



# BROOKLYN MEETING NEWS

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

*brooklynmeeting.org*

**July 2016**

## **The Meeting House Outside of Worship**

The Brooklyn Monthly Meeting house has a varied life outside of worship times that helps to support the work of different communities as well as to maintain the costs of the building.

The building's main tenant is a preschool that uses the social room and basement classrooms Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Other regular meetings include the TOUCH AIDS dinners on Monday nights – for which the meeting donates its space -- as well as AA and Al-Anon meetings. Brooklyn Friends School holds its meetings for worship on Wednesday mornings and the social room is occasionally used as the backup space for the Quaker dinner club.

Perhaps most interesting is that many of the wedding rentals come from couples with different religious backgrounds who need a place that will welcome multiple people to officiate the wedding. In this way, it is Quaker practice itself that makes the space unique among other places in the city.

Space can be reserved for Quaker events free of cost with a minimum of approximately three weeks notice. Paid events that require substantial setup, such as weddings, should be requested at least 2-3 months ahead of time. Be aware! A common misconception is that the Meeting House rental rates are radically affordable, but they are, in fact, commensurate with other spaces of its size within close proximity to lower Manhattan.

People who are interested in reserving the space can reach out through the Quarterly Meeting Office at 212-777-8866.  
-- Catherine Despont

## **Young Quaker Party**

On June 19, I looked around Meeting for Worship and saw that there were at least 20 guests. When they stood up to introduce themselves, we learned that they were from all over the Eastern states.

They had come to the Quaker Party. This event, sponsored by the Young Adult Concerns Committee, took place from June 17 through the 19th. The purpose of this event was to pull together Young Adult Friends (YAF) who graduated High School in 1990 and later into a weekend long celebration at 15th Street Meeting in New York City.

Organizers reached out to those YAF who grew up in NY Yearly Meeting, Powell House, Junior Yearly Meeting or local meetings, and have drifted away. They also reached out to our neighbor YAF groups in New England, Philadelphia and Baltimore Yearly Meetings.

Planned activities included a music room, an art room, an experimental

forms of worship room, a play room, a quiet room and a fellowship room. In addition, there were some facilitated activities, exploring Quaker faith and



A circle of Quakers standing by the lake at Silver Bay, surrounded by flowers, birds and the Spirit.

practice, talking about witness, exchanging ideas, and more. Best of all, it was a time to visit with old Friends and make new ones!

They created this Epistle from a collection of tweets sent out by attendees.

*You Are Loved even before You ARRIVE HERE.*

*Care for humanity, courage to move freely*

*The appearance of Spirit in unexpected places, openness, easy intimacy*

*There is beautiful singing coming from the plenary in the meetinghouse. Harmonies when we know the song—but great enthusiasm when we don't*

*What do you do in the world and how does it align or contrast with your Faith? I felt embraced in a way I hadn't expected.*

*We need to challenge our cliché response of talking about love and kindness.*

*I've been away from Quakerism for a long time*

*We need to create safe spaces for people to heal.*

*I felt called to come back.*

*For the first 25ish years of my life the only Quakers I knew were pale skinned folks....here at the Quaker party the people are from many countries, many states, and many cultures. We are all different individuals.*

*-- Lucy Sikes*

## **June Meeting for Business: A Plethora of Reports**

### **Peace and Social Action Committee Recommendations for Donations Are Approved**

PSAC recommended the following donations:

-- \$5000 to the Friends Peace Team in Indonesia to buy land for a Friend's House, construct a school playground and garden and expand the preschool program.

-- \$1750 to Earth Quaker Action Team for a Field Organizer advocating for alternative energy in Philadelphia.

-- \$2500 to DK Holland's Inquiring Minds Program at PS 20 New York Department of Education, which teaches civic engagement to third, fourth and fifth graders through the establishment of "Kid's Councils."

Friends ask that the recipients of grants from the Meeting report on how they used the funds.

### **Brooklyn Meeting Treasurer Reports**

Brooklyn Meeting has received the following donations this year:

113 donations from members totaling \$25,740 and 48 from attenders totaling \$3,680. An additional \$742 has been donated as restricted funds or as supplements budgeted committee.

### **First Day School Committee Reports Fewer Classes in 2015-16**

Due to low enrollment in the intermediate class, First Day School offered two classes: one for the youngest children and one for the older children. Our tenants, The Explorers, cooperated in sharing a classroom on the lower floor. They also purchased a new play structure for our playground in consultation with the First Day School Committee.

### **The Annual Winter Celebration Includes All Ages**

On December 19, more than 70 Friends joined in decorating a Christmas tree as well as cookies and

other crafts, shared a chicken dinner and welcomed Santa Claus bearing gifts for all the children. Music and caroling took place in the Meeting room. Friends welcomed Ella Frederick and her new daughter, Lee, just arrived from China. Parents pitched in to help with the event.

### **Community Dinner Committee Reports on a Busy Year**

This year the Community Dinner Committee reorganized to define and assign tasks: shopping, donations, kitchen, front room duties and organizing volunteers. A new refrigerator greatly improved service. Approximately 65-70 guests attended regularly. Friends were assisted by a variety of volunteers, mainly children, from Brooklyn Friends School, Berkeley Carroll School, Girl Scouts and a Seventh Day Adventist Youth Group, as well as a group of single mothers and children. Second graders from Brooklyn Friends School visited the kitchen and baked desserts.

### **Annual Powell House Retreat Brings Friends, Young and Old, Together in New Ways**

During the weekend of April 29 to May 1, 42 adults and 8 children from Brooklyn Meeting gathered upstate at the New York Yearly Meeting Retreat Center to strengthen and renew their spiritual connection with each other.

Activities included an "Affirmation Exercise" in which participants shared the answer to the question, "What transformation are you going through?" Other experiences included social games, a writing activity, responding to a poem, crafts, hiking, a campfire, collecting from nature and an education session to build understanding of the role of Clearness Committees in Quaker life.

### **Childcare Committee Reports**

The Childcare Committee has provided care for very young children during Meeting for Worship this past school year. It relies on a paid

professional as well as rotating volunteers. The average attendance is six children. The committee is looking for a new professional for next year.

-- Molly Rusnak

## **Two Meetings to Consider the Future Uses of the Meetinghouse**

On successive Wednesdays, Friends gathered to share ideas about the future of Quakers in Brooklyn and how the Meetinghouse can serve that future. This discussion was led by a professional consulting group hired by Quarterly Meeting Trustees.

Generally Friends focused on the social aspects of Quakerism both within the Meeting and in the wider community. Suggestions included environmental improvements in the building, using the Meetinghouse to host community organizations, providing space for the needs of different age groups in the Meeting (from the very young to the old) and modernizing it with technology.

The Meeting will receive a follow-up report on the specifics of these suggestions from the consultants in the near future.

-- Molly Rusnak

## **Quarterly Meeting Friends Consider Future of Quakers and Quaker Properties in New York City**

On Saturday, May 14, Brooklyn Meetinghouse was filled with Friends from around the Quarterly Meeting. They came together for a day of worship and shared their vision of what Quakers' presence in New York should be and how their buildings could support that vision. The format was a combination of all group participation and small groups meeting and reporting back. The

workshop was presented by the "Urban Projects Collaborative/Stone House Group" and sponsored by Quarterly Meeting Trustees.

The workshop was organized around queries based on the testimonies of Simplicity, Peace, Integrity, Community, Equality and Stewardship. They suggested ways that these testimonies can be implemented through planning, decisions, actions and use of spaces with reference to the history of the Meetings.

Ideas and suggestions in both large and small groups centered on the concern that Quakers be more involved with the larger New York City community and that our buildings serve as a means of doing this. Friends brought up activities such as the Newgate Project in Brooklyn Meeting, the homeless shelter at Fifteenth Street, space use by YSOP, the Touch Aids Dinner, the Community Dinner and Peace and Civil Rights witness. It was pointed out that Quakers try to "seed" projects in a small way so that they become larger public or private programs. The Meetings also use their properties to provide space for socially active groups.

The consensus reached by the larger group is that we Quakers implement whatever changes are practical in our properties to expand our community involvement and social action.

Brooklyn Meeting will have a follow-up worship sharing on the future of Brooklyn Meetinghouse on June 15 at 6:00 PM.

-- Molly Rusnak

## **Remembering**

On Saturday, May 28, about forty members and attenders of the Quarterly Meeting gathered at the cemetery in worship to remember our departed Friends. Nature cooperated generously with our mission. Puffy

little white clouds occasionally skipped happily across a robin's egg blue sky. Trees and bushes were in various shades of velvety green and the flowers were in bloom on the knoll. It was a deliciously warm day -- not too dry, not too humid. The earth was soft and yielding beneath our feet. My mind wandered a bit, reflecting on James Lovelock's *Gaia* while at the same time appreciating the little I know about paganism. The day was just that beautiful.

We remembered Friends who are no longer present in the physical world, pronouncing a name when it felt right. Some of us shared memories of departed loved ones aloud, expressing gratitude that their physical remains were nestled here in this beautiful place.

After worship, we enjoyed a wonderful potluck and more fellowship. We reminisced and projected into the future as well, talking about our hopes and dreams for the future of the cemetery and our roles as stewards. Even though I was tired, I was reluctant to leave the beautiful day and this beautiful place where I had been so tenderly comforted.

-- Linda Clarke

## **College Women Then and Now**

As young women from Brooklyn Meeting plan for college next year, while the first woman in our country's history is a candidate for president of the United States, my thoughts turn to my first year of college in 1948-49 and how much has changed since then.

In the first years after World War II, I attended a small liberal arts college in Ohio along with a large number of married veterans financed by the GI Bill. While the college adjusted to the maturity of these veterans living independently, freshmen women lived

a protected existence in their own dormitories. We were required to be in the dormitory at 9 p.m. on weeknights and 10 p.m. on Saturdays. We had to remain on campus on the weekend unless we had written permission from our parents. We had to sign in and out in a book in the Housemother's office.

The college men who were not veterans lived in men's dormitories. They were allowed to go in and out as they wished and, in their second year, to own cars. Of course women of any age were never permitted to own cars.

Women's rules were enforced by a "Board" made up of senior women under the guidance of the Dean of Women. Early in my freshman year I and two friends in the dormitory disobeyed the rules and were caught coming into the dormitory several minutes late. For this infraction we received a number of "demerits" which led to a "Board Call". This was an opportunity for the older women not only to punish us, but to offer personal criticisms as well. I particularly remember being criticized for my bedroom slippers making too much noise when I walked in the hall. I resented this comment, as these were



new slippers specially purchased in honor of my first year of college.  
-- Molly Rusnak

## Notes from the Property Committee

**Phase One of the first floor lobby renovation** is expected to take place this summer. The existing closets will be removed and hooks and new schoolhouse light fixtures will be installed. The plan will be posted in the social room for all to see.

Bathrooms will be painted but the renovations to make them fully accessible will be done in Phase Two, at a future date.

**Refrigerator Reminder** -- Please label everything in the refrigerator with each committee's name and the date it was stored, in order to help us manage its heavy use by committees and other groups. Starting this summer unmarked or improperly labeled items will be thrown out.

-- Elizabeth Gilmore

## News from a Brooklyn Meeting Member Living in Hawaii

*Elaine Warner, who moved away from Brooklyn Meeting more than a decade*

*ago, recently sent news of her life in Hawaii. She can be reached at: quakerelaine@gmail.com*

Even though I get to Brooklyn Meeting only twice a year at most, I recently received the newsletter. I am grateful to call it my home meeting and to learn of the various activities and changes.

I am still able to do "regular" yoga and tai chi classes, but the chair yoga and chair tai chi offerings here are very popular and valuable.

Here is a photo of our Friends Meeting on the Big Island.

Aloha,  
Elaine Warner

## Outdoor Meeting for Worship

For a refreshing break during the week, all are invited to join Downtown Manhattan Meeting's outdoor worship every Thursday at 6:00 pm. We have benches at the Labyrinth in Battery Park, which is between the huge Castle Clinton and

the intersection of Battery Place and West Street. If it's raining, we don't meet, but if the weather is iffy we show up and see how it goes. Through September, you'll bask in Harbor breezes, surrounded by greenery among a few local and visiting Friends. Details: ask Andy von Salis, Barbara

Kuesell or Beth Kelly.

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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 August 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  
6:00 PM, every Thursday, weather permitting  
through September, outdoor worship under  
the Quarterly Meeting's care in Battery Park  
(Manhattan) at the Labyrinth just north of  
Castle Clinton

### 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)***

**July** Summer Sessions at Silverbay. This year's  
**Sunday, July 24, 2016 - 6:00pm - Saturday, July 30, 2016 - 6:00pm:** Summer Sessions theme, based on the NYYM  
Leadings & Priorities, is "Nurturing the Blessed  
Community at Every Age." **July- September 6:00 PM:**  
Outdoor meeting for worship downtown at the  
Labyrinth in Battery Park. Weather permitting.

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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.*

*Drawing by Lucy Sikes*

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