



# BROOKLYN MEETING NEWS

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

*brooklynmeeting.org*

**December 2016**

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## **Seeking Community During Turmoil**

In the weeks since the presidential election, Friends may have noticed that the benches in the Meetinghouse are fuller and the messages are more frequent and impassioned. There have been many introductions at the end of Meeting, from those Friends who are returning after an absence and others who felt called to attend for the first time.

For many people, the election has inspired strong feelings. Seeking community at Meeting is one way to reinforce the values that matter to us. Simplicity. Peace. Integrity. Community. Equality. Stewardship. Reconnecting to the Meeting is also a reminder to find the Light in all people – including those with whom we have political disagreements. It is tempting, in a time of turmoil, to avoid conflict by avoiding dialogue. But withdrawing only leaves us more polarized from those who hoped, with their vote, for a change that can move our country forward. We can seek common ground with those who are hoping for a greater voice in a

political system that they believe has excluded and failed them. At the same time, we can look at the actions of Quakers throughout history -- and into the present -- for inspiration. It is possible that we are facing a time of great injustice in our



nation. When we hear talk of registering Muslims or taking rights away from immigrants, we can look to the examples of Quakers during World War II who provided aid and support to the Japanese-Americans forced into internment camps. We can draw on a long history of social action to stand up to those who want to return to a time when it was acceptable to treat women as less than men, Muslims as less than Christians, people of color as less than white people, LGBTQ people as less than straight people. With those beliefs, there can be no common ground. In our communities, in our schools, in local government, on our streets, in social media, we will say over and over: No.

We come together to keep finding our way forward during a difficult time. Our best hope is that the Trump presidency will not go down in the history books as a great drag backward on the social progress that the U.S. has made since the Civil

Rights era. Perhaps it can be a catalyst for a progressive new dawn, born from the quiet resistance of those who will not accept changes that are driven by hate.

*-- Melissa Cavanaugh*

## **Keeping Our Elders in the Community**

Facilitated by Callie Janoff, New York Yearly Meeting ARCH (Aging, Resources, Caring and Help) director, a meeting on keeping our elders in the community was held in Brooklyn on Saturday, November 18. This retreat meeting was organized and led by members of the group of people from all over New York Quarterly Meeting who have been worshipping with a concern for how we grow old with grace in New York City. We started with review of the group's worship over the last year, beginning with an analysis of the number of relationships it takes to develop the kind of caring network we need as we

age: 1000 acquaintances might become 100 friends and they might become 10 very close friends. Members of the group shared their realization that a lack of trust keeps us isolated and inhibits those caring relationships from deepening. We also heard about some ideas for areas to focus our interests: Providing service, creating a community center and developing housing options. Pat Doyle of Kendal on Hudson shared with us the breadth of models for providing care and housing to seniors that exist today. We heard a history of Quaker housing initiatives in New York City: The Quaker Schools which were built about the same time as the meetings, the Pennington built in 1898, two other homes for low income Quakers in the 1920s and the '40s, Rose Hill Residence in 1990 and the Cedars Residence in the Bronx in 2009. These have ended up not being used by Quakers, because of expense and government regulations. We must build the Quaker identity into the first plans.

Breaking up into smaller groups, both in the morning and in the afternoon, we came up with these ideas:

*We don't know each other well.*

*We elders need to accept our stages on the journey.*

*We need to talk more about death and dying.*

*Build trust by trusting.*

*We fear dependence, separation and needing care.*

*We prize independence, which makes it hard for us to trust.*

*We need trust in each other in order to ask for help.*

*We may need to hire a volunteer coordinator and not rely fully on volunteers, but more of us should take the ARCH training, even those who will need the help.*

*Learn about other institutions that provide elder services.*

*Learn about the organizations, such as Village within a Village.*

*Communications: use existing meeting resources, such as newsletters, Facebook and other social media. We need WIFI in the meeting house.*

*A sub-group will continue to explore goals, action plans, and possibilities around aging concerns. We could look for a planning grant from the NY Quarterly Meeting, and also from the Friends Foundation for the Aging should our interests require funding. Our next meeting will be held on December 14 at 6:30 PM.*

*-- Lucy Sikes*



## **November Meeting for Business: Two Transfers, Committee Reports**

### **Meeting Greeted New Members**

Magnolia Sampson and her daughter, Nedelia, transferring from North Branch Monthly Meeting, Pennsylvania.

Mary Owen transferring from Staten Island Executive Meeting, Staten Island, New York.

Jim Darragh from Westbury Meeting, Westbury, New York

### **Letter of Thanks Received from the Sister of Boyce Bengé**

Janet Turner writes her appreciation for the Memorial Service and the love and support that Brooklyn Meeting gave to Boyce Bengé during his illness and throughout his years of membership in the Meeting.

### **The Committee on Ministry and Counsel Reports on Services and Programs Provided for the Meeting**

The Committee provided Memorial Services for beloved members, Boyce Bengé and Sara Nazimova-Baum. The Committee also organized a Memorial Day on May 28 at the Quaker Cemetery in Prospect Park to remember Friends who have died in recent years. About 40 Friends gathered for worship and a potluck meal.

Members of the Committee were present weekly at Meetings for Worship at 9 and 11 a.m. on First Days and Tuesday evenings.

Holiday cards were sent out in December.

Clearness and support groups were provided for Meeting Friends for the following: Membership, 8 adults and one child; Support for life needs, 6 adults; Ongoing support, as needed, 10 adults.

Two marriages were held under the care of the Meeting.

The Pastoral Care Subcommittee sponsored ARCH training and resources for care-givers and three Care Teams for ill, home-bound and institutionalized Friends.

The Adult Religious Education Subcommittee provided monthly spiritual readings and monthly worship based on a spiritual text. Beginning in October, eight sessions of Quaker Studies will be led by the Committee on First Day afternoons. Twenty five meeting members and attenders participated in the "Spiritual Friends" project, matching individuals and joining in four large group meetings.

To celebrate the Transgender Day of Remembrance, the film *Vagina Monologues* was shared.

A minute was sent to the Orlando, Florida, Friends Meeting in sympathy for the massacre that took place in that city.

Brooklyn Meeting participated in the Gay Pride March in New York City in June.

The Committee granted \$6222 in scholarships for Friends to attend Quaker events, including Summer Sessions of New York Yearly Meeting. This resulted in a budget shortfall. The Meeting authorized an additional \$4000 for Ministry and Counsel to cover this.

-- Molly Rusnak

## **Meeting Property Committee Reports on a Busy Year**

The Property Committee removed the closets in the foyer and replaced them with hooks, also adding hooks to the second floor area. A wall between the childcare room and a classroom was installed and two new fans were provided for the Meeting room. LED lighting was installed where possible. The Committee has a new contractor for replacement windows, as there

were problems with the former proposal.

The Quarterly Meeting has hired a new part time Building Superintendent, Cion Lewis, for the Meetinghouse.

Additional native plants have been planted around the Meetinghouse grounds and a table and chairs, donated by Nancy Black, have been placed in front yard.

The Property Committee is reviewing whether to renew the lease for our present tenants, "The Explorers," a preschool and day-care program.

-- Molly Rusnak

## **Care Relationship Committees for the Brooklyn Quaker Schools Report**

The Annual Appreciation Dinner for staffs of both schools was held with more than 100 guests present. Brooklyn Friends School participated in a "Day of Service" at the Meetinghouse. Both schools joined in a special day of family worship.

-- Molly Rusnak

## **Save the Date: Workshop on Decentering Whiteness**

The Workshop on Decentering Whiteness will take place at our Meetinghouse on Saturday, December 10<sup>th</sup> from 9:00 a.m. until 3:30 p.m. The workshop was recently developed for the Center for the Study of White American Culture (CSWAC) by New York Yearly Meeting's Jeff Hitchcock and Charley Flint. The basic concept of a white-centered society and the evolution of a paradigm for study was begun by Dr. Flint over twenty years ago, in her capacity as a professor of sociology. Other sociologists have

ventured into this area of study over the years, but none have worked so long, consistently or effectively as she has.

"Why should I take this workshop?" you may ask. Forgive me if I speak too plainly, but look at transpired on November 8 and then consider what you might be able to do to bring about change. I can't promise that it will answer all your questions, but this workshop will provide plenty of food for thought. Additionally, Jeff and Charley will be leading the workshop and this is a special opportunity to learn about Decentering straight from the original source. Who knows when they will return to Brooklyn Monthly Meeting? (This is especially pertinent as they have announced their plans for retirement and relocation.)

Registration is open and interest is already very high. For more information and/or to register, go to [www.euroamerican.org](http://www.euroamerican.org). For BMM scholarship applications, contact Inga Schwartzkopf or Linda Clarke.

-- Linda Clarke



## **In Memoriam: Ellen Key Harris-Braun**

*Ellen and her husband Eric attended Brooklyn Meeting over twenty years ago. The two of them*

were married under our care at Wilton Meeting before they joined with Spee and Jens Braun in founding the Quaker intentional community in East Chatham, NY. Many of us at Brooklyn Meeting have been inspired Ellen's blog that detailed her struggle with cancer.

Ellen Key Harris-Braun, 50, of East Chatham, New York, died at home Friday, October 28, 2016. Born in Atlanta, Georgia, she attended high school in Rochester, New York, and graduated summa cum laude from Yale University with a BA in anthropology. A life-long science fiction reader, she turned her honors thesis on the use of anthropological concepts in science fiction into an application to Del Rey Books, the sci-fi division of Random House. There, in the early 90s (before the Web) she began an email newsletter, including writing advice, that ultimately became the independent Online Writing Workshop, which she and her husband, Eric Eugene Harris-Braun, directed. During her last few years at Random House, she was part of a pioneer group in charge of that publisher's online projects.

Ellen was a midwife. She trained as a childbirth instructor after the birth of William, her first child, then became a doula after the birth of Jesse, her second. As she began her midwifery studies, she served first as a public member of the Commission for the

Accreditation of Birth Centers and then as director of data development for the Midwives Alliance of North America's division of research. As a Certified Professional Midwife, she attended home births in Massachusetts and New York, working with River and Mountain Midwives and Local Care Midwifery.

She and Eric designed the data collection software for MANA's statistics website, an ongoing project that recently led to the publication of a landmark study of almost 17,000 planned home births. In 2014 she received the MANA Star Award for her contributions to the profession, and that organization has named its two research awards (one for students, one for practicing midwives) in her honor. In 2015 the Midwifery Institute



of Philadelphia, where she had been pursuing graduate studies, established the Ellen Harris-Braun Midwife Scholar Award and presented the first one to Ellen.

Her love of words and her sharp wit – often described as not TSA-approved

– were relished by her friends and family and have been passed on to her children. Evidence can be found on her blog, World of the Sick/World of the Well, an account of her illness that is at once informative and, almost to the end, a delight to read ([ellen.harris-braun.com](http://ellen.harris-braun.com)).

-- Spee Braun

## Quarterly Meetings for Business on the Calendar

At the New York Quarterly Meeting's October quarterly meeting for business, Friends decided when the next three quarterly meetings for business will be held. They are:

Sunday, **January 22** at Brooklyn Meetinghouse

Sunday, **April 16** at Fifteenth St. Meetinghouse

Saturday, **July 15** at our Cemetery in Prospect Park (or, in case of rain, at Brooklyn Meetinghouse).

*Each event includes morning worship at 11:00, potluck lunch at noon, and meeting for business at 1:00 p.m.*

## New York Yearly Meeting's Fall Sessions: a Recap

Almost 130 Friends gathered for New York Yearly Meeting's Fall Sessions this past month, in light-filled space in White Plains and Scarsdale.

Friday evening we circled together to hear stories. One, the story of the Revolutionary War-era visit of the Native Americans to the meeting for worship at Easton, reminded us that God is with us and "shall cover thee with his feathers and under his wings shalt thou trust" (Psalm 91). You can read a version of the Easton story here: <http://www.qjs.net/~daruma/features.html>. Deep worship bred peace then, and over the weekend, in a time of change and fear in our country, our

worship together grounded us in peace again. We have a tremendous gift, Friends: we know and practice the way to the peace that invited the Native Americans to lean their quivers against the meetinghouse wall in 1775, and we know and practice it now. We offer a place not just of refuge but of deep connection to reality, both beyond and within us all. It is visible, palpable, alive. As one young woman said after business on Sunday, "I was quaking." Let us share, be nurtured by, and celebrate that Spirit.

We began our meeting for worship with concern for business on Saturday with ministry brought by our General Secretary, Christopher Sammond, in the aftermath of the presidential election. Then, in small groups, we spoke of our responses, answering the question Christopher posed: "In what do you trust?" Jeffrey Aaron closed this special time together with "A Song of Peace." From this centered, though for many of us grief-filled, space, we worshiped over the business before us. Among many other things, we approved the 2017 Budget, encouraged Friends from across the Yearly Meeting to contact the Ad Hoc Committee on Staff Structure with ideas and thoughts about our staffing

in the light of our General Secretary's resignation next summer, and approved a minute in support of the Standing Rock Sioux (see elsewhere in this issue). We revised our Faith and Practice's section on covenant relationships; as our minutes report, "Friends spoke to the joy and timeliness of the approval of this inclusive and non-judgmental expression of our faith."

It was good to be together, Friends, and I invite you to join together again in worship at New York Yearly Meeting's Spring Sessions, March 31 – April 2, 2017, on Long Island. We will also have a chance to be together as a Yearly Meeting body at the Meeting for Discernment, March 11 at Poplar Ridge Meeting, a time of deep, extended, nourishing worship.

In peace,

*Lucinda Antrim  
Clerk, New York Yearly Meeting*

## **New York Yearly Meeting Approves Minute Regarding the Standing Rock Sioux**

On November 12, New York Yearly Meeting took a public position on the dispute involving the Standing Rock Sioux and a proposed pipe-line under their traditional lands.

An excerpt from the New York Yearly Meeting Minute:

*Friends have had a particular concern for the relations between European settlers on this continent and its First Nations beginning with our founder, George Fox's encounters with native inhabitants during his North American travels in the 1680s and the founding of Pennsylvania. New York Yearly Meeting has had a standing Indian Affairs Committee since the 1590s and maintains warm relations with Native Nations and Peoples to this day.*

*We stand beside our First Nation brothers and sisters in insisting that the legal and treaty rights of the Standing Rock Sioux must be honored and must not be violated by the construction of a pipe-line."*

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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 December 19<sup>th</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)***

### December

**December 17:** Brooklyn Meeting Winter  
Celebration. Celebrate with Brooklyn Meeting at  
the meetinghouse. Cookies! Santa!

**December 30- January 1 :** “Cherish Family and  
Friends” Celebrate New Years with your family  
and friends at Powell House. Go to  
[powellhouse.org](http://powellhouse.org) for more info!

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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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