



# BROOKLYN MEETING NEWS

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

*brooklynmeeting.org*

**April 2015**

## **March Meeting for Business: New Members, a Wedding and Peace and Social Action**

### **Le Noury-Stewarts Join the Meeting**

Leela and Chris and their daughter, Violet Valentina, were welcomed into membership in Brooklyn Meeting.

### **Wedding Report is Accepted**

Tom Rothschild reported for Ministry and Counsel on the marriage of Eli Gwynn and Emily Walsh, in the manner of Friends. They are residing in Massachusetts at present but Eli will continue participating in the Meeting and working on committees.

### **Revised Edition of the Committee Handbook is Complete**

Nancy Black and Martha Hyde reported that the new handbook describing Meeting committee responsibilities, replacing the old "Blue Book," will be available online and called the "Committee Handbook" -- as it is no longer blue! Guidelines for revising it were discussed. Future suggested revisions will be brought to Meeting for Business and, if approved, will be inserted by the Meeting Clerks.

### **Peace and Social Action Committee Reports on a Busy and Productive Year**

The Peace and Social Action Committee, which has been focused on the issues of climate justice and Earth care, undertook the following activities:

- Presented the documentary *Gasland*, followed by a discussion on the dangers of fracking.

- Hosted a panel discussion on the theme "Tankers and Turbines," with speakers from the Sierra Club and Clean Ocean Action who explained plans for a natural gas port and wind farm. This event was filmed.

- Hosted two members of "Brooklyn for Peace," who described to Friends the human costs of climate change. The Committee also recommended allocating the Meeting's Social Responsibility Fund to New York Quarterly Meeting African Education Committee (for schools in Africa), the Anti-Fracking Campaign, Quaker Earthcare Witness, Brooklyn Meeting Community Dinner (for sustainable sourcing of food), Ramalla Friends School In Palestine and Columbine Loza (for a service trip to El Salvador). The Socially Responsible Fund is replenished each year and accepts requests for Quaker projects on a "rolling basis," with a deadline of September 1.

In July and August, the Committee organized hospitality and participation for the "People's Climate March." The Committee also asked Brooklyn Meeting to urge the Trustees of New York Quarterly Meeting to invest in the Friends Fiduciary Fossil Free Fund. The Committee expressed support for Paul van Linden-Tol in his weekly vigil in front of the Supreme Court Building, witnessing a concern for the incarceration of African-American young men.

## **Correction from March Issue**

### **Meeting Treasurer Reports; Her Requests Are Approved**

Treasurer Danielle Dybiec recommended, and the Meeting approved, two financial requests to be

carried over into 2015 from 2014: \$2,500 (this was incorrectly reported as \$25,000 in the March issue) for a Teen Documentary Project and \$843.00 (unspent from the Child Care Committee budget) for new toys.

-- *Molly Rusnak*

## **Joel P. Wolfe: a Remembrance**

*Joel P. Wolfe, a familiar fellow to many at Brooklyn Meeting, passed away on Monday, March 2, 2015. A memorial service will be held at the meetinghouse on Saturday, May 2, at 11 a.m. The following obituary, written by his daughter, Lisa, pays tribute to a man who lived a rich and varied life.*

Joel P. Wolfe was born in Brooklyn on September 19, 1936, the oldest of three sons. His father, Seymour Wolfe, was a milkman and his mother, Rachel (Rae) Borrin Wolfe, was a Canadian expat. His mother's family, Jews who had emigrated from the pogroms in Polish Russia (actually Belarus), grew up in the Jewish area of Montreal called Mile End. Although Joel spent most of his childhood in the Bronx, he spent his summers in the Laurentian mountains with his Montreal relatives. He always had strong ties to his mother's side of the family, who could tell lively stories and jokes and also had the best bakers.

He found his love of fencing at City College, where he got to compete on a national level. He majored in psychology mostly because he had an enigmatic professor, Kenneth Clark, who played a pivotal role in the *Brown vs. the Board of Education* case. After college he didn't have a set career path, so he joined the army in Fort Bragg. It was there that he found his love of the stage and acting. After leaving the army, Joel took several, less interesting jobs before he met the love of his life, Sue

Heacock. Sue always encouraged him to follow his dreams.

A year after they first met they walked down the aisle – and never looked back. Their marriage was a Quaker ceremony held at Sue's childhood Meetinghouse, Horsham Friends. The atheist Jewish actor and the entrepreneurial Quaker made the perfect team. Joel and Sue moved from a studio in Yorkville to a townhouse on Adelphi Street in Fort Greene in the late 1960s. Pursuing a career as an actor, Joel toured in two national shows, did dinner theater and summer stock, suffered through commercials, did "character roles" in some major motion pictures and shared a room with Morgan Freeman while performing a play called *Royal Hunt of the Sun*. When Joel wasn't auditioning, he would watch Julia Child on TV. That is how he fell in love with French food. With no training other than some community college courses, Julia Child and Jacques Pepin, Joel laid the foundation for the next phase of his life. Disenchanted with acting, he now dreamed of opening a French restaurant.

In 1970, Joel and Sue bought a building on Atlantic Avenue with the intention of opening a French Continental restaurant. The family soon realized that they would have to move in above the restaurant in Boerum Hill, or Joel would never see his wife or daughter. Joel never wrote a book, but he did inscribe his wife and daughter's names in the pages of his second career.

Lissa + Susanne = Lisanne

Restaurant Lisanne opened in 1979. It was a success, receiving high ratings in the earliest Zagat books. Joel had opened the French restaurant that he dreamed about, and opened it on his own terms. He was a Brooklyn culinary visionary, 20 years ahead of his time;

the menu was seasonal from week to week. He strived to demystify French food. Each night he would go from table to table holding a hand-written menu on a blackboard, so that he could explain the preparations and components of each dish.

Customers came because they knew they would get to eat delicious, seasonally appropriate food. But they kept coming back because they knew they would be able to ask Joel about the menu, make requests for a repeat of a favorite dish or talk about the newest spy novel. He had an almost encyclopedic knowledge of cinema greats. Regular customers quickly became friends.



Joel made sure that the restaurant was accessible to the neighborhood. There was no formal dress code; "Wear shoes" was the response when asked if a coat and tie were necessary attire for gentlemen. He loved the restaurant, but by 1987 he was ready for his next career. He closed its doors and, at age 51, became a student at the Swedish Institute. As part of his training, Joel massaged fencers at the Fencer's Club in Manhattan. There, he reconnected with his love of fencing. Joel sparred with the senior group, who called him "the kid." This was all part of his fulfilling third career, as a massage therapist.

After the restaurant had closed, Joel became an attender of Brooklyn Meeting. He never joined, but he appreciated an hour of silence that he would not find at home. He hardly ever stood up to give a message, but the few times he did were from the heart. He was a member of two committees in his time at Brooklyn Meeting. First was the Community Dinner Committee. One of my favorite Joel Wolfe quotes from that time was "You can run the Committee Meetings or the floor (dining room) however you want, but the kitchen is NOT a democracy." He also served on the oversight committee for the marriage of Roger and Charette Boyce.

A couple of years ago a doctor asked Joel what he loved about his wife. I'm sure there were many answers upon his tongue, but the quickest and strongest was "She never quits." Joel, or, as Sue would call him, "My renaissance man," did reinvent himself in careers that he liked to say "appealed to hedonism." Joel may have left his acting career in the late 1970s, but he always had a stage presence. He did not talk much, but you always knew he had something intelligent to say. He said more with a smile than most could say in an hour. And his double takes were delicious.  
-- Lissa Wolfe

## Worship Groups Read Together on Second First Days

At 10 a.m. each second First Day, Friends gather in the Meeting room to share spiritual readings in silence and with individual messages. At 1 p.m. a group has formed to read and consider early Quaker writings, Rex Ambler's "Truth of the Heart" as a resource. Initially, the group read and talked about the writings of George Fox. All are welcome at both times.

-- Molly Rusnak

## **An Invitation to Apply for Funds from the Barrington Dunbar Fund for Black Development**

The Black Development Fund was established in 1969 as the response of New York Yearly Meeting to the needs of the Black and Puerto Rican communities within the area of the Yearly Meeting. It was provided that the fund would be administered by a committee of Friends, the majority of whom would be Black. The name was changed in 1978 to recognize the work of Barrington Dunbar for the Yearly Meeting. In addition, the charge now includes all Latinos in the NYYM area, not just those of Puerto Rican descent.

The committee tries to educate Friends on the needs of the Black and Latino sectors of the community and tries to foster Friends' concern and cooperation in responding to the needs of those communities.

The committee has granted funds to maintain or expand programs for Black and Latino communities, including development projects that help preschool children, youth, and aged who are victimized by the adverse conditions of poverty and racism; projects that help with re-entry challenges of formerly incarcerated individuals; scholarships for disadvantaged students at high school and college level; and many other programs of a like nature. Please send requests to [office@nyym.org](mailto:office@nyym.org) with Barrington Dunbar in the subject line and indicate your monthly meeting or worship group.

## **Brooklyn Friends Consider New York Yearly Meeting Apology to Afro-American Descendants**

On the afternoon of February 15, Friends gathered to share their thoughts and feelings about the Apology approved by New York Yearly Meeting Fall Sessions. They learned

more about the practice of institutional apology and how the decision was made in Yearly Meeting.

Friends expressed concerns about the history of racism in this country and the presence of so many African-Americans in prison and in the criminal justice system. They spoke of the importance of examining their own lives and attitudes and how comfortable African-American members and attenders feel in Brooklyn Meeting. Friends agreed that the Meeting needs to give life to the Apology in the community and continue the search for justice without and loving relationships within.

-- *Molly Rusnak*

## **The Vigil Against the Mass Incarceration of Black Citizens**

Black citizens make up 15% of New York's population, yet they comprise 49% of the prison population. Although white citizens make up 66% of New York's population, they only make up 3.7% of the prison population. To address this inequity, a few of us have been holding a vigil entitled "Too Many of Our Fellow Black Citizens are in Prison." It takes place every Wednesday between 12:30 and 1:30 in front of the Brooklyn Supreme Court.



This is an appropriate spot, as the majority of New York's state prison population comes from Brooklyn. Nationwide, the situation is also dire. NAACP documentation shows that one out of three black men is likely to experience prison. Five times as many white citizens use illicit drugs, yet black citizens are sent to prison at 10 times the rate of white citizens. Black citizens are serving nearly as much time for drug offenses (58.7 months) as white citizens are for violent offenses (61.7 months). Black citizens represent only 12% of monthly drug users, but comprise 32% of citizens arrested for drugs.

The contributing factors for this high incarceration rate for our black citizens are "Get Tough on Crime" and "War on Drugs" mandatory sentencing, "Three Strikes You're Out" laws, racial profiling and stop and frisk practices. These severe laws and practices are ruining the future and lives of many young black men and women. Consider that, in some countries, drug use is regarded more as a social problem; that prisons have not proven to rehabilitate behavior; that only a few decades ago the laws on drugs here were much less severe. Most of the current laws, police practices and sentencing guidelines need to be either abolished or reformed.

We hope that by doing the vigil, we can reach and create awareness about this inequity. We have been holding it since last December and although the weather was cold at times, we were lucky in regards to wind, rain and snow. Black citizens responded favorably with responses such as "Thank you for being out here,"

"That is the truth," and "Bless you." A few white citizens asked me about racial

profiling and an older white gentleman asked if one should go to jail for a crime. “Maybe,” I responded, “but if punishment was applied equally then the jails would be crammed with white citizens.”

Two teachers from the Friends School dropped by at one point. One woman, who worked with incarcerated young women, thanked us for being out there. A few disparaged the politicians. White citizens, our intended audience, were a bit more aloof. Some asked who we represented and I usually responded that “I am a Quaker and attend the Brooklyn meeting.” That seemed to be okay with most people.

Individual members of the meeting have shown enthusiastic support for this initiative. I realize that because of work, many can't make it. However, members have been recommending books, attending workshops, editing the handout and sharing their personal experiences. Peace and Social Action and Ministry and Council have allowed me to speak out on the issue; special thanks to the members on my clearness committee. I hope that we can eventually place the vigil on the meeting calendar and start to organize a meeting on the vigil and mass incarceration.

In friendship,  
**Paul van Linden Tol**

## Follow-up Meeting on Racism

Friends gathered after Social Hour to share thoughts about how to respond in a practical way to their concerns about racism. The group considered excerpts from “Teach Us to Sit Still” by Frank and Golden. This essay advises concerned participants to refrain from moving directly to advocacy, but rather to take the time to learn more, think more, listen and make connections with others who may come to share this concern.

A workshop on racism will be held in the Meetinghouse on April 25.

– **Molly Rusnak**

## Quakers and Slavery, the History

On First Day, April 26, the History Committee has invited historian Chris Densmore, curator of the Quakers and Slavery Collection at the Friends Historical Library, to share with Friends the true relationship between Quakers and slavery in the past, with special attention to New York. He will refer to actual documents and records and answer questions. All are invited, including children, at 1 p.m. in the Meeting room.

– **Molly Rusnak**

## Racism and Me: A Personal Story

When I was fourteen, the only African-American person I had ever seen was Hattie McDaniel in the movie *Gone with the Wind*. The California town we lived in was not only white, but subject to invisible “restrictive covenants” (meaning that houses could only be sold to white people).

So, when I attended a Congregational Church camp the summer before ninth grade, I was much surprised to find that a number of dark-skinned young people were part of the group. They came from a large Negro church in Los Angeles. One of them, a high school senior, was particularly popular and took a leadership role in camp activities. His name was Price Cobbs. He was handsome, charming and all of the girls admired him and sought his attention. This included me and my best friend, Sally, though, as ninth graders, we were lucky to be noticed at all.

The following school year our church hosted a conference of young people from Congregational churches in Southern California. Of course, Price Cobbs was to be there. Sally and I each begged our parents to host him in our home. I won, but I generously shared his company with Sally. I remember the three of us skipping down Indian Hill

Boulevard to the church, holding hands and singing together.

That night, a shocking thing happened. My house was picketed. A large number of people gathered on our quiet small town street holding signs and shouting epithets. My mother covered the windows and we turned on the radio and tried to pretend it wasn't happening. As I remember, we told no one. We never spoke about it again.

Many years later, in the sixties, times had changed. I was living with my husband and children in Brooklyn when I saw a book review in the newspaper. The book was called “Black Rage” and it was by a noted psychiatrist, Price Cobbs. I decided not to read the book because the review described it as being against interracial marriage because it was seen as harmful to blacks. Even then I couldn't help taking this personally and allowing my feelings to be hurt.

Many more years later, while watching television, I saw Price Cobbs again. This time he was being interviewed by Tavis Smiley about another book. He was still handsome, though a little grayer. I took down the address of his publisher and wrote him a note, reminding him of our youthful encounter and teasing him about “Black Rage.” I never heard back from him. I hope he received it, and perhaps smiled.

-- **Molly Rusnak**

## Mark Your Calendars – New Hike with Worship Dates Announced

Sunday, April 26: Hike with Worship, waterfalls and spring flowers. (8-10 miles, moderately strenuous, lots of quiet fun.)

Sun. June 14: Hike with Worship and ice cream (8-10 moderately strenuous miles, one moderately melting ice cream bar and two small napkins.)

Sun. Aug. 2: Hike with Worship in the

Water and Swimming (7-9 miles, moderately strenuous and soaking wet.)

Sun. Oct. 25: Hike with Worship and Fall Foliage. (8-10 moderately strenuous miles and gazillions of colorful leaves.

For gear list, details and to RSVP, contact Robert Matson at [rm@theinnovationworks.com](mailto:rm@theinnovationworks.com). Each hike is limited to 10 people.

## Two April events with Mary McDowell Friends School and Brooklyn Meeting

Mary McDowell Friends School Middle School has invited people from Brooklyn Meeting to come worship with them on Friday morning, April 24<sup>th</sup>. This is a very good opportunity for our community to witness the stimulating learning environment of MMFS, and to better understand the depth of its commitment to Quaker values and beliefs.

The Meeting takes place from 8:45 a.m. to 9:20 a.m. at the school, located at 133 Summit Street between Henry and Hicks Street in Carroll Gardens. There will be coffee served before Meeting for Worship, from 8:15 to 8:45, and a tour of the school afterwards.

The Middle School Meeting has a three-part structure. It starts with a query, followed by a period of 15-20 minutes of silence when those who are moved to speak share. Then there is a time for community news -- classrooms share their events of the week, and students and faculty comment on news events.

On Saturday, April 25<sup>th</sup>, families from Mary McDowell Friends School will be attending the Quaker Cemetery Workday from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Last year there were many people from MMFS and very few from Brooklyn Meeting. The maintenance of the cemetery requires a lot of work, and volunteers make a much-needed contribution. Please come, spend a few

hours in a beautiful place and get to know other people in a new way. Please bring your own lunch; the Cemetery Committee and the PTA of MMFS will provide snacks and beverages.

-- *Mary Doty, for the Care Relationship Committee*

## "Finding Our Joy" -- Friends Participate in a Saturday Retreat

On February 28, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., approximately thirty Meeting members joined in a variety of creative activities in the Meetinghouse. The many choices of activities were provided by Friends themselves in different spaces in the Meetinghouse, displaying the rich array of interests of individual Friends as well as a different way of knowing each other.

This reporter was able to learn something about many things while walking around the building, including the history and craft of quilting, self-expression in movement, telling personal stories, collage, "active listening" with the flute, personalized yoga, the recipe for a delicious vegetarian soup, reminiscing about urban street games and free-form drawing.

The day concluded with a circle in which participants described their feelings and experiences.

-- *Molly Rusnak*

## An Invitation from Stephanie Rauschenbush

I will be exhibiting oil and watercolor paintings in a show called "Still Life with Snow" from April 21 to May 16 at Prince Street Gallery (530 West 25<sup>th</sup> Street, between 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Avenues. The gallery is on the fourth floor).

Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday from 11 a.m. until 6 p.m. The reception will be Saturday, April 25 from 3-6 p.m. I will be sitting in the gallery every Saturday.

## Hospitality Needed

*Jo Schlesinger, co-clerk of Pittsburgh Friends Meeting, has made the following request. Please contact her at [joschlesinger@verizon.net](mailto:joschlesinger@verizon.net) if you may be able to assist.*

I have something to ask regarding the group "Remembering Hiroshima, Imagining Peace" that Scilla Wahrhaftig (the recently retired head of the AFSC Western PA office) and I are involved in. A group of us (not sure how many yet - at least 6) will be making the trek to NYC to the UN for the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. There is a big rally on Sunday, April 26. We will bring quilts made by the children at the Pittsburgh Children's Museum with us to hand off to a women's group in Japan to hang in their museum. I wondered if you or others at your Meeting might be willing to offer housing that weekend. I expect we will come up the day before and/or stay until the next day.

## Want to Share Your Upcoming Event with the Brooklyn Meeting Community?

If you answered "Yes!" to the above question, then simply email the details of your event to [events@brooklynmeeting.org](mailto:events@brooklynmeeting.org). Messages sent to this address will be received by the Meeting webmaster, Newsletter editor, Young Adult Friends leaders and Kate Rappaport (who sends out regular Quaker event listings).

Live it, love it, learn it: [events@brooklynmeeting.com](http://events@brooklynmeeting.com) is your one-stop shop for all your Quaker event promotion needs.

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## Submission Guidelines

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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 **April 20th**.

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 - we look forward to your input!

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## Regularly Scheduled Activities

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### 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

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## Upcoming Events

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

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

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

### April 2015

#### **April 24-26:**

Peace & Planet NPT Mobilization & March  
For additional information about these events and  
to become involved, see [peaceandplanet.org](http://peaceandplanet.org). To  
volunteer contact Stephen Polk, AFSC  
Disarmament Associate, at [SPolk@afsc.org](mailto:SPolk@afsc.org).

#### **Sunday, April 26**

Hike with Worship, waterfalls and spring  
flowers. (8-10 miles, moderately strenuous,  
lots of quiet fun.) For gear list, details and to  
RSVP, contact Robert Matson at

[rm@theinnovationworks.com](mailto:rm@theinnovationworks.com). Each hike is  
limited to 10 people.

### May 2015

#### **May 1-3:**

Powell House Retreat Center  
Earthcare, Eco-Justice, and Inner Transition  
Retreat Weekend Retreat Program Tuition: \$108  
w/scholarships available and plenty of work study  
opportunities for discounts leading up to May

#### **1. Powell House lodging**

**fees:** [www.powellhouse.org](http://www.powellhouse.org) or by calling 518-794-  
8811. (Meeting for worship on site is part of the schedule.)

#### **Sunday, May 17 1pm-3pm:**

Brooklyn Meetinghouse

A group of Hibakusha (survivors of the atomic  
blasts in Hiroshima and Nagasaki) will visit  
Brooklyn Meeting, joined by several other people.  
This is the last ever of the visits by Hibakusha  
which have sponsored over the last seven years by  
the educational organization Hibakusha Stories.  
The program director Robert Croonquist said, "*We  
began this work in gratitude, and hand in hand with our  
Brooklyn Friends, we will close it likewise.*"

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*Send additions to Regularly Scheduled Activities or Upcoming Events to [events@brooklynmeeting.org](mailto:events@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 Gnyinn (clerk), Ben Hill, Molly Rusnak, Lucy Sikes, and Anna White.*

*Drawings by Lucy Sikes*

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