



# BROOKLYN MEETING NEWS

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

*brooklynmeeeting.org*

**February 2016**

## **Brooklyn Meeting Mourns the Loss of Longtime Active Member Boyce Benge**

Boyce Benge died on January 17, following a long illness. He had received daily visits in the hospital from Brooklyn Friends, which were organized by ARCH (Aging, Resources, Consultation, Help). Boyce joined Brooklyn Meeting in 1991, and served on a number of committees over the years. His openness as a gay man at a time when it was not accepted, as well as his open commitment to Alcoholics Anonymous, inspired many Friends. Though his profession was designing and constructing decorative picture frames, his passion and occupation in recent years was painting. He experimented with integrating written text into abstract designs. His work was shown in England as well as here. He will be greatly missed.  
-- Molly Rusnak

## **Brooklyn Friends Provide Care and Comfort for Boyce Benge**

We were all saddened to learn that longtime Friend Boyce Benge died on January 17. He would have celebrated his 87<sup>th</sup> birthday in March, and had

always enjoyed robust health until the last few months. If you've arrived early in the Meeting Room on almost any Sunday over the past quarter century, it is quite likely that you saw Boyce sitting there, quietly meditating before the start of Meeting for Worship.

Following a major stroke on October 30, Boyce was admitted to New York City's Veterans Hospital. The stroke left him with total paralysis on his right side as well as aphasia (the inability to speak). He was transferred to a rehabilitation and nursing home in Brooklyn, where his many Friends and friends could easily visit. It is good to know that he received a visit



from someone within our Meeting on every day in which it was possible. In mid-December, Boyce contracted pneumonia and was hospitalized for a short time. He then returned to Brooklyn's Center for Nursing and Rehabilitation, where he remained until his death. Throughout the course of his dying days, all who saw him were touched by his peaceful

demeanor and quiet acceptance of his condition.

On the day Boyce died, many of us had gathered during social hour to write cards that would be read aloud to him by his visitors during the following week. Many have commented on this coincidence. Some

of us like to imagine that he was aware of this outpouring of love, and even hope that it made his transition easier.

-- Linda Clarke

## **January Meeting for Business Recap: Clerk's Report, State of Meeting Report, New Members**

### **Report of Meeting Clerk**

During the past year, Brooklyn Meeting reached unity on three minutes:

- To New York Yearly Meeting, regarding their financial contribution to Friends United Meeting. We expressed our displeasure with its discriminatory policy toward LGBT Quakers.
- To New York Quarterly Meeting, requesting that we convert to 100% renewable electricity in our buildings.
- To New York Yearly Meeting, supporting Planned Parenthood and its mission.

### **Brooklyn Meeting Welcomes Two New Members**

After reading their letters of application to the meeting, Jonathan Fluck and Paul Sireci were welcomed into membership.

Excerpt from Jonathan Fluck's letter: "When I told my mother I was attending Quaker Meeting, she said, 'All your ancestors on my side were Quakers.' When I related this to a Friend in the Meeting, she responded, 'Welcome home.'"

Excerpt from Paul Sireci's letter: "I have been most surprised by my emotional response to the workings of listening, spirituality and community in myself when I come to Meeting for Worship With a Concern for Business."

### **African Education Committee Thanks Brooklyn Meeting for Donation to Friends School in Tanzania**

"It will be used to assist a dozen young people orphaned by AIDs."

### **Draft of the State of the Meeting Report Reviewed**

Friends read and commented on the draft report. Several suggestions were made. The Report will be revised by the committee and heard again at the next Meeting for Business.

-- Molly Rusnak

### **The New York Quarterly Meeting Meets in Brooklyn**

Despite stormy weather, Friends from New York Meetings convened in Brooklyn for the January Quarterly Meeting. The agenda included a financial report from the Audit and Budget Committee, a progress report from the Relationship Committee for the Quarter, 15<sup>th</sup> Street Meeting and Friends Seminary, a report from Friends Seminary, a request from Young Adult Friends of New York Yearly Meeting and other business. (Complete minutes and reports will soon be available on the NYQM website.)

The Clerk of Audit and Budget Committee reported that our total budget for 2015 -- which includes the maintenance of our buildings and cemetery, our office, staff and committees -- totaled \$1,249,405. Our projected budget for the coming year is over \$15,000, due to postponed capital projects and increased personnel costs. Our income comes

from rental of the building next to Brooklyn Meetinghouse and socially responsible investments with the Friends Fiduciary Corporation. We also had additional costs, as a result of separately incorporating Friends Seminary and surveying our buildings. The 2016 budget was approved.

### **Relationship Committee Will Continue Until April Quarterly Meeting**

Tom Rothschild, Relationship Committee clerk, explained that the process of agreeing on Quaker principles for the Friends Seminary involves participation from a number of people from both the Meeting and the school. Varying concerns are considered and, thus, this takes time. Appreciation was expressed for the work of this committee and the request for more time was approved.

### **Relief Committee Reports Some Funds Unused**

The Relief Committee, while making some grants and changing some loans to grants, once again has funds available. Requests are usually made through the Ministry and Counsel Committees of the Monthly Meetings.

-- Molly Rusnak

### **News Regarding Heloise Rathbone, Longtime Member of the Meeting**

*Heloise Rathbone, a familiar presence at Brooklyn Meeting for many years, is now residing at an assisted living facility in San Francisco. Below is an update on how she is doing, as well as her new contact info, courtesy of daughter Douina Rathbone.*

My mother was not happy in her previous facility. She was quite unhappy, in fact. Alfred and I found a different facility -- Buena Vista Manor House, one of the other choices we had looked at -- and recently moved her there. Now, she is much happier.

In the previous facility, she was put in a "lockup unit" for Memory Care (which was not the plan we had agreed to). She only had a small area in which to roam, and one little patio area with a view of a wall. They told us that it would be a provisional stay in Memory Care, but then we were told that it would be best if she remained in that unit.

At Buena Vista Manor House, she has a much bigger room and can roam the entire building (two floors of activity rooms, a library, TV room, sitting room and 3 pianos to choose from to play). There is a very large enclosed area in front of the building, so the residents can sit or walk outside without the risk of wandering off the property. There are also beautiful views of the city and a really nice park. She can even have her cat, Zoe, who wasn't allowed in the Memory Care unit at the previous facility. And it's actually much *cheaper* than that first facility was.

Here is her new contact info:

Heloise Rathbone  
c/o Buena Vista Manor House  
399 Buena Vista East, #4003  
San Francisco, CA 94117

*Phone: 415-863-1721 (this is a direct line to her room). She would enjoy hearing from her friends in Brooklyn Meeting.*

### **Adult Religious Education Meeting: Talking Aloud, Exploring the Silence**

On First Day, January 17, Friends and attenders gathered in the Meeting room to talk about their relationship with silent worship. The silence of a Quaker meeting is a rich, intriguing and sometimes elusive process, and sharing the experience can be a helpful way of understanding and refining the practice for beginners and veterans alike.

The discussion was hosted by Andrés Colapinto of the Adult Religious Education subcommittee of Ministry and Council. Peter Laughter, Patricia Glynn and Nathan Shields were invited to open the discussion with descriptions of their own practices, and several other members also shared their experiences. The notes below elucidate some of the central ideas that emerged during this wide-ranging discussion.

**The role of the body in experiencing silence:** Patricia Glynn noted that if she is having any trouble focusing at all, she first checks in with her body. Sitting upright, grounding the feet, following the breath and noticing tension and trying to release it are techniques that several people use to get more centered at the beginning of Meeting for Worship.

**The relationship between life inside and out of the Meeting:** All three speakers noted the effect that daily practice has on their experience within Meeting for Worship. A harried week could easily carry over into the quality of their sitting, but often they found greater resonance if they had spent time doing spiritual reading and other forms of intentional questioning. What is read or heard or considered during the week is filtered through the Meeting.

**The Meeting as a space for healing:** Linda Clark and Patricia Glynn noted that the process of worship is deeply connected to a process of healing, whether physical or spiritual. The act of connecting to something bigger than oneself within community includes a process of understanding one's experience that can bring resolution and transformation.

**On messages:** There are many forms in which messages come. But as regards determining what to say, one Friend offered these guidelines: What is the message? Is it something that

needs to be said now? Is it something that needs to be said by me?

**Worship as investigation:** A unique characteristic of Brooklyn Monthly Meeting is the way members strive to describe the thing they connect to, in their own words. Some say "God" (sometimes hesitantly), some describe a "force," some call it "light" or "presence," and some focus on the centrality of Christ or on Buddhist or other mystical teachings. What they all share in common, perhaps, is a search for greater meaning, connection and understanding.

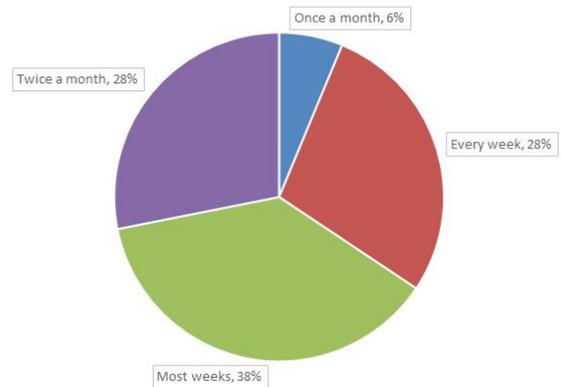
-- Catherine Despont

## A Spiritual Survey from the Spirits Class

For the First Day School Spirits class, Meeting for Worship is a little mysterious: What are Friends thinking about, what do they believe and what calls them there? Teacher Julie Glynn explained to the students that because they spend a lot of time wondering about these questions, the best way to find out was to ask. She then worked with the students to design a survey, similar to one that the Spirits class had conducted about 10 years ago, that would help them understand the spiritual beliefs and practices of the

Friends who attend the Brooklyn Monthly Meeting. The class placed the survey online in November, e-mailed the link to the Brooklyn Meeting e-mail list and waited for responses.

How often do you go to Meeting?

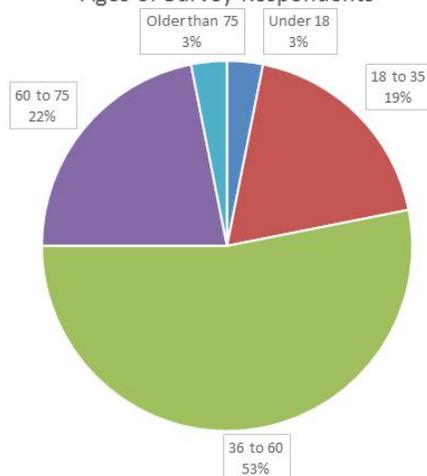


33 responses were received, and some of the responses were not surprising: 94 percent of the respondents said that they attend Brooklyn Meeting, and 82 percent consider themselves Quaker. Other results were more unexpected, however. For instance, although the history of the Quaker faith is rooted in Christianity, only 30 percent of respondents answered "Yes" when asked if they consider themselves Christian. 48 percent said "No", while 18 percent said that it was "Hard to answer yes or no."

Although 85 percent of respondents were raised in a religious tradition, only 27 percent had been raised in the Quaker tradition (either on its own or in combination with another religion). People came to Quakerism at ages ranging from infancy to over 55.

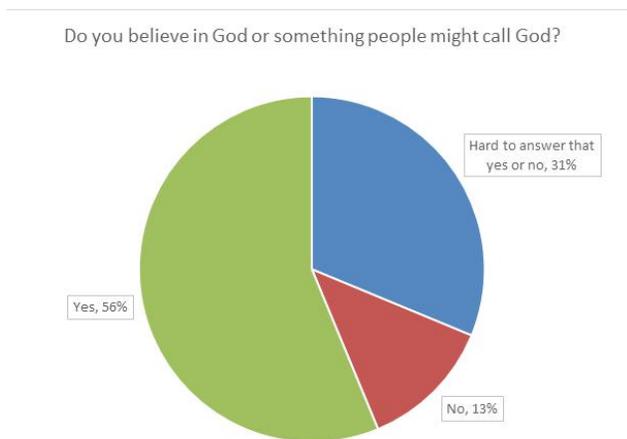
A survey question on inspirational reading produced an extensive list for the Spirits -- and anyone else -- looking for spiritual wisdom. The texts that respondents cited included not just *Faith and Practice*, the Bible and the writings of George Fox, but also Kahlil Gibran, Parker Palmer, bell hooks, Thich Naht Hanh and the Dalai Lama, among others. Similarly, the survey offered plenty of insight for Spirits looking to learn what to do during Meeting. The

Ages of Survey Respondents



students asked what respondents do physically and mentally in Meeting for Worship. Many respondents offered some variation on “clear your mind” as well as guidance on finding one’s breath, thinking about the Light, listening for God and using a mantra.

The Spirits are still deciding what to do with all of the information they’ve discovered; they may even make a movie based on the results. In the meantime, though, the survey is still open for anyone who would like to share their spiritual insights. Visit: <http://bit.ly/205WNAu>



### Losing Our Minds

In other news from First Day School, there are currently two classes instead of three. This is because many members of the Minds class (ages 7-9) decided they would prefer to advance to Spirits (ages 10-12) with the older kids. Younger children (ages 4-6) remain in the Bodies class.  
-- *Melissa Cavanaugh*

### Brooklyn Meeting Member Works to Reform Baltimore Criminal Justice System

Through her work with Baltimore Friends Meeting, Katherine Sorel is continuing her long career of

worldwide service. Currently, she is working to bring justice and humanity to Baltimore’s criminal justice system. This ambitious and wide-reaching project began simply, when Quakers from the various Meetings began attending criminal court sessions. From what they saw and the personal contacts they made, serious needs became apparent and ways opened. The Friends became involved with young people and the Public Defender, while exploring the services offered and the need for more. They also researched racial profiling and other problems, advocating for solutions such as expungement and eliminating the “Have you ever been convicted of a felony?” check box on job applications. They have also held vigils and persistently lobbied the state legislature for reforms.  
-- *Molly Rusnak*

### Book Review: The Invention of Wings,

by Sue Monk Kidd

*The Invention of Wings* is a historical novel which brings to life the story of Sarah Grimke and her sister Angelina. The Grimke sisters became famous speakers, advocating for the abolition of slavery.

The story begins when Sarah, on her eleventh birthday, is given a slave. The slave, a girl of about her same age, is named Hetty and known as by the nickname of “Handful”. Sarah despises slavery, even at that early age, attempts to reject the gift on principle. She writes a manumission paper and her father tears it up, insisting that every young woman of her station must have her

own slave. The book alternates between chapters, by Sarah and by Hetty. We may be familiar with the lives of privileged white daughters on a southern plantation, but the hardship of a slave’s life has been papered over with the myth of the kindly plantation owner. In fact, there are numerous acts of hideous cruelty. Hetty, shrunken by years of extreme hard work and near starvation, is only half the height of Sarah. Much of the Grimkes’ story is based on historical fact: Kidd has fleshed out mountains of research — facts, figures, dates, letters and articles -- into a believable and elegantly rendered fictional first person account of Sarah's life. But though Hetty actually existed, her story here is almost entirely fabricated. Perhaps because she is mostly a product of Kidd's imagination, the character seems truly inspired.

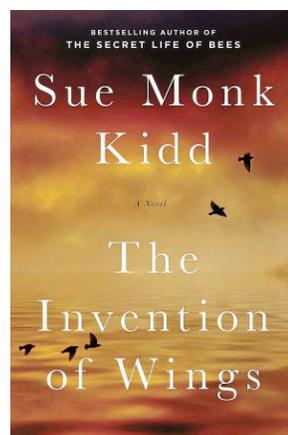
When her father discovers that Sarah has been secretly teaching Hetty to read, he forbids her to go near his library. The daughters of the family are kept in almost as much ignorance as the slaves. Sarah turns to the Quakers, in sympathy with their

abolitionist views. We hear of people converting, but it is amazing how difficult it is for her to walk away from the family religion and adopt the simple dress and ways of the Quaker faith.

There is mention of the colored bench in the Quaker Meeting, where Sarah breaks the barrier and sits with the colored

people. She is severely criticized by the folks in Meeting. Societal pressure from both the Quakers and her family force her to leave Charleston and move up North. Followed by her younger sister, Angelina moves into a life of advocating abolition to women’s groups throughout New England.

-- *Lucy Sikes*





## Quaker Values & End-of-Life Decision Making Workshop

**When:** February 28 after social hour at Brooklyn Meeting, 1-4 p.m.

Consider Quaker values of stewardship, integrity, simplicity, peace, equality and community as they pertain to our choices for end-of-life care. Give yourself and your loved ones the gift of perspective in a supportive environment.

Join with ARCH Visitors to reflect, learn and complete advanced

care directives documents. We will be using the new ARCH Workbook to guide our time together.

These documents are necessary for everyone over 18; therefore this workshop is encouraged for all Friends over 18.

*Participants need to pre-register by February 14. (If we do not use the 28 available registrations, other Meetings will then be invited to complete the roster.) Registrants will be given advanced materials to prepare for the workshop.*

### **A donation of \$10 is suggested**

To register, please contact:  
Electra  
Cummings, [cummings.electra@gmail.com](mailto:cummings.electra@gmail.com)

For more information about the workshop contact:

Yana  
Landowne, [yanaland@gmail.com](mailto:yanaland@gmail.com) 917-684-8784

*ARCH Workbooks will also be available for purchase at the book table*

## Fed by the Spirit

The initial organizing meeting for "Fed by the Spirit" dinner club will take place on third First Day, February 21, 1 PM, in the social hour room. All are welcome, whether you filled out a membership survey or not. Child care and a snack will be provided. This will be a Meeting for Business during which we hope to be led by the spirit toward unity on where, when, and what we want Fed by the Spirit to be. For more information, contact Carl Blumenthal, [carlblumnthl@gmail.com](mailto:carlblumnthl@gmail.com) or (718) 871-3275.

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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 February 22<sup>nd</sup>.

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)*

#### February

#### **February 12-14<sup>th</sup> Powell House: Winter Wonderland**

This annual family-centered weekend has  
become a favorite. Bring yourself, your family,  
and your friends to an open, unprogrammed  
winter weekend at Powell House.

#### **February 21<sup>st</sup> 1:00PM Meetinghouse:**

All are welcome, whether you filled out a  
membership survey or not. Child care and a  
snack will be provided. This will be a Meeting  
for Business during which we hope to be led by  
the spirit toward unity on where, when, and what  
we want Fed by the Spirit to be. For more  
information, contact Carl  
Blumenthal, [carlblumnthl@gmail.com](mailto:carlblumnthl@gmail.com)  
or [\(718\) 871-3275](tel:7188713275).

#### **February 28<sup>th</sup> 1:00PM- 4:00PM Meetinghouse:**

On February 28<sup>th</sup> from 1-4 p.m. Pastoral Care and  
ARCH will be leading a workshop on “Quaker  
Values & End of Life Decision Making.” Anyone  
18 and over is welcome and encouraged to  
attend; a donation of \$10 is suggested. Together,  
we hope to enable each other to make informed  
decisions with the guidance of Friends values.  
**Please register with *Electra Cummings***  
**([cummings.electra@gmail.com](mailto:cummings.electra@gmail.com))**

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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: Melissa Cavanaugh, Catherine Despont, Ben Hill, Molly Rusnak, Lucy Sikes, and Anna White.*

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