



Brooklyn Meeting News

Brooklyn Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends • brooklynmeeting.org

February 2018

Friend Lucy Sykes' Burial

A hundred years ago, Lucy would have been called a “naturalist.” Today we might characterize her as an “environmentalist.” Neither of those words actually convey how much Lucy loved nature in all its aspects. You only need to look at a few of her paintings to appreciate how much she embraced nature on a deep level. An extraordinary landscape artist, trees and forests and ponds and puddles and skies and clouds and falling rain all show up in her paintings in multiple variations. One of the ways she carried her love of nature into her daily life was by eschewing florists and bringing beautiful things from the natural environment into living spaces and showing them in original displays. Another way was mindful walking. Whether in her neighborhood or in a nature preserve she loved to be in the natural world and constantly sought to incorporate it into our daily lives.

It came as no surprise to learn that Lucy advocated for green burials. Well, actually, when she first mentioned it to me I was surprised to learn that there was something called “green burial.” This was about fifteen or twenty years ago, when few of us were talking about death openly and freely as we do today, let alone what to do with our mortal remains. But there she was, talking about it. Freely and openly. Whether you wanted to hear it or not. It's fair to say she was *advocating*. She said that embalming was putting more chemicals into the earth. Cremation was an enormous waste of energy. Caskets were wasteful; furthermore they merely delayed the inevitable (and highly desirable) natural return of the body's elements to the earth. Green burial, while gaining in popularity, is still not

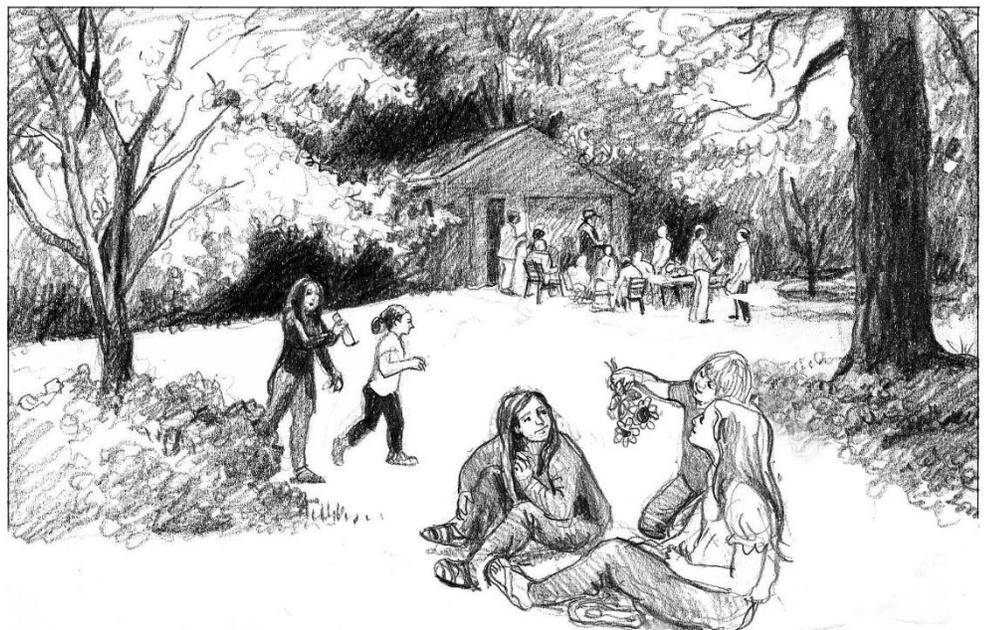
readily available. During the last year, we discovered a monthly event at Greenwood Cemetery called “Death Cafe.” A modern adaptation of some Victorian Salons, we munched cookies and sipped herbal tea before meeting in a large group (which later broke into smaller groups) to talk about our experiences, hopes and fears surrounding death. We were glad to learn that the undertaker who leads these events is willing and able to conduct green burials.

The day before Lucy was interred, it seemed like it snowed all day, but the weatherman on Channel 12 said we had accumulated less than two inches. “Hyper Local News.” They should know. I stayed inside and watched much of it from my window. It was so beautiful while falling, these big, soft, fat flakes. When the snow blowers took a break, you could experience that special hush that

accompanies a good big, soft, fat flake snowfall.

When we got to the cemetery on Sunday, the snow had begun to melt but most of the ground was still covered with snow. Some of the trees, especially the firs, still held some snow. Here, near an open grave with wood planks laid across it, approximately thirty of us gathered. That special hush abounded, even through the conversations that sprang up from time to time. Though the temperature was in the forties, there were occasional bursts of wind, throwing a little snow from the trees in my face. I had hoped to see a winged creature, but I only saw a dead leaf flutter to the ground. The sky was blue and the shining sun gave a starkness to the snowy cover.

Comforted in the knowledge that Lucy's remains were faithfully returned to the earth in alignment with



her wishes, we lined up on both sides of the path from the access road to the grave.

Wrapped in an ivory-colored shroud and laid upon a wooden platform, Lucy's body was carried from the hearse to the open grave by six men and laid upon the wood planks. Her two children each spoke a few tender words. One of them mentioned how much Lucy loved the simplicity and silence of our meeting for worship, and we were invited to speak as well. Someone did speak but I could not hear what she said. Following silent worship, each of her children placed some green branches from Lucy's large house plants upon her shroud while a trumpet softly played. Then some planks were removed from the top of the grave and the body was gently lowered into the ground. We

had been given small bunches of rosemary, and we each could have time to spend directly at the foot of the grave to say farewell. We gradually took our departures by twos and threes from Lucy's family members and from one another. Holding onto another Friend's arm as we quietly walked down the hill, I couldn't help but think about how so much of Lucy's life had been devoted to simplicity and how that ministry had endured, literally, until the end. I know she would have liked the way her burial was done.

— Linda Clarke

My Gift to Lucy Durand Sikes

As a member of the communications committee, Lucy was always trying to get me to write articles for our meeting newsletter. Any time we were

at a Quaker function, whether it was a clerk's workshop or contra dance, Lucy would invariably ask me to write a few lines for the newsletter. I always enjoyed my time with Lucy, but I had no interest in putting pen to paper.

In fact, the only time I wrote anything for the newsletter was an article about my father's life. I do regret that I did not assist Lucy with her calling. And I do believe that Lucy felt called upon to make sure that the newsletter was filled with well written articles about Quaker activities and the life of the meeting.

I loved Lucy's messages. They were pearls of wisdom; she felt no need to weave them together for some intricate necklace. I appreciated her brevity and lack of pretention. She could speak volumes in a sentence where others might speak paragraphs and say nothing. Lucy was passionate about the environment, and would go out of her way to make sure to leave a small ecological footprint.

Lucy was one of those rare birds - both an idealist and a pragmatist. When you were with Lucy, she would be fully present and even if she disagreed with you, she would have the presence of mind and spirit to connect with you on a very human level. She would always search for "that of God in everyone," and believed that everyone had some unique gift to share with the world. For the past several years, Lucy was the keeper of the "Light List." If you wanted to have the meeting hold you or a loved one in the light, you could ask for the one in need of healing to be "held in the light" and Lucy would add them to the list. I believe the meeting as a whole needs to be on that list, for our hearts are broken. To know Lucy was to know love, understanding and compassion. She was not a showy person, and maybe for that reason, her light showed so brightly to all who knew her.

So, Lucy, for you I endeavor to write a well thought out article for the meeting's newsletter. It is my gift, one that I hope you are able to receive as you bring your light to another plane of existence. We miss you terribly, but are better for having touched your life, as your life touched ours so deeply.

— Lissa Wolfe

Poetry Corner

Friends are encouraged to share poetry through this monthly newsletter feature. This can take many forms. A number of those who attend meeting write poems; this space is for you to share your poems, perhaps accompanied by a description of your writing process, or a reflection on how the poem connects with Quaker practice, or a note about the inspiration for your work. Or perhaps you have recently been contemplating a poem written by someone else and feel moved to share the poem and/or your reflections with friends. Perhaps you would like to submit a review of a recent volume of poetry, or of a style of poetry that you have been delving into. Poems and commentary for the Poetry Corner are welcomed by email at newsletter@brooklynmeeting.org. Feel free to email or to contact members of the Communications Committee with any questions.

This month, member Stephanie Rauschenbusch shares one of her poems with us.

I SEE MY MOTHER AS A FISH

by Stephanie Rauschenbusch

I. I See My Mother as a Fish

I lug to my mother a heavy pail of sand,
gritty and sticky sand like sugar in a sugarbowl,
to bury her old sour body. I offer her another bucket
that holds the green-brown salt water:
a cascade of fish scales, a Chinese jade grave suit,
so that she will have a mermaid's burial.

II. I See My Mother Lose Her Sea Legs

A persistent thought of death draws her eyes
to the spirit level of the sea's horizon.
She cries out in the terror of falling backwards
off the edge of the world.

III. I See My Mother's Mind as a Paper Oyster

which, when you put it into a glass of water,
does not dissolve but sends up
a sea wrack of paper flowers.

Lucy Sikes, Member of the Communications Committee

On Wednesday, November 29, I sent an email to Lucy Sikes containing the articles that would appear in the December issue of the Brooklyn Monthly Meeting Newsletter. It was Lucy's job to do the layout.

We were running behind schedule, a not uncommon occurrence, and it appeared unlikely that the December issue would not be completed on time. But on December 1, I received an email from Lucy saying that "It has been a maniacal deadline, but the printer is making a miracle. They are going to send it to the meetinghouse this afternoon."

Lucy died the next day, Saturday, December 2nd. And there the newsletter was on First Day December 3, at the meetinghouse. As in so many other aspects of her life, Lucy's commitment to and influence on the communications committee was felt until the very end.

Thank you, Lucy.

— Ben Hill

E-mail Forwarders: "How Do I Send a Message to the Clerk of That Committee?"

Have you ever wondered "How do I reach the clerk of the such-and-such Committee?" Our meeting has a system of email addresses that automatically forward emails to the last known clerk of a specified committee. An email sent to communications-clerk@brooklynmeeting.org will be forwarded to my email address. This is a great system, but we rely on getting updates. Every committee should send an email to nominating-clerk@brooklynmeeting.org and communications-clerk@brooklynmeeting.org giving the name and email address for the committee clerk. It is okay to send two names and email addresses. I can create additional forwarders. Nominating committee sends the communications committee periodic updates about committee clerks. Below is a list of forwarders on file by

which you can reach each committee:

Add "@brooklynmeeting.org" after the following for the email address that will reach the committee clerk:

adult-education-clerk
asst-clerk
asst-recorder
asst-treasurer
bmmcalendar
book-table-clerk
brooklynmaf
calendar
child-care-clerk
clerk
collections-finance-clerk
communications-clerk
community-dinner-clerk
database
events
finance-clerk
first-day-school-clerk
flower-clerk
lgbtq-concerns
library-clerk
ministry-counsel-clerk
newsletter
nominating-clerk
peace-social-action-clerk
property-clerk
retreat
scholarships
schools
social-hour-clerk
treasurer
webmaster
welcoming-clerk
yaf

— Ben Frisch

Book Review: *Quaker Strongholds* Offers Insight Into Our Faith

I suspect I am not unusual in wanting to expand my understanding

of Quakerism. To that end, I try to be a regular user of Brooklyn Meeting's library. I find I have never made a poor choice. One of my latest reads was in quest of finding out more about how Quakers pray. I chose *Quaker Strongholds* by Caroline Stephen. A line from the dust jacket (I know, just don't go there) caught my attention: "This book is one of the clearest visions of our faith."

It's a nice, simple book (in fairly large print, which I appreciate more as I age) describing one person's exploration of the Quaker faith. It's broken into sections covering the basics: the inner light, worship, free ministry, special testimonies, and our calling. I didn't quite find what I was looking for but was not disappointed. As expected, it pointed to new directions.

This is meant to be a book review more than a personal testimony so I will save from commenting on the lack of detail on prayer. Instead, I'll recommend it for its explanation of who Quakers are and what we believe. Stephen starts with the cornerstone of belief, that God communicates directly with each of us, and also describes silent worship. She covers the historical framework, defines terms like "ministry" and "testimonies," and distinguishes between individual and communal beliefs. The book left me feeling I had a basic understanding of Quakerism *and* inspired me to want to learn more, to do more.

Here's what I'm doing: encouraging everyone to share what they've read about Quakerism from our library or any other source. Just as it's not necessary to attend meeting to commune with God, the experience can be much deeper if you do share it with others. I know I would gain a lot more from my readings if I shared them with others. Write a review, suggest a topic for a discussion session, a book for a book club, come up with a new idea and get others involved.

— Heather Loza

From the Archives

"TWO QUAKER CHURCHES FLOURISH IN BROOKLYN. But Primitive Costumes Are No Longer Seen and Ancient Forms are

Modified.”

This was the headline of a 1905 article published in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, the paper of record for the borough, which offers a detailed glimpse into Quaker life at the turn of the last century.

“Forty years ago Brooklyn was very definitely a Quaker town,” the article reads. “Quakerdom and New England Congregationalism came close to having the whip hand. A fair share of the most distinguished families were of Quaker stock.”

Lamenting our waning “picturesqueness,” it describes the declining use of “thee” and “thou” and the tendency toward modern dress: “The garb of the Friends is rapidly being swept off the face of the earth... the quaint neckclothes, old time hats and coats of the men and the strange fangled drab bonnets and gowns of the women are largely things of the past.” The author notes that this sartorial shift is “one of the most notable changes of Brooklyn, though it has come about so gradually that it has caused little comment. Otherwise Quakerdom here has kept wonderfully fresh and strong.” It mentions that our meeting house “dates back to 1834,” noting “very few congregations of Brooklyn antedate it,” and quotes a value of our real-estate “holdings at \$60,000” and our membership at 487, deeming Brooklyn Friends “not numerous, but [...] substantial and faithful,” citing a figure of “not more than 3,000 Quakers” in all of New York state. The article goes on to explain the differences between the Hicksites and the Orthodox and describes in some detail how the services at the Quaker Church on Lafayette Avenue had integrated a pastor - a “trend of the times” - and even an organ (!), further proof of “the modern march onward of the Friends.”

“In the Hicksite meeting more of conservatism will be found. Quakerdom in Brooklyn is very progressive to-day, however. These

are not the Friends’ services of bygone years. It is true that in Schermerhorn street the old style benches remain at the head of the building [...], and each Sabbath morning there seat themselves here the sages of the ‘meeting,’ ‘male and female,’ to speak ‘if the spirit moves’: otherwise to remain silent. No pastor is here and ‘elders’ bring the services to a close

by the two foremost shaking hands.”

The article concludes with a reflection on how Quaker attitudes toward dancing had changed in the last generation and a half: “Some of the prettiest, gayest young

girls of Brooklyn come of the old Quaker stock, and at cotillion [sic] and ball their heels are among the most active and untiring of all of those on the floor.”

This article is among the gems that Linda Gnat-Mullin has unearthed in her research, collected in a new scrapbook in our library. We welcome input from interested members and attenders on how to increase the relevance of our meeting library. Please contact the Library and History Committee, or leave any suggestions in the return box. And watch this space for more news and historical tidbits.

— Mara Faye Lethem

From Newsletters of Years Past

45 years ago:

“A number of Brooklyn Friends contributed greatly — through their presence, their contributions of food and cash, or all three — to a party sponsored by the New York Monthly Meeting Prison Committee for the children of men and women in prisons. The party was held in the Common Room of the Friends Seminary behind the Rutherford Place Meeting House and was attended by about 50 to 75 children and parents. It is hoped that this will be only the first of a series of activities enabling Friends in New York and Brooklyn to

develop an effective outreach program with the families of long-term prisoners — for these are people badly in need, often, of continuing relationships with people who simply care about them and the real problems they face in building and maintaining a family structure when one parent or another is imprisoned for a long term or at a great distance... Following last fall’s roundtable discussion on marriage, divorce, love and sex, some Friends have wondered whether it might not be time for us to begin rethinking the wording of our New York Yearly Meeting’s Advices and Queries on marriage. If this interests you, please speak to Henry Koster or John Barlow.”

30 years ago:

[From a series of questions from John Barlow about Brooklyn Meeting’s financial relationship to the Yearly Meeting, growing out of the December 1987 Meeting for Business]

“What is the commitment of the Monthly Meeting to its Quarterly Meeting and to its Yearly Meeting in the case of disagreements? (a) If a Monthly Meeting gathered for business in a spirit of worship specifically disagrees with a Yearly Meeting policy or procedure and (b) its representatives make this decision known to the Yearly Meeting, and (c) its representatives continue to support the Monthly Meeting position, but (d) a decision is recorded contrary to the Monthly Meeting consensus...is (d) an appropriate action by the Yearly Meeting Committee Clerk? Is the Monthly Meeting morally bound to do other than carefully consider the Yearly Meeting position in such a case?”

5 years ago:

“Two marriages took place under the care of Brooklyn Meeting on 2012: Helen Mullen and Mary Paturelias on November 14 and Seta Taroyan and Doug Van Clief on July 29.”

“Interviews with Larry Jaeger, Boyce Bengé and Martin Norregard have been added to our historical archives. Other interviews are planned. A complete history of the Prospect Park Cemetery is still in progress.”

— compiled by Dan Bodah





What's Going on Here? Advice to Committees on Getting the Word Out

Is your committee running an event that you would like to tell others about? I recommend that you think about outreach. Please consider doing any or all of the following:

- Make an announcement at the rise of worship — this will notify everyone who can stay in the meeting room to hear the announcements.
- Send an email to events@brooklynmeeting.org — this will notify the newsletter and the online calendar at brooklynmeeting.org that you are doing an event.
- Post a graphic and description of your event on the public Facebook site for Brooklyn Meeting. [@BrooklynFriendsMeetingQuaker](https://www.facebook.com/BrooklynFriendsMeetingQuaker) will reach that site. Don't forget to check the page often and click "like" so that Facebook records greater interest in the page.

- Write a brief article for the newsletter and send it to events@brooklynmeeting.org.
- Send a notice of your event to the New York Quarterly Meeting office for inclusion in the Quarterly Meeting calendar. Call Kim at the New York Quarterly Meeting office: 1-212-777-8866.
- Send a notification to the Young Adult Friends using yaf@brooklynmeeting.org.

Dealing with Committee Turnover

Have you ever been on a committee that loses half of its active members in a month? Death and committee rotation has challenged the communications committee — we missed getting out a January newsletter. Fortunately, there is a rich trove of sketches by Lucy Sikes available for our use. But we also need your articles, artwork, and photos. See the guidelines for submissions at the end of the newsletter.

What can a committee do when there is significant turnover? Make a

commitment to meeting in person at a set time. Be transparent about the committee work. Old-timers should explain what they do and why they do it. At the same time, be open to new ideas from new committee members - treasure new insights and perspectives. Be sure to keep agendas and minutes of every meeting. In communications committee, we are keeping our agenda and minutes on a Google document that is shared with every member of the committee. Don't forget that our committees are smaller communities within our Meeting where we can know and be known by one another.

— Ben Frisch

Appreciating Brooklyn Friends School

On Tuesday evening, January 23, Brooklyn Monthly Meeting, under the direction of Care Relations Committee for BFS, hosted an Appreciation Dinner for the Staff & Educators of Brooklyn Friends School.

The event was attended by approximately 50 staff members along with about 10 Brooklyn Monthly Meeting members. We gathered for worship at 5 p.m., followed by dinner at 6 p.m. Tom Buckley and his staff catered the dinner. Tom's skills are every bit as good as any chef of a five-star restaurant. It must be a great bonus to work at BFS and be exposed to Tom's talents for lunch every day. In an effort to keep costs down we have asked that members of our meeting provide desserts. The table was overflowing with goodies; thank you to all members who participated.

The committee made the attempt to have a "Quaker" at each table, answering any questions regarding Quaker worship. Larry Weiss, head of BFS, treated us to a brief history of the school. This year BFS celebrating its 150 year of educating children in a co-ed environment.

— Leslie McCarthy



Submission Guidelines

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. We ask that submissions for the upcoming issue be submitted by the 15th of the month before to allow time for the Communications Committee to prepare the newsletter.

Please send your article, artwork, letter, essay, poem, photograph or other item in an email to newsletter@brooklynmeeting.org.

Contributions should generally be brief — aim for between 150-450

words in length. Please send your newsletter submission as an attached Word document or high-resolution image file.

Keep in mind that all contributions are copy edited and subject to editing for length. Your item thus may appear in the newsletter in slightly modified form.

We look forward to your input in creating a newsletter we all wish to read!

Regularly Scheduled Activities

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

10:45–11:45 AM, Sundays,
September to June. Three
classes, roughly related to age:
Bodies (ages 4-6), Minds (ages
7-9) and Spirits (ages 10-12).

Social Hour

12:00 PM on 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

Outdoor Worship

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

Worship Sharing

10:00 AM, third Sundays, on the
third floor

Prayer Healing Meeting

10:00 AM, fourth Sundays, in
the meeting room

Community Dinner

1:00–3:00 PM (set-up)
3:00–4:00 PM (meal/serving)
4:00–5:00 PM (clean up)
Last Sunday, in the ground-level
dining room
Come for some or all!
Volunteers ARE appreciated for
this monthly dinner for anyone
who wishes a free hot meal.
Children encouraged to
volunteer.

Upcoming Events

Ongoing additions to the Meeting calendar can be seen at <http://www.brooklynmeeting.org/calendar>

Waging Peace: 100 Years of Action

AFSC Exhibit. Jan 27–Mar 17, 2018 at Godwin-Ternbach Museum at Queens College, 65-30 Kissena Blvd., 405 Klapper Hall, Flushing, NY 11367

To submit an event or a change to the list of regularly scheduled activities, email events@brooklynmeeting.org. Inquiries and suggestions about the newsletter can be sent to newsletter@brooklynmeeting.org. The Brooklyn Meeting Newsletter is published by the Communications Committee of Brooklyn Monthly Meeting. Current members: Dan Bodah, Melissa Cavanaugh, Ben Frisch (clerk), Ben Hill, Heather Loza, Leslie McCarthy, and Adam Seigel-Isaacson. Artwork by Lucy Sikes.