



# BROOKLYN MEETING NEWS

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

*brooklynmeeting.org*

**May 2016**

## **The Brooklyn Meeting Webpage is Alive Again!**

Have you ever wanted to see a live calendar of Brooklyn Meeting Community events? Wouldn't it be nice to have a Google Calendar for Brooklyn Meeting events? Well, the website calendar page is live again! It just needs content. Send events to me at: [events@brooklynmeeting.org](mailto:events@brooklynmeeting.org) Please remember to include

- Date
- Time
- Location
- Sponsoring committee (if there is one)
- Contact person

I will also be doing routine updates to the Brooklyn Meeting Webpage ([www.brooklynmeeting.org](http://www.brooklynmeeting.org)) Updated newsletters will be posted on the newsletter page. Lastly, the forwarding email addresses in the newsletter and on the webpage will be corrected periodically.

How can you help?

1. Send me information about Brooklyn Meeting events
2. Let me know if the clerk of your committee has changed
3. Try out the calendar

-- Ben Frisch with the Communications Committee

## **April Meeting for Business Addresses Social and Political Issues**

## **New Members Welcomed**

Adrienne, Ed and Neva Oliver were welcomed into Brooklyn Meeting after the second reading of their letter describing their religious journey. Amy Hundley was also welcomed after the second reading of her letter. The Clerk reported on the Welcoming Dinner for new member Patty Frascatore. Patty plans to organize a Meeting for Healing in the Meetinghouse soon.



Dance is a most unusual, but worthy, form of worship. Once in a long while, a Friend is moved by the Spirit to get up and dance. Here are Yana Landowne and Patricia Glynn worshipfully dancing in the meeting room. *Lucy Sikes*

## **Peace and Social Action Committee's List of Priorities for Friends Committee on Legislation Approved**

Responding to a request by the Friends Committee on National

Legislation for Brooklyn Meeting's legislative priorities, the Peace and Social Action Committee suggested the following concerns: 1. A world free of war and a society with equality and justice for all. 2. A community in which every person's potential can be fulfilled. 3. An Earth restored. The Meeting approved and added the elimination of nuclear arms and the demilitarization of police departments to the list.

## **Brooklyn Meeting Joins in Opposing Limits on Boycotts**

Ken Diamondstone presented a letter, signed by a number of organizations, opposing legislation now before the New York State Legislature to limit the right of groups to boycott as a form of free speech. This issue has come up because some groups wish to boycott Israel to influence better treatment of the Palestinians. The Meeting approves signing this letter.

## **Nominations Approved**

The following Friends were approved for service: John Loza (Quarterly Meeting Nominating Committee),

William Carr (Welcoming Committee), Ben Frisch (Communications Committee), Elizabeth Gilmore (Property Committee).

-- Molly Rusnak

## **April New York Quarterly and Corporation Meetings Do Quaker Business**

George Fox, in founding Quakerism, made a point of not worshipping in fancy buildings with steeples. So Quakers have historically tried to worship plainly and avoid worldly business. Here in New York City we have ended up with no steeples but our “plain” buildings are valuable, old and beautiful landmark structures that require a great deal of worldly business to finance and maintain. At the April Quarterly Meeting, held at Fifteenth Street Meetinghouse in Manhattan, Friends from Morningside, Manhattan, Fifteenth Street, Flushing and Brooklyn Meetings as well as Staten Island Worship Group gathered for worship and a delicious luncheon before settling down to business. Each Meeting reported on its Meetings for Worship, activities and membership. Trustees reported both at the Meeting and the Corporation Meeting. The Clerk, Ann Kjellberg, described the work of the three Trustee subcommittees: Finance (managing investments), Property (overseeing capital projects and maintenance) and Personnel (supervising employees and the General Manager). Trustees also engaged in the separate incorporation of Friends Seminary. Constructing an agreement for this was the major project of the Trustees for this year and is almost completed. It will be followed by a professional review of the properties and their uses which will engage the whole New York Quaker community. The Nominating Committee has been unable to fill several vacancies on Trustees at this time as well as other positions in the Quarter. This caused concern about the functioning of the Nominating Committee as well as of Trustees. The Audit and Budget Committee and Trustees reported that our investments

-- mostly in socially and environmentally responsible entities -- have not performed well this year, similarly to other investors. Documents from this meeting are available on the literature shelf in the library.

-- Molly Rusnak

## **“Visioning” Meeting to be held at Brooklyn Meetinghouse**

On Saturday, May 14, from 10 to 4 all Quarterly Meeting Friends are invited to participate in a meeting in Brooklyn to discern together, using an open space format, what our future as a religious community should be and how it might best be served by our buildings. Professional consultants, engaged by the Trustees, will be present to help implement ideas in the near future.

-- Molly Rusnak

## **The Property Committee Wants Your Voice to be Heard**

Have you ever thought about how you could make better use of our Meetinghouse? How you would improve and/or use the property we own to improve the spiritual lives of our members and attenders? Have you ever wondered why the trustees of Quarterly Meeting don't do something about coordinating the uses of the various properties that our forebearers have thoughtfully organized as a unit? What are your hopes and dreams about making these properties more accessible to members, attenders and the surrounding communities? What are your concerns about the status quo? Do you have ideas about how Quaker values might be applied in making decisions about our real estate? Have you ever thought we could develop more long-term tenancies in addition to or instead of schools? How do you

think our tenancies should be coordinated; best harmonized? If you were a trustee, if you were a member of any of our property committees, how would you seek to prioritize and balance the needs of the varied stakeholders, individuals and groups, in the Quaker Community?

If you have ever thought about any of these questions, here is some good news! Trustees for the Quarter have employed property facilities assessment consultants to help us develop queries and discernment around our concerns for both the immediate and long-term future. At the last Brooklyn Monthly Meeting Property Committee meeting, we met with some of the consultants to talk in general terms. They have outlined a three-phase process: visioning, planning and implementation. The visioning phase will be launched in a very real, tangible way on May 14 -- here at 110 Schemerhorn Street from 10 am until 4 pm -- when all members and attenders of the Quarter are invited to express our needs, our hopes and our visions for ourselves and our posterity. Hope to see you there!

-- Linda Clarke, for the Property Committee

## **New York Yearly Meeting Reports on the Spring Sessions**

Dear Friends,

More than 150 of us gathered in central New Jersey for New York Yearly Meeting's Spring Sessions. Delightful spring-like weather welcomed us before thunderstorms rolled through and brought back winter coat weather.

We enjoyed the warm hospitality of First Baptist Church of Lincoln Gardens and the old quiet of Rahway and Plainfield Meetinghouse. We worked hard. Saturday's agenda brought a fond farewell to Ann

Davidson as she prepares to retire from many fruitful years as Powell House Director. We welcomed our new Powell House Directors, Regina Baird Haag and Dennis Haag, as well as our new Children and Youth Secretary, Melinda Wenner Bradley.

We were reminded on Sunday that our financial life together takes care and attention from all of us. We struggled with an overrun in the expenses related to our preparation for our audit and with new ways of using income from our trust funds. As we move along the road toward greater transparency in our finances and a consolidated statement that includes both trustee-managed funds and our operating account, we are experiencing some bumps. Our vision of a yearly meeting that is accountable and transparent continues to inspire us. We are a bright and committed group of people; accountability starts with each of us and in classic Quaker fashion, trickles up toward God.

We heard a report from our General Secretary ([here](#)) and a report from the Meetings for Discernment Steering Committee ([here](#)). We were encouraged by our 6–12 year-olds to conduct our Sessions without the use of plastic tableware and disposable plastic water bottles; we referred this concern to Sessions Committee for their consideration.

As usual, there was much more. There are over 3000 of us in New York Yearly Meeting, and though we felt as though we were many at Spring Sessions, we were a small portion of us all. I am grateful to those who come to actively share our work, and grateful to all who support it with prayer and concern from afar.

In peace,

-- *Lucinda Antrim, NYYM Clerk*

## **Book Review: The Underground Railroad on Long Island: Friends in Freedom**

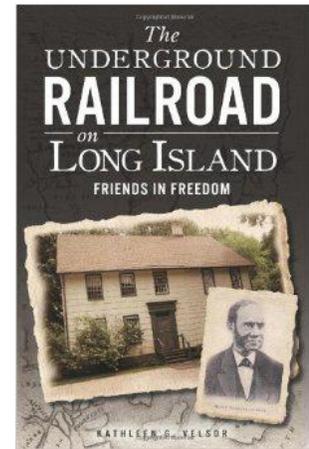
This 2013 volume, slim at 123 pages, nonetheless tells a big story. Author Kathleen Velsor, fascinated with the Underground Railroad since childhood, writes about the role Long Islanders played in this secret for of “mass transit.”

The book is notable not just because Velsor consulted primary sources, but also because she visited many homes still standing on Long Island where Quakers sheltered African-American slaves on their escape from the South. She traveled back and forth from NYC as well as to upstate New York and Canada.

Her descriptions of the nooks and crannies where the “enslaved people” hid could be the background for a mystery novel about the bravery of both groups. Velsor links the discrimination experienced by early Friends and their value of seeing God in everyone to their desire for harboring those on the run from “illegitimate” authority.

Some Quakers initially owned slaves; the Orthodox among them backed gradual emancipation while the Hicksites favored immediate abolition. Their leader, Elias Hicks, personally guided 200 slaves through his home turf of Long Island.

In her epilogue, Velsor states that “The story of how the Quakers of Long Island helped enslaved people to freedom should no longer be subject to speculation.” This is no idle boast. Velsor deconstructs the seamless safety net of intra-marrying Quakers, showing that the Hicksite belief that continuing revelation of the inner Light could foster an activism which was moral as well as political.



This safety net of families and faith helped free Blacks establish their own villages and set up clandestine schools, because well-educated slaves could more easily pass as free Blacks. Velsor even credits Hicks and his cohorts for enabling New York State to abolish slavery in 1827.

But as much as Velsor tries to give (ex-) slaves their voice in her narrative, apparently there aren't much of their words in the historical record (save for the “Story of Levi Trusty”). History may just as easily be written by do-gooders as by the (evil) victors. And what eventually happened to all those Quaker families who risked their lives and those of their guests in the cause of freedom is another mystery.

-- *Carl Blumenthal*

## **Brooklyn Meeting Shared Space: A History**

When the Meetinghouse was first built and occupied in the last century, the area around it was a low income neighborhood. The Meeting wanted to be part of their new community and decided to reach out to the neighborhood children by sharing outdoor space and organizing activities for them.

When my family joined Brooklyn Preparative Meeting of New York Monthly Meeting in 1968, the Meetinghouse was connected to the Brooklyn Friends School Building

(now leased to the Department of Education for an Alternative High School). The space was shared -- the Meeting First Day School met in the school building and Brooklyn Friends School used the meeting kitchen and social room for their cafeteria. Later the adjoining doors were closed and the basement became a First Day School area.

In the 1970s the basement classrooms were used during the week by children in the Meeting's Newgate Project, an outreach program for children of families visiting in the prison. This program was continued until the service was provided by the city.

The next sharing of space was when Mary McDowell Friends School was founded by a member of Brooklyn Meeting for children with learning disabilities. The school originated in Brooklyn Meetinghouse and made heavy use of the classroom and other spaces. First Day School classes struggled to function in classrooms

crowded with rows of desks and cabinets.

After Mary McDowell moved to their new building in the neighborhood, they came back to the meetinghouse for three years during a time when their student body grew rapidly. Again, this resulted in considerable furniture and equipment. In the interval, space was also used by Brooklyn Friends School intermittently (and the Meeting room still is).

When Mary McDowell left for the second time, Brooklyn Property Committee undertook to look for another tenant. They interviewed several schools and leased to our present tenant, New York Explorers. Meanwhile our sister meeting, Fifteenth Street, has contributed to the maintenance of their building by sharing space with Friends Seminary. This arrangement will continue after the school separately incorporates from our Quarterly Meeting. Brooklyn Meeting Property Committee is now considering

whether to continue renting to our present tenants, weighing the advantages and disadvantages. Some of the advantages include contributing to the cost of maintaining our building (as Fifteenth Street is doing), outreach and connection to the community around us and making use of unused space. Some of the disadvantages of sharing are the additional furniture and equipment, wear and tear on the building and a need for communication for Friends who might wish to use the building during the week.

-- Molly Rusnak

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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 May 23<sup>rd</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)*

#### May

**Saturday, May 14<sup>th</sup> 10 AM- 4 PM Brooklyn  
Meetinghouse:**

The Place and Places of New York City Friends  
New York Quarterly Meeting: Please join us for a  
day of discernment about the future of New York  
City Friends and how our spaces can best support  
that future.

**Wednesday, May 18<sup>th</sup> 12:30 PM- 1:30 PM 247  
E 48th St:**

NYQM Members are welcomed to join with  
QUNO for brown bag lunch.

**Saturday, May 28<sup>th</sup> 11:00 AM Quaker  
Cemetery, Prospect Park:**

To remember and celebrate the lives of people we  
have known and loved, the Cemetery Committee  
is supporting a memorial meeting for the New  
York Quarter in the cemetery on Saturday, May  
28. The memorial meeting will begin

at 11:00 followed by a potluck lunch. Come  
prepared for listening and sharing or just to enjoy  
spring in our lovely cemetery. For information  
on how to get there, go to the website of NYQM.

#### June

**Friday, June 17 to Sunday, June 19 NYC:**

Regional Young Adult Concerns Party: For all  
Friends who graduated from High School after  
1990. For updates contact: Emily Provance .

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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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