



BROOKLYN MEETING NEWS

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

brooklymeeting.org

September 2014

JULY MEETING FOR BUSINESS

First Day School Committee

Reports

Brooklyn Meeting First Day School Committee reported on the challenges that they faced during the past year. These included a shortage of teachers, difficulty developing a curriculum, small and irregular student attendance and lack of adequate space.

The committee dealt with low and irregular attendance and the teacher shortage by reducing the number of classes from three to two. A plan has yet to be developed for working with our tenants to reserve more space for the First Day School classes. (Next year's lease with the tenants will be negotiated in the fall by the Property Committee and general manager.) It is instructive to note that the current concerns of the First Day School Committee are identical with those of the committee a decade ago, when major efforts were made to reorganize the program and invest in new equipment and the tenant was asked to leave.

A new paid teen coordinator was at work this year, resulting in the first active teenage group we have had for some time. The group held monthly social events -- including trips to Flushing Meeting and the Queens Historical Society to learn about the first Quakers in New York City -- and reached out to teens in 15th Street and Manhattan Meetings. The group also worked on a documentary about the "Fair Food Campaign," and cooperated with young Friends in Florida

supporting the Immokalee Workers Campaign.

Query 6: Do our children receive the loving care of the meeting?...Do we offer our young people opportunities for fellowship, for service, for religious instruction and for participation in the life of the meeting?

Long Time Attenders Become Members of Brooklyn Meeting

Carl Blumenthal and Adam Rashid were welcomed into Brooklyn Meeting after a second reading of their letters of application.

Adam Rashid comes from a Quaker family long devoted to Brooklyn Meeting. His grandparents, the Sterritts, were active in the Meeting in years past and Adam himself attended First Day School and Meeting for Worship regularly as a child. He and his fiancée, Leslie Alba, have been attending recently. He has been involved in

community service in the field of education.

Carl Blumenthal is a familiar figure in the Meeting kitchen. For several years he has been serving as clerk and chef-in-chief of the Social Hour Committee, providing innovative healthy recipes and invariable good humor after Meeting for Worship. Carl also has a long history of community service. His wife, Susan Palm, designed and maintained the garden around the play area next to the Meetinghouse.

In welcoming these "new" members we are reminded of the popular song "Everything Old is New Again."

Community Dinner Committee Reports on an Active Year

The primary service Brooklyn Meeting offers the wider Brooklyn community is the monthly Community Dinner (in addition to the Touch Aids Dinner, also monthly, which is provided by Meeting volunteers). On the last First Day of the month, the committee serves 75 to 80 guests in need of food. It also distributes used clothing and produce donated by Perelandra.

Committee members perform regularly scheduled duties such as cooking, service, coordination and food pick-up. Additional volunteers from the Meeting also serve, as do volunteers from Girls Scouts and the Brooklyn Friends and Berkeley Carroll schools. Second graders from Brooklyn Friends School bake desserts, and also visit the kitchen once a year.

The committee is now engaged in writing up their recipes for future use.

-- Molly Rusnak



Peace and Social Action Committee Supports People's Climate March in NYC on 9/21/14

For the past year and a half, the Peace and Social Action Committee (PSAC) has focused on the "Human Cost of Climate Change." Through education and action the committee is advocating a reduction of fossil fuels usage and an increase in renewable energy sources. The committee now urges those at Brooklyn Meeting to join the groundswell of political activity planned for September 20 and 21st, surrounding the People's Climate March.

These activities are occurring in the days before world leaders attend the Climate Summit of 2014 at United Nations headquarters. The march will create great momentum for an international climate deal.

Details on the coming events will be announced on a weekly basis.

During the past year, many Brooklyn Meeting Quakers have attended PSAC events. In March the committee screened the film *Gasland*, about the nature and hazards of hydraulic fracking. A follow up discussion was led by Ling Tsou from United for Action, a grass roots organization that, along with many other groups, continues to hold fracking at bay in this state. In June the New York State Assembly voted overwhelmingly in favor of a three-year moratorium on fracking natural gas. But the New York Senate did not agree. Governor Cuomo has agreed to allow the moratorium that is currently in place to continue until after November's election.

In May the committee sponsored the event "Takers, Turbines and Our Offshore Energy Future" with speakers from Clean Ocean Action and the Sierra Club. The presenters discussed the conflicting plans for energy development 17 miles off the shore of Jones Beach. One plan, developed by Con Ed, the Long Island Power Authority, and the New York State Power Authority, is to construct a

renewable energy wind farm. The other plan, developed by the oil and gas industry, is to install a liquefied natural gas (LNG) port. This would increase the amount of fracking in Pennsylvania and justify the expansion of fracking operations into New York State. Governor Cuomo has the power to unilaterally veto this LNG project, called Port Ambrose.

The third committee event, United for Climate Justice, was held in August and focused on the moral and scientific aspects of climate change and what individuals can do to effect change. The speakers were Martha Cameron and Gary Goff from Brooklyn for Peace.

PSAC hopes that there will be a large turnout from Brooklyn Meeting at the Climate March. Also, it plans to open the Meetinghouse and welcome upstate Quakers who are coming for the march to stay here or with families who have beds available in their homes. If you can help, or plan to attend the march, please sign up on the sheets that have been posted in the social room.

On September 21st Friends and allies from around the world will march to change everything.

-- *Mary Doty, Amy Stuart and Maureen Healy for the PSAC*

New York Yearly Meeting at Silver Bay

What joyful hugs there were, as car after car pulled up to the driveway at the Inn at Silver Bay, as Friends from all over New York State (and some from a number of meetings in New Jersey and Connecticut) greeted folks they hadn't seen in a year. But we were concerned that there were fewer this time. A decade ago more than 750 Friends attended, and this year there were only slightly over 500. We enjoyed the lines in the dining hall -- which were shorter and easier to navigate -- but we worried about our shrinking numbers.

This concern was reflected in the Statement of Leadings and Priorities:

We Envision a Yearly Meeting Deeply Grounded in the Practice of Our Faith.

We Envision a Yearly Meeting Made Up of Strong, Vital Monthly Meetings.

We Envision a Yearly Meeting Gathered Together into One Body.

We Envision a Yearly Meeting that Nurtures Our Children, Youth, and Young Adults.

We Envision a Yearly Meeting that Witnesses to the World on Our Behalf.

We Envision a Yearly Meeting that Is Accountable and Transparent.

This statement was read at the Wednesday meeting for business, and it was hotly contested. It was held over for a specially called meeting the next day, miraculously approved after the committee labored all night to incorporate the concerns. It seemed to me that the document had not changed much, but the gathered Friends had. However, the statement in its two incarnations seemed to me to be apple pie and motherhood -- lofty hopes about what was envisioned, but few tangible actions. Perhaps the generality was on purpose, in the hope that these words would inspire us to creative thinking.

Brooklyn Meeting and several other urban meetings are strong and large. What can we do about the shrinking upstate meetings, with their lovely pieces of real estate and heavy maintenance needs, with only a half dozen (or fewer) elderly members? They have a hard decision: whether to lay down their meetings or continue a seemingly impossible struggle. Should they be allowed to die, or should we seek to inspire all meetings to significant action?

A specific example close to us is Flushing Meeting. During lunch one day, I talked with a woman who had

taken on the job of treasurer. She is studying a computer program on accounting and also learning how to write grant proposals. They have received and used a government grant to restore their historic meeting house, but much more is needed. How long can they survive on grants, with so few Friends at meeting on a First Day? Does our meeting have a responsibility for them? New England Yearly Meeting has a sister meeting in Nicaragua. Should we undertake having sister meetings in our midst?

The document might be translated as how to do our work with a shrinking pie; the many smaller meetings are less able to donate to the Yearly Meeting. Meetings were at their peak during the Vietnam War. We have a war right now: the Environmental Crisis. How do we communicate to the world the urgency of this war, and what Quaker Earthcare Witness is doing? Might that be our salvation?

The question was asked: "Do we need New York Yearly Meeting?"

I say yes; it inspired me to these thoughts.

-- *Lucy Sikes*

Reconciliation and Inspiration at Silver Bay

Silver Bay was wonderful in so many ways. The Meeting for Worship on Racial Healing provided us with an opportunity to learn a little bit about what other meetings are doing to heal both society and individuals. It was heartening to see so many individuals, operating at different stages of healing and awareness. New York Yearly Meeting's organized action toward racial healing is multifaceted, and though presently structured along racial lines, considerable unity exists regarding the concern for racism in the prison system. There is so much to change, in all of our social systems, if we are to ever eliminate racism along the lines of what has recently transpired in Ferguson, Missouri. But it's not just "out there," it's here in our own yard as well. Just think about the de facto

segregation in New York City schools, recent racial profiling cases, and the tragic death of Eric Garner at the hands of the police. It can be daunting. There is a lot of energy growing out of the Apology to Afro Descendants, which might be harnessed to raise awareness and dissolve complacency at Brooklyn Monthly Meeting. I'm sincerely hoping that this will happen soon.

-- *Linda Clarke*

New York Yearly Meeting Summer Session Approves Five Year Revitalization Plan

After several intense Meetings for Business, Yearly Meeting Friends approved the report and recommendations of the Priorities Working Group and the continuation of Meetings for Discernment which form the basis for these priorities.

The approved recommendations included a number of wide-ranging activities to be implemented in a five year period, but did not set priorities among them. The priorities are:

1. Strengthen Monthly Meetings by increasing membership and contributions, providing them with assistance in financial matters.
2. Increase contacts between Monthly Meetings.
3. Increase Yearly Meeting witness activities and public awareness of Quaker witness.
4. Improve Yearly Meeting financial transparency and accountability.

An expanded Finance Committee was designated to be responsible for implementing these recommendations. The report and discussion did not address the immediate financial shortfall in the Yearly Meeting. (Brooklyn Monthly Meeting donates approximately half of its collections to New York Yearly Meeting each year.)

These recommendations, and how to implement them, may be considered at Yearly Meeting Fall Sessions. These will be accessible to Brooklyn Friends, as

they will be held at 15th Street Meeting on November 14-16 of this year.

-- *Molly Rusnak*

Jim Morgan Celebrates his Birthday

Jim recently celebrated his 80th birthday with a celebratory dance recital, during which he was surrounded by Friends and the beloved women in his life. The celebration, which features performances by Jim, Anna Scheckenback, Lyn Pyle and Sarah Morgan, also included a group dance led by Ted Ehrhardt. To view a video of this dance celebration, simply go to YouTube and type in "Jim Morgan 80th Birthday."

-- *Lucy Sikes*

Brooklyn Meeting Minute on the Environment

On July 11, Peace and Social Action Committee presented the following minute for the approval of Brooklyn Friends, with the recommendation that it be forwarded directly to the Earthcare Working Group of New York Yearly Meeting and to New York Quarterly Meeting for its consideration and action:

We in Brooklyn Meeting request that our Yearly Meeting place the problems of Earthcare and Global Climate Change among its top priorities. We hope staff time and resources can be moved towards helping local Meetings and individual Friends to seek the Guidance of the Spirit in considering changes in our attitudes and life-styles. These changes will be profound and unsettling. As Newton Garver pointed out in Spark before his death, most Friends are in denial about the magnitude of the problem. For many of us, it is hard to acknowledge the subconscious (but stoutly held) belief that we human beings are God's favorite species.

Yet these challenges may also represent a Spiritual opportunity. Our Testimony on Simplicity asks us to not permit our worldly concerns, economic and otherwise, to interfere with daily reverence and gratitude and seeking Divine Guidance. We feel that increasingly

destructive weather events, melting ice caps, and rising ocean temperatures are asking us to help one another prayerfully and lovingly not only with the necessary social and economic changes, but also with the spiritual deepening that will be needed in order for us to cope. We hope that the Yearly Meeting might be less scattered in various programs and more deeply united around seeking the Inner Teacher's Guidance to protect God's gift to us...our Earth, our home.

More people than Quakers will seek to live more simply. Might it be possible that the attitudes of gratitude and reverence that underlie our approach to Simplicity would spread beyond Quaker circles in the trying times to come? Might this bring more folks with spiritual thirst and need for fellowship to the doors of our Meetings for Worship?

Friends approve the minute and ask the clerk to forward it to the Earthcare Working Group of New York Yearly Meeting and to New York Quarterly Meeting.

-- Glen Bibler

Hike to Island Pond

On July 12th, a beautiful and sunny day, I had the pleasure of attending a hike with worship in Harriman State Park led by Robert Matson. Our group of eight hiked about 8 miles, eventually reaching a lookout point where we stopped for lunch (dessert was "provided" for us by the lovely blueberry bushes all over the rocks). We then began our descent, so that we could take a swim in one of my favorite lakes, Island Pond.

While normally we would have worship sharing following lunch on the rocks, the sun was in full force at that point in the day and we began to think of other options. As a joke someone suggested we have meeting for worship in the lake. We had a few laughs over this, until we realized that this actually was a terrific idea! So... we held meeting for worship in the lake, much to the amusement of two fishermen out in their boat at that time.

We sat/stood in a circle, with some choosing to sit on the dry rocks, but many of us happy to stand peacefully suspended in the water. A common theme arrived from our worship, and that was one of gratitude for having this opportunity to escape the rush of city life and enjoy our

natural world. Brooklyn Meeting is very lucky indeed to have Robert Matson (with occasional assistance from an informal hike planning committee) lead us on these wonderful trips.

-- Anna White

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 by **September 22nd**. General Guidelines:

- Please send an email to 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 - 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.

*Member Kate Rapoport also maintains an
email event announcement list; send a request to brooklyn.kittens@gmail.com to join.*

September 2014

Sunday, September 7:
First Day School Pancake Breakfast.
9-11am at the Meetinghouse.

Saturday, September 27:

Committee on Lesbian Gay Bisexual
Transgender Concerns
will host a social gathering.
For directions telephone Beth Kelly - (773)
[972-8117](tel:972-8117)

October 2014

Friday, October 17 – Sunday, October 19:
2014 Powell House Retreat! RSVP required.
Contact retreat@brooklynmeeting.org
At Powell House.

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: Eli Gnyinn (clerk), Ben Hill, Molly Rusnak, and Anna White.

Drawings by Lucy Sikes
