

THE NEW ENGLAND FRIEND

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Grace at work

Lee Noel Porter, Monadnock (NH) Monthly Meeting & member of the Faith & Practice Revision Committee

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE SPIRIT-LED? If you talk with Friends serving on the *Faith & Practice* Revision Committee you may hear this consideration at the core of their thoughts and reflections. I took time to step back and to interview my fellow committee members about their experiences as we've worked together. In my conversations with these Friends the common themes were trust, study, and the relationship between worship and work.

There is for many committee members the sense that "all the time one is facing one's own fallibility. That doesn't mean I need reassurance, but my desire to do a good job leads me to understand...how hard this [work] is." Another felt that "Nominating Committee could have chosen almost any sixteen people in the yearly meeting" to do this work "and I guess my faith is that, using a process like this, they would come to something similar." Indeed, there is a piece of this work that is "simply, purely, about receiving others' gifts." The paradox we become aware of is that "it's about each of us giving our own individual contributions, and the Spirit leading the process."

"The way we've been able to come together and work as a committee" has been a pleasure, a surprise, a relief, and a gift. Each person I asked about "high points" responded with gratitude for the group as a group. It's challenging work, and at times we're "especially grateful to be able to come back to the committee" to get perspective, counsel, and to worship. Especially appreciated is the "leadership and extremely thoughtful clerking." "The care that Nominating Committee put into finding us, and our clerk" is credited for gathering people who are willing to listen to each other and to God. We get along, "there has been no rancor, and there is a great deal of respect, as well as genuine affection for each other." As one person mentioned, it's so seldom that you're in a group where you can come to "name others' individual gifts." Working on a committee that is, "so regular and so long-term without significant change in membership allows us to build bonds."

These bonds provide the trust that allows our discussions to go deeper. "It's given me confidence. It's always been hard for me personally to straight-up disagree with someone," but finding the courage to do so has been a gift. People describe "finding my voice." This burgeoning trust allows each of us to speak our

own individual truth in ways that are increasingly clear and tender. Trust is one of the pathways towards a deeper communion.

There has been a great deal of old-fashioned study. When asked what has been difficult, or unexpectedly hard, many mentioned the sheer scale of the project at hand. Some of us can sometimes feel daunted "when I realize that we have a lot of work to do." As a result, we've "done a lot more work. History. Other books of discipline. Quaker writers." We've gone at this "perhaps not with scholarly rigor" but with intensity. "I've done about ten times as much directed reading as I normally do." While all this study means we can feel "up to our eyeballs in words" it's got a clear source: a deep desire that "things not be my own subjective feelings, but be filtered" through the discernment of other Friends. There is a unanimous effort to avoid "personal opinions." "You have to swallow a lot more on this committee. [The question for us is] how to say what's true."

The members of this committee have served Friends in a variety of other ways, so I asked if they had any insights about committee work to share. Consistently, people talked about the relationship between worship and the work. We worship a lot more, "at all levels." The fact that we have "a fairly defined, discrete task" and so have a strong focus helps. "The discussions have been in that other kind of space, of very careful listening, and really profound honoring." "If there's anything I would wish for on other committees it would be to worship more."

Has this work changed us personally? More than one person describes a deepened connection to Quakerism and a quickened spiritual journey. "It's going to call on resources that it'll be interesting to see if I have," said one. Committee members acknowledge wistfully that we tend to do less now for our home meetings. It has been a big part of our lives, especially so this year as the work has come into a new phase. "I'm going to come out of this with a very different understanding of our yearly meeting as a faith community, I just

don't know what that might look like yet." "It's helping me grow. Not sure how." Someone known for listening well said, "I'm going to learn how to listen a whole lot better," and added, "and how to let go. That process is just beginning."



Artwork: G.K. Bugbee ©2003

NEYM *Faith & Practice* Revision

Worship and work: Revising *Faith & Practice*

Jan Hoffman, Mt. Toby (MA) Monthly Meeting & clerk of the Faith & Practice Revision Committee

[*Note: All materials followed by “(web)” are located on the the NEYM website at neym.org/faithandpracticerevision]*

“**W**E’VE MOVED FROM BEING AN amoeba to being a vertebrate!” This exclamation followed our approval of a working skeleton for a revised *Faith & Practice (F&P)* at our January 2005 meeting, after over three years of working together. From our first meeting in the fall of 2001, we agreed to follow the Spirit’s guidance in our work. We also agreed we would need to model that process as we asked for input from monthly meetings. We began by listening to each other’s spiritual experience and learning what gifts and faith we each bring to the committee, sensing both the variety among us and each other’s integrity. In the spirit behind our words we felt a unity strong enough to ground our work. We begin and end each of our ten, day-long meetings a year with substantial worship to feel ourselves as one body, supported by this ground.

We also seek spiritual guidance from NEYM Friends. At the 2002 Sessions we distributed a questionnaire (*web*) that asked what topics were important to meetings and what was needed in this *F&P* revision. We reported what we had heard to the 2003 Sessions (*web*); what we learned from them was invaluable in giving us a sense of the broad outlines of our work.

In 2004 we distributed a draft preface to the revised book. (*web*) We’re grateful to the twenty-five meetings and four individuals that have sent responses thus far, and are open to receiving more.

We’re moved by the spiritual energy and depth of consideration we feel in the responses. In them we found both affirmation for the general direction of our work and some concerns we need to address. One of the four sentences most frequently approved was, “We are called to hear the Spirit, not the words alone, and to release each other to speak of our experiences of the Living Presence in the language that is given to us.” One of the two sentences raising the most concern was, “It presents lives transformed by the Spirit and by discipleship to Jesus Christ, and testimonies rooted in spiritual conviction.” Tune in at Sessions this year to

see the results of our absorbing the varied preface responses and seeking further guidance on text!

While the preface is the first text we have presented to NEYM, we have shared some other fruits of our work.

MATERIAL FOR FUTURE WORK

• **Collection of “substantive” NEYM minutes from 1944-2003.** (*web*) A small group studied past NEYM *Disciplines [F&P]* and reported to the full committee on changes in those *Disciplines* since 1809. Older *Disciplines* consisted of actual minutes of NEYM Session, dated and arranged alphabetically by topic. In order to create a source of NEYM minutes as possible texts for this revision, a working group formed to collect substantive minutes from the years since NEYM’s 1945 unification, annotated by topic and by category. Quoting minutes on a given concern over the years might show continuing revelation at work among us.

• **Catalog of documents on recognition, accountability, and support for gifts and leadings.** (*web*) In questionnaire responses meetings asked for more guidance on this general concern and more detail on the process of recording gifts in the ministry, travel in ministry, denominational endorsement, released Friends, etc. Another working group formed in response to this concern and felt that before any text could be drafted for *F&P*, information and wider exploration were necessary. This catalog lists documents relating to theology, history, and present practice in NEYM on a variety of specific topics within the larger topic. We hope it will provide resources to Friends for a deeper consideration throughout NEYM on how to encourage living out gifts and leadings among us.

MATERIAL TO CIRCULATE IN NEYM

In this case, a working group seasons material to present to the whole committee for approval. Anything we bring to Sessions must be approved by the whole committee.

• **A Peculiar People.** (*web*) An early homework assignment led to the formation of a working group that created and seasoned a document called “A Peculiar People.” We approved forwarding a revised version to the 2003 Sessions, not as text for *F&P*,

but “as a work in progress, to provide a window for the yearly meeting into the work we are doing.”

• **List of possible topics for the revision,** gleaned from questionnaire responses and our own work. (*web*)

• **Draft preface.** (*web*) The work of a group called “Living in the Light” led to our presenting a draft preface to the 2004 Sessions. We felt it was time to submit actual text for the revision, and we hoped comments on the draft would affirm our direction and help us establish principles about language. It is gratifying to see how the process of responding to the preface inspired many meetings to provide opportunities for Friends to express their faith in a great variety of languages.

INTERPLAY OF FAITH AND PROCESS

We spent most of our first year working in full committee. Each of us did homework on a different given topic each month—writing on a variety of topics or responding to questions such as “What is a book of *Faith & Practice*?” In sharing our homework we learned to feel our individual approaches as well as our corporate sense on a given topic. In the process we learned to respect each other’s gifts and perspectives and to accept each other’s comfort or discomfort with different styles of working.

When facing a new topic or approach, some of us want to consider it gradually while others wish to jump right in. Our shorthand for this is “toe-dippers” and “jumpers”. We found some “jumpers” may be tempted to push “toe-dippers” beyond their inclination, and that some “toe-dippers” want “jumpers” to sit patiently with them for a while. We later discovered that some of us are “*ex nihilo* people” who like to let things grow organically from the merest seed, and others like to begin by building on what has already been written.

Words from our minutes show our clarity on connecting practice and faith, and on our respect for each other’s condition: “We are looking for a form for the book that will clearly show the connection between faith and practice. Although we don’t have the final form in mind, we have been experimenting with various approaches and we are waiting for additional clarity. Some of

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us are more comfortable with this waiting than others.”

Through our work thus far, our commitment to show clearly the connection between practice and faith has grown stronger, as has a sense of connecting the present to the past. We are clear on the elements we need to consider for each topical chapter: theology, history, NEYM minutes, process and procedures, queries, and appendices.

We have faith that none of our work will be wasted. We have set aside work on a given topic when continuing felt like going beyond our leading. We have already returned to some of the work we set aside earlier. Now that a working group is drafting a chapter on worship, they are finding a resource in the previous work we did on advices and queries and in drafting the “Peculiar People” document.

When the decision was made to revise

our 1985 *Faith & Practice*, hope was expressed that the spiritual life of the yearly meeting would deepen in the process. As we on the committee have learned to work together and seek the very necessary divine assistance, we have felt our spiritual life deepen. We rejoice in this and in our sense that an increasing number of NEYM Friends are experiencing this deepening as well. We have faith that it will continue.



Artwork: G.K. Bugbee ©2003

Responses to the draft *Faith & Practice* preface

Compiled by Jonathan Vogel-Borne, Editor of The New England Friend

The following is a selected series of comments on the draft preface received from meetings and individuals.

- ¶ Shorten it vastly.
- ¶ Make it longer.
- ¶ The length is just right.
- ¶ Please use the introduction to the 1985 *F&P* and the quotes from the Elders of Balby and William Penn on its reverse.
- ¶ Friends praised the successful and eloquent presentation of the basis of Quaker faith as direct experience with the divine within a community of worshippers.
- ¶ Friends wondered if there was too much attempt to put in content for which there is not enough space to develop fully, and might better be inside the main body of the book.
- ¶ Although we never quite came to unity on what we felt ought to be included, we did come to agree that as it stands the preface tends to have the feel of a having been developed as a “policy” document (and thus can quite rightly be used as a basis for the Committee’s further work) and is perhaps not simple and direct enough for an actual preface.

LANGUAGE

¶ One person writes of his guiding principles: 1) since Friends join and belong to local meetings, this preface is meant to embrace a wide variety of personal beliefs in order to be truly welcoming and inclusive; 2) the term “divinity” represents the spiritual presence known by Friends which speaks to their condition in immediate experience rather than any reified conceptual power; 3) the term “spirit” refers to that

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Draft preface to NEYM Faith & Practice

THIS BOOK IS A WITNESS to the lived faith of Quakers in New England, a devotional resource of encounters with God, and a handbook of procedures. As a witness, it presents glimpses into the unfolding faith and testimony of Friends to their experience and understanding of the Divine. It presents lives transformed by the Spirit and by discipleship to Jesus Christ, and testimonies rooted in spiritual conviction.

As a devotional resource, the book contains records of Quaker spiritual experience which are drawn from the past and reach forward to the present. This experience is rooted in the Judeo-Christian tradition of one God, in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, and in the Christ Spirit. But they all speak to a living mystical experience that can never be completely described. This Faith and Practice honors the variety of spiritual experience among New England Friends, and uses many different terms to name the divine.

Friends know that direct experience of God is possible, and that each person can live in direct relationship with the Divine. We are not unique in this belief. Our more distinctive gift is to understand not only that this capacity is given to every human being, but that an entire community can live in such a relationship. We have experienced that together we can receive divine guidance. What is required is faith, love, and respect as spiritual leadings are tested, nurtured, and upheld.

We recognize that there is dynamic tension between the individual and the community when we hold ourselves open to

divine guidance. The living Word may be offered in terms that do not always resonate with us personally. We are called to hear the Spirit, not the words alone, and to release each other to speak of our experiences of the Living Presence in the language that is given to us.

As a handbook, the book outlines the practices and procedures Friends have found helpful in living lives faithfully centered in the Spirit, both as a religious body and as individuals. It reflects practice which is the result of group discernment. It also holds up a vision of how we are being invited to deepen our communities and bring light to bear on new realities. Our structures and procedures are open to change in responsive obedience to the Inward Teacher.

We are called to be faithful, to listen humbly to God’s voice among the myriad of others calling for our attention, and then to live out the truths we have been shown. Every generation faces its own challenges as it moves from experience and faith into witness. How we respond to the challenges of our generation is the way we take our place in a living, evolving tradition. Living as Quakers requires sympathetic attention to the past and diligent attention to the Spirit and to each other.

In each section we have upheld the standard that practice grows out of experiential faith. When procedural questions arise, this book is designed to serve as a helpful guide for individuals and meetings. Further assistance may be sought from Friends of long experience and known commitment.

Responses to the draft *Faith & Practice* preface (continued)

which “gave forth the Scriptures,” informed the conduct of Jesus himself; and is now available even to us; 4) the figures of speech we employ in talking about ineffable experiences are allowed as metaphors and not capitalized as proper nouns.

¶ We admired your willingness to tackle head on Quakers’ infinite diversity of approaches to the name of God. The method you seem to have settled on—indicating the catholicity of your approach not by naming the difficulty of the task or acknowledging the varieties of understandings and theologies among us which it shadows forth, but by trying to use as great a variety of mutations and permutations of language for the divine as you can, in quick succession—prompted one Friend to say she experienced “capital-letter whiplash.” This remark resonated among us. It’s not just that seeing “spirit” in lower case in one paragraph, capitalized in the next, is anathema to would-be editors. This typographical confusion feels like a metaphor for the perils of attempting to cram ideological complexity and theological heterogeneity into a brief, didactic document. Nuances and clarity are bound to suffer.

INCLUSIVITY, DIVERSITY, UNITY

¶ We realize that, despite our diversity, our meeting does not include the full range of beliefs held in the yearly meeting. We are clear that the beliefs of all New England Friends must be included.

¶ The draft preface...reflects the vitality of NEYM that arises from the dynamic tensions between seekers and seasoned Friends, the Christocentric and universalist, contemplative and social activist, Judeo-Christian and those who are not, individual leadings and corporate discernment, convinced and birthright Friends.

¶ We very much want *F&P* to reflect the experience of both Christ-centered and universalist Friends. Please find a way to lift up the Christ-centered experience in ways that don’t sound prescriptive or exclusionary.

¶ As a meeting more generally oriented to universalism than Christ-centered theology, we appreciate the care that has been taken to express the diverse strains of NEYM Quaker spiritual experience in this proposed preface. Some of us upon first reading the preface, however, felt it was more focused on the Christ-centered approach. Additional readings seem to suggest that that was not the overall intent.

¶ A concern was raised by a few that for

some Friends in New England...their spiritual experience is rooted in their relationship with Christ. A preface which presents this relationship as only relevant to historic Friends experience does not fully honor all Friends experience.

¶ Before we first read the proposed preface to the revised NEYM *F&P*, we were looking forward to a revision that might parallel the poetry and openness of the 1994 revision of Britain Yearly Meeting’s *F&P*. In contrast, this proposed preface sounds narrower than the Religious Society of Friends we joined and continue to experience. To us it sounds not very tolerant of theological diversity, let alone welcoming to it. We and many Friends who, like us, do not identify as Christians, have been warmly and openly welcomed into membership by our monthly meetings. We fully understand our origins in Christianity, and are comfortable with and sympathetic to Christian religious vocabulary and with a traditional Christian entry into and understanding of Quakerism. We do, however, believe that is not the only way to be a Quaker. Some argue that theological diversity will cause the Religious Society of Friends to wither away. Our religious society, however, has been evolving since it was created, and has maintained its membership in the US and the UK as well as or better than other liberal, mainline religions. None of us has the uncanny ability to see into the future. Rather, we have only this moment, the one we now live in, and is it not our urgent task to live lives that speak, in loving, generous, and thoughtful ways, in this precious present? Living Quaker lives, rather than exclusivity and conflict, is the best foundation for a rich and vital future.

¶ We want those holding diverse points of view—Christian, Universalist, non-Theist*, etc.—to feel that they are included in the preface and want to ensure that the chosen devotional passages are representative of all traditions. (*Non-Theists say they use God language, treasure it, understand its intention but don’t think of it as supernatural, rather that it is a human creation.)

SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS

¶ We need to claim our roots in the Bible. The Bible is not mentioned in this document. Also not mentioned: George Fox, Inner Light, “that of God in everyone.”

¶ We would like the preface to emphasize the centrality of the direct experience of God,

rather than opening by talking about books, historical testimonies, and the like. As one Friend said, “What’s important is coming to meeting and worshipping together.”

¶ In paragraph three, gifts of the Spirit as expressed in Galatians 5:22-23 might be quoted. The “faith, love and respect” feel too limited for us.

¶ We felt uneasy with the generalized language in paragraph four—could be more direct, simple. See Jeremiah 23:23-32.

¶ When we speak of the Judeo-Christian tradition we omit the Muslim tradition of one God. Rather than referencing the Judeo-Christian (or Judeo-Christian-Muslim) tradition, could we refer to the God of Abraham?

¶ Several were disappointed that there was no indication of the joy which, as many of us can attest, often accompanies the spiritual discipline of our faith.

¶ “...bring light to bear on new realities...” We need to not get lost in “new realities” but find God’s truth in this new reality. We wonder how this can be more clear. Our question is how do we love one another and not judge each other.

THE PROCESS IS VALUABLE

¶ We are learning to speak and to listen—honestly and openly—about our differences. The opportunities which the *F&P* revision process has given us for deepening our dialogue [on faith] have been a gift.

¶ Friends were appreciative of the thoughtfulness that went into this writing and thank the Committee for opening up this conversation about our beliefs in our meeting. We are looking forward to further discussion of our views of God.

¶ Friends felt that the proposed preface was beautifully written and that they found much richness within it. The exercise of a close and careful corporate consideration of this preface was valuable.

¶ Whatever its ultimate fate, the preface is an extraordinary document as a description of the understandings and evolving insights of your committee. The work that went into it will surely stand you in good stead as you embark on recreating the remarkable anthology we call our *F&P*. It has sparked rich discussion among us. Thank you.

Comments from meetings and individuals on the draft preface are still welcome. Send to Jan Hoffman, 343 West Street, Amherst, MA 01002 • fandp@neym.org

Around the Yearly Meeting

Compiled from monthly meeting newsletters and correspondence by Holly Lapp & Jonathan Vogel-Borne

• **Wellesley (MA) Monthly Meeting (MM)** hosted the longest-ever Junior Yearly Meeting elementary retreat in January when more than 25 inches of snow fell over the weekend. The retreat was extended to Monday since most New England schools were closed because of the snow and non-emergency travel.

In other news, a Political Action Support Group has begun to meet monthly. Among other activities participants will keep a political action journal.

• **Dover (NH) MM** has created an ad hoc Prison Outreach Committee for the purpose of providing spiritual discussion opportunities for the men and women of the Strafford County Jail. Wellesley (MA) MM was invited to make a presentation about their experiences doing similar work in a Massachusetts prison.

In addition Dover MM has restarted their Secret Friend program. Each Sunday for a month each recipient sends a note or small gift or whatever to an adopted secret friend and receives the same.

• **Putney (VT) MM** has approved a minute that they have sent to Friends United Meeting (FUM) indicating their "deep concern regarding the FUM Personnel Policy that states '...marriage is understood to be between one man and one woman.'" Their minute, in part, explains, "We believe this is a view of marriage that is founded on Biblical misinterpretation similar to that which was used not too many years ago to justify slavery." It continues, "Quakerism is about continuing revelation. Your policy appears to reject both continuing revelation and some of our brothers and sisters."

Also, they have arranged with a Brethren church to provide meetings to offer guidance to young people about how to establish one's conscientious objection status.

• **Northampton (MA) MM** Friends will be having a sale and exhibit called "Our Creative Spirit" on Saturday May 7th to raise money for the Assistance Fund. The event will be open to the public.

• **Cambridge (MA) MM** Ministry and Counsel (M&C) facilitated a Sunday afternoon program entitled the "Languages of Our Faith" with a panel presentation, small group reflection and large group sharing. The participants explored how "diversity of

religious language" can "both challenge and enrich us." This program arose from M&C concerns about the draft preface for the new NEYM *Faith & Practice*.

In addition, a group for those over 50 have been meeting regularly for fellowship and reflection as they consider the "blessings and challenges of aging."

• **Framingham (MA) MM** has prepared a one-page brochure for newcomers entitled "What to expect in First Day School and Meeting for Worship." In the First Day School, students have been studying different parts of the Bible this year. The curriculum has included texts from the Old and New Testament that have been brought to life through story-telling and craft activities linked to the texts.

• **Vassalboro (ME) Quarterly Meeting (VQM)** approved a new Gifts and Leading Committee that will change the nominating approach so that it is "primarily focused on recognizing and encouraging gifts and leadings." This new committee will have one or more representatives from each monthly meeting making it much larger than the customary VQM Nominating Committee with only three or four members. Also, VQM has formed an Intervisitation Group that will provide, on a regular basis, a group of "enthusiastic Friends" to visit meetings that invite them.

• **Sandwich (MA) MM** is planning a day-long Quaker gathering at West Falmouth Meetinghouse in June to be devoted to creative expression. Objects and exhibits as well as performance pieces are welcomed. "The purpose of the event is to facilitate sharing among...meetings, to provide outreach to the community, and to give us an excuse to have some fun!"

• **New London (CT) MM** member Virginia Bainbridge was part of an inter-generational group of 37 led by NEYM's Susannah McCandless that attended a work camp from 12/26/04 to 1/4/05 at the Finca La Bella co-op farm south of the Quaker Community of Monteverde in Costa Rica. More than half of the group was NEYM Quakers. The group's main project was to work on a post and beam building but sub-groups also helped on several other projects. Work campers lived with local families and worked side-by-side with co-op members as

they did their daily work including harvesting coffee. Virginia hopes to provide on-going support to a fledgling community artisans group by providing supplies and helping to sell their products.

• **Midcoast (ME) MM** hosted a second-hour discussion attended by about 25 people to "consider the relationship between the Peace & Social Concerns [Committee] and the rest of the meeting." "Some very emotional release" and "inner movement" happened as those gathered explored their "frustrations and confusions" arising from the fact that some people are "led to pursue social activism as their spiritual path" while others "feel the need for a more contemplative approach."

• **New Haven (CT) MM** held a five-hour Saturday workshop to study conflict resolution techniques. Participants learned "many of the steps required to be effective in resolving disagreements" and about different conflict management styles. "Active listening" techniques were introduced as well as having discussions about what can block good listening and "how anger manifests itself in our bodies."

• **West Falmouth Preparative (MA) MM** explored how to do Quaker business in an evening workshop facilitated by Deanna Chase, member of Westport (MA) MM and former Clerk of NEYM. Those attending explored effective ways to conduct business so that Quaker business sessions are better able to "learn what God is calling us to do" and to "follow the leadings of the Spirit."

• **Worcester-Pleasant Street (MA) MM** has held a session "regarding our vision for the meetinghouse" as it considers "growing the meeting." Under consideration are remodeling the existing Meetinghouse, purchasing and renovating other sites or building a new structure at a new site.



Worcester-Pleasant Street Meetinghouse

In other Quaker news

Recognizing Gifts Workshop

Recognizing Gifts, with Jan Wood, 4/29-5/1/2005, is co-sponsored by NEYM Ministry & Counsel and Woolman Hill. "During this weekend we will explore the many shapes of giftedness. We will identify some of the ways God's empowerment is flowing through our lives, and we will consider how we can intentionally celebrate and foster our gifts." Contact, Margaret Cooley, 413/774-3431 • margaret@woolmanhill.org

NEYM Student Loans Available

The Student Loan Committee serves the NEYM by offering loans to members and children of members who are attending college. Loans of up to \$3000 per year with a maximum of \$7000 are available. The committee also administers the Anna M. Brown Fund which has a small amount available for children of Quaker farmers to help them attend high school or college. For information, Nancy Marstaller, 32 Catlin Shore Rd., Harpswell, ME 04079 • 207/725-4292 • minotaur@suscom-maine.net

The Oral History Project

The Committee on Aging kicked off its Oral History Project with a workshop on that topic at the 2004 NEYM sessions. The goal of the project is to honor our elderly members and to gain insights and inspiration from the experiences and wisdom of these Friends. The Committee's goal is to empower Friends with the tools to accomplish this end. The Committee will repeat its workshop in 2005 and is considering holding a weekend training session. We are putting together a re-

source packet for those interested in conducting oral interviews. In the meantime, the Committee is seeking information from individuals and monthly meetings who may have already conducted such oral interviews or other forms of experience-sharing. Contact, Karen Will, 227 Girard Ave. Hartford, CT 06105-2234 • 860/232-5253 • kellycpw@aol.com

New England Friends Peace Tax Fund

The New England Friends Peace Tax Fund, established in 1979, assists conscientious tax resisters (see NEYM *Faith & Practice*, pages 186 & 210). Like other peace tax funds, this Fund allows NEYM members and attenders to deposit unpaid taxes, to remove any personal profit from not paying the IRS. If the IRS later seizes the money owed, the Fund will reimburse the depositor. If the money is not seized, after five years it becomes a completed gift to NEYM for "life-affirming activities consistent with Friends principles." Contact, Ruah Swennerfelt, Burlington (VT) MM, Fund Administrator, 802/425-3377 • ruah@QuakerEarthcare.org

Woolman Hill SmorgasBoard

From Tuesday, 5/31 to Thursday, 6/2/05 come hang out with Friends at Woolman Hill. Find out what floats our boats, what makes us tick, what dreams we're chasing. Help with projects around the Hill (trail-mapping? garden-tending? bird-watching? snack-eating?), relax into the quiet sanctuary of our community and land, lead an interest group, just plain ol' have a good time. Come for the whole event, drop in for an

afternoon, join us for breakfast—fit it into your schedule." Contact, Judy Hyde, 860/742-8338 • judyhyde@charter.net

Freedom & Justice Crier out soon

This year the Racial, Social, and Economic Justice Committee will be issuing just one issue of the *Freedom and Justice Crier*. Look for the summer edition of the *Crier*.

FGC Minute on LGBTQ Friends

On 10/22/04 the Central Committee of Friends General Conference (FGC) approved the following "Minute on Our Experience of and with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) Friends:"

Our experience has been that spiritual gifts are not distributed with regard to sexual orientation or gender identity. Our experience has been that our Gatherings and Central Committee work have been immeasurably enriched over the years by the full participation and Spirit-guided leadership of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and queer Friends. We will never go back to silencing those voices or suppressing those gifts. Our experience confirms that we are all equal before God, as God made us, and we feel blessed to be engaged in the work of FGC together.

New Head of Lincoln School

Julia Russell Eells has been appointed as the new Head of the Lincoln School in Providence, RI. The K-12 girls school was the sister school to Moses Brown School from 1926-1976 when Moses Brown was a boys school. In 1976, NEYM gave a 99-year lease to the Lincoln School. In 2003, through an assessment process with the Friends Council on Education, Lincoln School once again become a Friends School.

Giving in the Spirit

Carolyn Hilles, Beacon Hill (MA) Monthly Meeting & member of the Development Committee

AS QUAKERS, WE SEEK TO LIVE OUT our faith in our daily actions and decisions. We try to speak truthfully, live in the light of our witnesses, and act in a way that leads to the building of the Kingdom in this world. We also give time and money to Quaker organizations and to other groups which represent our values. A

frequent topic of conversation among Friends is our busy-ness, and how we struggle to discern about where to exert our energy so that it is best used without draining us of the time we need for our families and for our own spiritual refreshment.

What we speak of less often is how we discern about the financial side of our giv-

ing. We know that operating our Quaker offices, publications, and activities is not free, but sometimes we do not consider how our money represents us when we give. Many Friends are familiar with the book *Your Money or Your Life*, in which authors Vickie Robins and Joe Dominguez speak of how to align our spending with our values, and explain

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how our money represents our “life energy.” We have exchanged the precious commodity of time in exchange for money. Money is one avenue for us to align our practical, work lives with our spiritual life—by giving, as we can, to the organizations that are doing the work we want to see done in the world. When we decide where we will give, and how much, we can consider how the organization is, through our giving, an extension of ourselves and our values.

If you’re an active Quaker, you are already on numerous Friends’ mailing lists asking for your financial support and are already discerning how to balance your support of your monthly meeting with these other worthy organizations. You are probably aware that NEYM is now seeking to raise its level of individual giving in order to carry out its work beyond the level supported by corporate monthly meeting payments.

Quakers support their yearly meeting financially for many of the same reasons that they give their time, or in fact, sometimes

because they are not able to give their time. Perhaps they are grateful for the fact that their children have had opportunities for youth programming beyond the First Day School experience in their home meeting (“it is my way of saying thank you for my daughter’s experience at youth retreats and at Sessions,” a GiveMonthly donor told me.) Perhaps they see the yearly meeting as the voice for NEYM Friends in world Quakerism, or in the umbrella organizations such as Friends United Meeting and Friends General Conference, or because they have seen how our staff carry out Friends’ work in our name and help us maintain our unique corporate identity and witness as NEYM Friends.

This giving also places us in direct and meaningful association with the yearly meeting. “When I see that monthly donation on my credit card statement (or my checking account statement), I feel that I am incorporating my personal life in a very direct way with my spiritual life,” said one donor who uses the yearly meeting’s new Give-

Monthly program. Another said, “I like seeing it right in there with my utilities bills and grocery costs. I’m building the yearly meeting into my life in the same fundamental way!”

Whether you give what you able monthly, quarterly or annually to your meeting, your yearly meeting, and other Quaker organizations that you feel particularly close to, you can use your discernment as an opportunity to reflect on how giving money can connect you to a larger purpose. Is there something you might want to set aside or let go of so that your values can be better represented in your giving? Have you thought about putting your meeting and your yearly meeting in your will?

“Show me your checkbook register and I’ll tell you who you are,” someone once said. Who does our checkbook registers (or our credit card statements) say that we are?

For more on the GiveMonthly program, contact Jill Horton-Lyons, 413/253-6713 • accountsmanager@neym.org

Managing Quaker Investments

Mark Orlowski, South Berkshire (MA) Monthly Meeting & member of NEYM Board of Managers of Investments and Permanent Funds

ON A COLD WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON, in a cozy dining room tucked downstairs at Beacon Hill Friends House, ten Friends from around New England have come together to discuss both local and global issues. One might guess that this is a meeting of a peace and social concerns committee—and in a way, it is. However, the medium for advocacy is money—the funds invested under the care of the Yearly Meeting’s Board of Managers of Investments and Permanent Funds.

Through carefully analyzing and researching possible companies in which to invest, the Board of Managers meets to discuss investments that affirm Friends’ testimonies. Primarily, this is accomplished through avoiding companies that deal with war materials, alcoholic beverages, tobacco or gambling, as well as companies that conduct unfair employment practices or pollute the environment.

The NEYM Nominating Committee selects 10 NEYM members who serve staggered

terms of five years each on the Board. The Board manages the Pooled Fund which invests money on behalf of over two dozen NEYM Meetings. With assistance and guidance by The de Burlo Group, a professional advisory firm, we offer participation in a diversified portfolio to Quaker organizations that may not be able to achieve adequate diversification by investing their funds alone.

In 2004, the Pooled Fund began actively voting its shareholder proxies. Concerned shareholders—as owners of corporations—often file social and environmental resolutions for voting by investors at the annual meetings of public companies. Most shareholders who cannot attend the annual meeting submit their votes beforehand via proxy.

Resolutions submitted to shareholders for proxy voting encompass a broad range of issues. Examples of proposals filed with corporations include: adopting the International Labor Standards, providing reports on political donations and compiling annual sustainability reports. The success of these

resolutions in showing broad shareholder support is remarkable. Many resolutions only receive 5 to 25% of the vote. Nevertheless, these votes represent many millions of dollars of investor capital, so a significant portion of resolutions are adopted by management.

Last November, the Board of Managers filed its own shareholder resolution at two large real estate investment trusts (REITs). The resolution asks that they “assess how the company is responding to rising regulatory, competitive, and public pressure to increase energy efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas emissions and report to shareholders.” Through this process, we aim to encourage environmental stewardship at both companies which own and manage over 250 million square feet of commercial real estate in the United States. By conserving precious natural resources each company has the potential to increase long-term shareholder value while also helping reduce the impacts of global warming.

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New England Yearly Meeting of Friends
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Address Service Requested

Please send **ALL FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS** to the Yearly Meeting **DIRECTLY** to the Treasurer, Ken Hoffman, 343 West Street, Amherst, MA 01002

Please let the NEYM Office know of any address changes or monthly meeting membership changes

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THE NEW ENGLAND FRIEND

YEARLY MEETING CALENDAR

April 2005

- 9 Committee Day—hosted by Storrs MM (CT)
- 14–17 FWCC America’s Annual Mtg— Tempe, AZ
- 17 RI–Smithfield QM—Westerly MM (RI)
- 19-21 NE & NY Pastors Gathering—Powell House, NY
- 22–24 Women’s Retreat—Geneva Point, Center Harbor (NH)
- 23 Sandwich QM—W. Falmouth Prep (MA)
- 24 Salem QM—South Shore Prep (MA)
- 29–5/1 M&C Recognizing Gifts—Woolman Hill (MA) [see p. 6]
- 29–5/1 Young Friends retreat—Mt Toby MM (MA)

May 2005

- 1 CT Valley QM—Mt. Toby MM, Leverett, MA
- 1 United Society of Friends Women—Cambridge (MA)
- 6–8 Jr. High Retreat—Portland FM (ME)
- 7 All Maine Gathering—South China Church (ME)
- 9 Coordinating & Advisory—Worcester FM (MA)
- 13–15 Young Friends Seniors retreat—Monadnock MM (NH)
- 14 Permanent Board—Hanover FM (NH)
- 20–22 Elementary Retreat—Woolman Hill, MA
- 21 Ministry & Counsel—Windham FM (ME)
- 29 Dover QM—Dover MM (NH)

June 2005

- 3–5 YAF Retreat—Location, TBA
- 4–5 Northwest QM—Farm & Wilderness (VT)
- 11 Committee Day—hosted by Mt Toby MM (MA)

July 2005

- 2–9 Friends General Conference Gathering—Blacksburg, VA
- 13–17 Friends United Meeting Triennial—Des Moines, IA
- 17 RI–Smithfield QM—Worcester MM (MA)
- 23 Sandwich QM—Allen's Neck MM (MA)
- 23 Falmouth QM—Durham MM (ME)
- 31 Dover QM—North Sandwich FM (NH)

August 2005

- 6–11 YM Sessions—Bryant College, Smithfield RI

September 2005

- 9–11 Vassalboro QM Gathering—Friends Camp, (China ME)
- 10–11 Northwest QM—Farm & Wilderness, VT

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 Note: The *Faith & Practice* Revision Committee generally meets on the last Saturday of each month.

2005 Sessions, Sat. August 6 – Thurs. August 11
—Bryant University, Smithfield, Rhode Island—

Theme: “Go and do likewise” (Luke 10:37)
Keynote: Skip Schiel, Cambridge (MA) Monthly Meeting
Bible Half Hour: Max Carter, North Carolina YM (FUM)