News contributions from all Meeting members and attenders. Our newsletter includes a variety of content which may be of interest to our community, including but not limited to:

- Recaps of recent Meeting events
- Previews of upcoming events
- Issues pertaining to our

## Quaker faith and history

The newsletter is published on the first Sunday of each month, and we request that submissions for the next issue be submitted at least two weeks in advance. General Guidelines:

- Please send an email to [newsletter@brooklynmeeting.org](mailto:newsletter@brooklynmeeting.org) so that we may briefly discuss your contribution, as regards its timeliness, appropriateness, and length.
- Contributions should

generally be brief, between 150-450 words in length.

- Please send your newsletter submission as an attached Word document.
- Keep in mind that contributions will be copy edited, and may not appear in the newsletter in exactly the same form as how they were submitted.

**Thank you for your interest and we look forward to your input!**

---

## Regularly Scheduled Activities

---

### Meetings for Worship

9:00–9:50 AM and  
11:00 AM–NOON on Sundays,  
in the meeting room  
6:30 PM Tuesdays,  
in the meeting room

### Childcare

Sundays during 11:00 AM worship, for  
children of 3 months to 3 years, in the care  
of an early childhood teacher and dedicated  
volunteers

### First Day School

10:45 AM – 11:45 AM, Sundays, September  
to June. Three classes, roughly related to  
age: Bodies (4-6), Minds (7-9) and Spirits  
(10-12).

### Social Hour

12:00 PM Sundays,  
Ground-level dining room

### Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business

1:00 PM, first Sundays, in the meeting  
room

### Hymn Singing around the Piano

10:00 AM, first Sundays, in the meeting  
room

### Readings of Spiritual Texts

10:00 AM, second Sundays, in the  
meeting room

### Worship Sharing

10:00 AM, third Sundays, on the third  
floor

### Community Dinner

1:00 PM-3:00 PM SET-UP  
3:00 PM-4:00 PM MEAL/SERVING  
4:00 PM- 5:00 PM CLEAN-UP, COME FOR  
SOME OR ALL!

Last Sunday of every month, ground-  
level dining room; volunteers appreciated  
for this monthly dinner for anyone who  
wishes a free hot meal. Children  
encouraged to volunteer.

Contact: Andres Colapinto,  
acolabus@gmail.com

---

## Upcoming Events

---

*Ongoing additions to upcoming Meeting events are regularly added to the Meeting website at  
<http://www.brooklynmeeting.org/calendar>.*

*To submit an event, email [calendar@brooklynmeeting.org](mailto:calendar@brooklynmeeting.org).*

*Member Kate Rapoport also maintains an  
email event announcement list; send a request to [brooklyn.kittens@gmail.com](mailto:brooklyn.kittens@gmail.com) to join.*

### January 2014

*Saturday, January 11: 5-10:45pm*

On Jan. 11th CDNY will host a free dance  
from 5pm to 6pm. Followed by a brown bag  
dinner. Followed by a beginner lesson  
at 7:30. And followed by more contra  
dancing from 8pm till 10:45. The evening  
dance is \$15. Special shoes not required.

For more information, visit [www.cdney.org](http://www.cdney.org).

If you want to go with a group of YAFs

email Robert Matson at

[rmatson@theinnovationworks.com](mailto:rmatson@theinnovationworks.com) or Elena

at [callahan.elena@gmail.com](mailto:callahan.elena@gmail.com).

*Sunday, January 19:*

*1-3pm at The Meetinghouse*

Quaker Studies topic: The varieties of  
beliefs in God among Brooklyn Quakers and  
among other Quakers.

### February 2014

*Wednesday, February 5:*

*6:30-8:30pm at Robert's Apartment*

Worship with concerns for Planning 2014

Hikes with Worship and for Eating Pizza.

Bring your ideas and volunteerism. Contact

[Rmatson@TheInnovationWorks.com](mailto:Rmatson@TheInnovationWorks.com).

*Sunday, February 16:*

*1-3pm at The Meetinghouse*

Quaker Studies topic: Living our lives in the  
light of the spirit: leadings and concerns  
(personal stories).

---

*Send additions to Regularly Scheduled Activities or Upcoming Events to [calendar@brooklynmeeting.org](mailto:calendar@brooklynmeeting.org).*

*Send inquiries or suggestions about the newsletter to [newsletter@brooklynmeeting.org](mailto:newsletter@brooklynmeeting.org).*

*The Monthly Meeting Newsletter is published by the Communications Committee of Brooklyn Monthly Meeting.*

*Current members: Eli Gwynn (clerk), Ben Hill, Marie Hogue, Barbara Mack, Molly Rusnak, and Anna White. Drawing by Lucy Sikes*

---