

## Nurturing Quaker children and families

The articles in this issue were written by members of the Christian Education (CE) and Youth Programs Committees. The topics reflect the scope and some of the challenges in supporting First Day Schools and youth programs throughout NEYM. For more information contact:

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### Meeting should be fun!

*Rachel Walker Cogbill, Plainfield (VT) Monthly Meeting*

**H**AVE YOU EVER NOTICED WE ALL MAKE ROOM FOR WHAT we like to do? We like to be welcomed by our friends, feel valued, have important contributions to make, laugh, and create, and come away with new ideas. Children are the same way. On our best months, children make sure their parents come to Meeting, just because Meeting is where they want to be.

Having children enjoy Meeting is not just the business of First Day School. Did you have a simple supper recently? Were the children waiting on the tables or handing out nametags? Passing out the cookies at coffee hour? Sitting in the front row during a slide show? Putting on a puppet show for all to watch? Do your walls have artwork from the children, and your newsletter articles by them? Have you tried a Bright Blue Sunday program with intergenerational worship on the fifth Sunday of the month or a Christmas Pageant led by 4-year-olds as sheep and teenagers playing a carol on the trumpet? Do children share their First Day School projects in the introduction time after Meeting?

Making children a Meeting-wide delight is especially important in small Meetings in which there are few teachers, and perhaps just a few children. The population of children tends to go up and down, and it is hard to predict just how many children of a given age will be there on a particular Sunday. Children cannot count on reuniting with a group of age-mates, so they need to feel eager to be with the adults and other kids of any age. Equally, when there are only a few parents to work with children, it is important for many adults to enjoy reaching out to the youth.

Our small Plainfield Meeting has tried various ways of making bridges to our children. We have a very small First Day School. We counted our numbers as large when we have had 8 to 10 regular children. Right now we have 3 children who come: two first year high school students and one second

grader. We rarely have enough adults to make for two teachers on a Sunday. What keeps us, adults and kids, inspired? Read on for some of our most successful tips for small First Day Schools:

1) Try multi-age projects such as a “Welcome to Our Meeting” booklet, a “Kids Faith & Practice,” fund-raising projects for the Heifer Project (such as a Nobel Peace Prize Winner calendar), and puppet shows of favorite stories from the Bible.

Younger kids can do simple pieces such as illustrations for the books, while older children love to plan and organize.

2) Create continuity with walls displaying student work over time, showing the inspiration and momentum that develops, even without large numbers. Photos and posters, mobiles and games, murals, timelines, and rich collections of books all give a sense of ownership in a community of children.

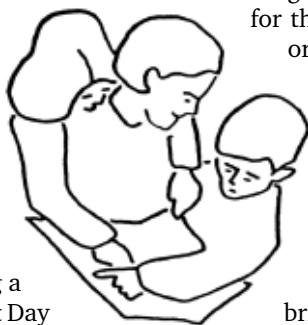
3) Foster intergenerational activities that make bridges between adults and children (see 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph above). Make children feel an important part of the Meeting.

4) Let adults know what is going on. Share your First Day School activities at the end of Meeting during introductions. Lead adults in songs or role-play. The children like to share, and the adults love hearing it.

5) Have children bring their friends to visit First Day School. First Day School numbers may increase, or friends will just be interested to see who Quakers really are.

6) And, finally, something we keep meaning to try, and do not do enough: Create a First Day School (activity) in a Bag: either a story to read or a simple project that any adult could enjoy doing, something that any adult could take down to the basement and try.

Ask other adults to share their interests... the geography of the Holy Land, prison work, cooking, or a visit to Ramallah.



## Annual theme: “Learn to be Peacemakers!”

This year the Christian Education Committee chose an annual theme to guide its work. The theme, Learn to be Peacemakers, provides a framework for the Committee’s vision and activities, including the May Curriculum Workshop and the Children’s Bookstore at Sessions.

**A**S QUAKERS WE ARE CALLED to a witness of peace and justice for all God’s people. How do we teach our children to be peacemakers in their daily lives? In their families? schools? meetings? communities? What does God require of our children and adolescents, and of us as their parents and teachers? How can we promote creative, active methods for chil-

dren to work for peace within the expanding spheres of their daily lives as they grow and mature?

Our theme this year, *Learn To Be Peacemakers*, will help meetings focus on the need for First Day School programs to:

Help our children learn personal worship skills; Teach our children about the Quaker Peace Testimony, including our tradition of public witnessing; Teach the principles and history of pacifism and non-violence; Help our children develop and practice conflict-resolution and other peace-making skills; and, Help our children understand how our/their Quaker religious faith can be effectively translated into visible practice or action.

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual First Day School Curriculum Workshop

Hartford (CT) Meetinghouse, Saturday, 5/6/06, 9am–4pm. *Learn to be Peacemakers: Teaching the Peace Testimony in First Day School and Home*. Workshops topics include:

- History of the Peace Testimony
- Quaker Involvement in the American Peace Movement
- Teaching the Peace Testimony in First Day School
- Teaching the Peace Testimony at Home
- Helping Children to Become World Citizens.

Curriculum, book displays, posters of Religious Education projects, good lunch and snacks.

## Films for families: Nurturing cultural sensitivity

Beth Collea, Wellesley (MA) Friends Meeting Working Group on Racism

**A**S QUAKER PARENTS, ONE OF THE MOST POSITIVE THINGS WE can do is foster a keen cultural sensitivity among our children. The worth of each person, no matter what culture or color, is at the core of our faith. The Working Group on Racism at Wellesley Meeting recommends films as a wonderful way for families to share a window into another culture. Films both provide the information on the breadth of the human family and create an occasion to discuss issues of social justice, bias, and privilege with our children. Three of the many films recommended are listed below. All are available from Netflix.

• **Mad Hot Ballroom Dancing**, suggested for ages 9 and up, is a terrific, fun film about a ballroom dancing program for 5<sup>th</sup> graders in the New York City public schools. Over a ten-week period, 6,000 5<sup>th</sup> graders are taught the merengue, foxtrot, swing, and rumba. The program ends with a festive competition.

The photography beautifully catches the children’s faces. The viewer is swept up in the unalloyed feelings of the children—joy, hope, excitement, and anticipation. *Mad Hot Ballroom Dancing* is like watching a flower bloom. We can see the transformative effects of love and affirmation as the children grow in confidence, poise, and skill.

Latin, Asian, African-American, and white students mix effortlessly. Later, we are told that for many schools, the strongest common element in this sea of diversity is poverty. Insights and laughter abound, but harder realities are never far away. The film deals lovingly with the inevitable loss of some of the teams. Only at the end, are we told that some of the success stories had had serious behavior problems in previous years. The dance program had been

the turning point for these children. Begin your family film festival with *Mad Hot Ballroom Dancing*.

• **Not One Less** takes the viewer to rural China. The scenery is beautiful and the grip of poverty on the village is ever-present. This story features a 13-year old heroine put in charge of a class of children for one month as their substitute teacher. Her family is also poor and she desperately needs the full month’s wages and the bonus which she can only receive if she keeps all of the students in school. When one of the students runs off to the city to find work, she follows him into the unfamiliar urban world. Through sheer tenacity and perseverance, she finds the boy. Our heroine returns to the little village with school supplies donated by city-dwellers.

Parents will need to help a bit more with this movie. There are subtitles, the poverty is more overt, and references to the authoritarian government will need some explanation. The pace of the beginning may seem a little slow for an American audience. Help children to use that time to really observe life in the village. Children ages 9 and up would be able to handle the subtitles, but younger children can certainly enjoy *Not One Less* with more explanations.

• The third movie, **Sugar Cane Alley**, takes place in Martinique in 1930 on a sugar cane plantation. This is a very rich movie and the most complicated of the three. Here, we not only view a foreign culture with overt poverty but add racial tension. Jose, a brilliant 11-year-old boy, and his grandmother live in a shack at the edge of the cane field. He is mischievous and likeable. When he is awarded a scholarship, his grandmother surmounts all obstacles to give him an education and a chance in a world dominated by whites.

**The Working Group on Racism at Wellesley Meeting recommends films as a wonderful way for families to share a window into another culture.**

*Sugar Cane Alley* is powerful and poignant in a way the other two films are not. For example, an old man befriends Jose and gives him a personal description of his family's history from capture in Africa, the voyage to Martinique, his grandfather's sale into slavery, a rebellion and emancipation only to wind up back in life on the plantation. "Now the master becomes the boss." The subtitles may actually help us to stand apart from the film and hear its message afresh.

Children ages 12 and older would be able to appreciate the com-

plexity, manage the subtitles, and lend a perspective to the corporal punishment of children, and the occasional coarse language. As always, if you can preview the film you will be able to assess its appropriateness for younger children in your family. It will also help you to anticipate areas for discussion later.

These three films give us an eye-opening, heart-opening glimpse into the lives of People of Color. Use them to begin your own family film festival!

## Dartmouth at Smith Neck Friends Meeting's after school program

*Sarah Terrell, Dartmouth at Smith Neck (MA) Monthly Meeting*

**A**T SMITH NECK FRIENDS MEETING WE HAVE BEEN EXCITED BY the enthusiasm of our children. Every Tuesday from 4-5:30pm we have been hosting an after-school program. This group was originally geared towards the elementary school students, but many of our middle school students have joined in the fun as well. We have kids from our meeting involved as well as others from the surrounding community.

We begin the afternoon by playing a few games to allow the kids a chance to release their energy. "Fuzzball," an indoor baseball game played with a fluffy ball of yarn, is usually a favorite. Then we center down and sing some worship songs. After the singing, we move into the topic of the day. We often follow a program called "Faith Weaver Friends" that explores different challenges and questions the children face in their daily lives, and how we respond to them from a Christian/Quaker perspective. We look at scripture and discuss how we can apply it to our situations. Sometimes the children journal their thoughts or create a project that reflects what they have learned. The children have some incredible insights and we find that they are very attuned to the Spirit. After the lesson we enjoy a snack and then do a craft that relates to the lesson or the season of the year.

No matter what the topic, they always seem to have a great deal

of fun! We've had joke-telling contests, cookie-baking times, and walk-through mazes. The children also learn how to give back to others through community outreaches. They've gone door to door giving away light bulbs, washing peoples, windshields, and collecting money and relief items for disaster victims. We are really enjoying this ministry and love watching our children grow in their faith.



Photo: Rachel Stacy

*2005 World Gathering of Young Friends participants atop Pendle Hill*

## A new Friends School on the horizon!

*Mary Tracy, Portland (ME) Monthly Meeting*

**F**RRIENDS SCHOOL OF PORTLAND PLANS TO OPEN IN SEPTEMBER 2006 at a special location soon to be announced. The pre-K through eighth grade school arose out of my leading to weave my Quaker faith and practice more closely with my work as an educator. Based on Friends' tenets and values, the school seeks to witness to children and the wider community that the power of love is, indeed, transforming. Small classes, hands-on inquiry, rigor and fun, challenge and acceptance, service and silent worship create the foundation children need to thrive and learn.

The school naturally welcomes students from a wide range of racial, ethnic, religious, socio-economic and family backgrounds. It has drawn together an impressive and dedicated Board of Directors,

has incorporated independently, is recognized and supported by Friends Council on Education, and is taking the necessary steps toward accreditation. Tuition and fees will be moderate for the region with tuition assistance available for qualified families.

Minutes of support have come from the Portland Friends Meeting, the Windham Friends Meeting, and the Falmouth Quarterly Meeting. The school is grateful for the leadings, the openings and the hard work of many supporters that have brought it this far and asks to be held in the Light as it goes forward. Ideas, questions and contributions are welcome. Please contact Mary Tracy, Friends School of Portland, PO Box 10324, Portland, ME 04104 • 207-780-8098 • [info@friendsschoolofportland.org](mailto:info@friendsschoolofportland.org)

## Growing a First Day School program

Laura Hoskins, Putney (VT) Monthly Meeting

SEVERAL YEARS AGO, THE FIRST DAY SCHOOL of Putney Friends Meeting suffered a plight well-known to rural Meetings throughout the Yearly Meeting. Attendance varied from two to maybe even eight children, and then not even the same eight children from week to week. It was frustrating for teachers and parents, alike. In the past, various approaches to First Day School were used and various organizations of teachers were attempted. We tried alternating teachers by weeks or months, teaching children in one large group, or dividing children into two age groups.

Then, all of a sudden it seems, at our annual Meeting retreat in September 2003, an informal brainstorming session was announced. Friends said, "Let's get together and talk about how our First Day School might be more effective." As it turns out, we had several parents of elementary-aged children who were concerned that we were not providing, and our children were not getting, the Quaker and religious education that we wished for them. A storm of energy and commitment came out of that meeting! We began our year with three different age groups, each led by two teachers who either co-taught or alternated First Days. Feeling a bit at sea, we called on Jean McCandless, Clerk of the NEYM Christian Education (CE) Committee, to come help us in developing curriculum. She and Beth Collea, NEYM CE Coordinator, came for a day-long retreat in February and helped immensely to focus our enthusiasm.

By the end of last (academic) year, we were still excited but real-

ized we needed more organization and wanted a more formalized curriculum, if only so that we would not repeat themes and activities from year to year. So, we planned an all-day retreat in July at which we brainstormed a mission for our First Day School programs and a rough structure for looking at a year-long curriculum. In our case, we decided to divide the First Day School year into quarters, each marked by the four major headings within Faith and Practice. Also, given the NEYM CE Committee's recent proposal of a theme per year (this year's being *Learn to be Peacemakers*), we have decided that we will apply that theme to our structure suggested by *Faith and Practice*. Our all-day retreat was not long enough and so we met an additional half-day and had a meeting during Putney Meeting's annual retreat.

This year, our First Day School program is divided into four age groups, three of which have two teachers each. On paper, though not necessarily every First Day, we now have twenty-eight children involved. Where they all came from I can't really say. I am sure our rapid growth has something to do with word of mouth and a confluence of our desires to teach our children well. We have also circulated a questionnaire within our Meeting looking for other Friends and attenders who are willing, able and have some interest or expertise in the various areas of our curriculum. In this way, we ease the task of our teachers but also involve the wider Meeting in the joy and responsibility of caring for the spiritual lives of our children.

## Child Safety: An update on lessons learned

Beth Collea, Religious Education Coordinator, Wellesley (MA) Monthly Meeting & NEYM Christian Education Coordinator

MEETINGS ACROSS NEYM ARE BEGINNING TO TAKE UP the challenge of reducing the risk of child abuse. We are well guided in this by the NEYM Ministry and Counsel Sub Committee's statement on Child Abuse Prevention Policy and Procedures, crafted by Bill How, Chris Jorgenson, and Bill Harley. Quakers find this topic especially difficult and painful because it seems to run counter to our core beliefs of that of God in each person and the value we place on trust in our community. I checked in with some of the Meetings which have been grappling with child safety for an update.

Portland Meeting relies on a deeper intentionality of communication between Friends as the backbone of their approach to child safety. They seem to be doing a good job striking a balance between a clear-eyed look at potential problems and a desire to accept people as they are. Portland Meeting drafted a set of Conflict/Abuse Guidelines some time ago in response to a difficulty between adults. Kate Potter, Co-Clerk, feels that that experience prepared them to face the risk of child abuse in their Meeting.

Portland (ME) Meeting actively uses a floater who checks in on First Day School rooms during class times, requires volunteers to attend for at least 6 months, and have made the nursery door a Dutch door that allows the top to be open and the bottom to be closed. Children are explicitly taught and encouraged to share any troubling

incident with a First Day School teacher. At this point, Portland is not working on a formal screening process for volunteers.

Rebecca Grunko, Religious Education Coordinator at Cambridge (MA) Meeting, reports that they have instituted a process of applications and interviews for volunteers. There still, however, is a need for constant fine-tuning of their system when a teacher is suddenly out sick or a field trip is proposed. Cambridge has relied on the *Reducing the Risk* DVD and guidebooks (ISBN: 1-880562-56-1), available at [reducingtherisk.com](http://reducingtherisk.com)

Rebecca notes, "Talking about these issues is very painful. We all want to live in a world where we don't have to work so hard to protect our children. We want Meeting to be a place where children can run free and build relationships with adults outside of their families. We have found it important, especially as we have tried to educate the broader Meeting community and sought approval of our risk-reduction policy, to continually acknowledge that sorrow."

Fresh Pond (MA) Meeting Ministry and Counsel has been using the *Reducing the Risk* DVD to deepen their understanding and they also carefully read the NEYM report. Melody Brazo, Co-clerk, offered this reflection, "One thing we have noticed is that it is very hard to make ourselves focus on this issue even when we give it ample space on the agenda—there always seems to be something more pressing

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that begs for our time. Our current discipline is to spend at least part of each Ministry and Counsel meeting on this topic.”

Our experience at Wellesley (MA) echoes each of these other Meetings. Like Portland, we use the 6-month rule, a floater, and increased intentional communication. Like Cambridge, we seek a systematic screening process as recommended in *Reducing the Risk*. While we worked on drafting those forms, we came to appreciate, like Fresh Pond, the difficulty of focusing on this painful topic. Upon reflection, it seemed that the very powerful feelings of anger, loss, and sorrow evoked by discussion of child abuse needed to be given voice and held in the Light. To this end, we are joining in a guided worship sharing to give us a spiritual grounding before we confront the specifics of policy and practice.

We offered a similar time of focused sharing on child safety at our last Religious Education Committee meeting. A shift began to occur away from a dichotomy of “to comply or not to comply.” Creative thought is already starting to emerge from the First Day School teachers. In follow-up conversations, Friends returned to our deep value of community as the starting place from which to advocate that we more than meet an external sense of best practice in our work with children at Wellesley Meeting. If we have to “render

unto Caesar,” we want to do it on our own terms. For example, for many Friends, the thought of interviewing volunteers is anathema. To our surprise, teachers newer to the Meeting offered that interviews might have been helpful for them. A lunch meeting or chat over coffee and tea when interest is first shown in Religious Education, long before the need for a screening interview, would actually strengthen our community. If an application for volunteering as a First Day School teacher and interview are needed later, it would happen in the context of a warm relationship among Friends. Perhaps we can live more easily with setting the bar even higher when our values are shaping the expectations, than we can when we feel forced to accept an external standard.

Reducing the risk of child sexual abuse in our Meetings is an ongoing effort that requires commitment and determination. This process is not so much a journey which will end, as a lifestyle change that we need to embrace everyday. There is no final destination that will allow us to return to a time when we rarely gave child safety a thought. The Quaker gifts of deep listening, a willingness to face hard things, creative thought, and our indomitable sense of community will allow our meetings to both create safe environments for our children and do it in a uniquely Friendly way.

## Caring for Quaker youth

### NEYM youth programs: a leading that feeds the Spirit

*Karen Sanchez-Eppler, Clerk, NEYM Youth Programs Committee, Northampton(MA) Monthly Meeting*

**T**HE SPIRIT HANGS UPSIDE DOWN FROM ITS KNEES, SWINGING ON the trees of Woolman Hill; it dresses itself in silly clothes and dances, leaving adolescent self-consciousness behind; it kneads prayer while it kneads bread; it builds dreams out of sculpey; it learns to sit silent and it takes joy in story and song. We have given these gifts to our children in the religiously grounded and centered programs of NEYM, and they have given them right back to us enriched with the vitality of their urgent, young souls. The Spirit always surprises us when it erupts, but that doesn’t mean we didn’t need to plan for it, to type those recipes on colorful cards, to organize the clothing swap, to make judgments about whether it is or isn’t safe to climb that tree....

In NEYM our youth programs have a much longer history than the committee that provides them with support and oversight. We are very blessed by programs that have been carried through the lives of so many children by wonderful staff who feel called to invent and do this work. As these programs proved so important to individual children and families, and to the energy and spirit of the Yearly Meeting as a whole, it became clear that we needed to create organizational structures that would hold this work, be responsible to it and for it, and insure its sustainability beyond the work of individual leadings and leadership. Figuring out how to do this, to build structures that hold without limiting, that enable and don’t obstruct, has been tender and often difficult work, and even with

the best intentions we may get that balance wrong almost as often as we get it right. These challenges take two very immediate forms for the committee now: staffing structures and safety guidelines.

Even before Christel Jorgenson retired from her many rich years as Youth & Education Secretary, Youth Programs started working with Permanent Board and Personnel Committee, and indeed the whole NEYM, to come up with a plan for future youth staffing. The Yearly Meeting does not yet know what that structure will be, but our youth programs are buoyed by the explicit acknowledgement during the Yearly Meeting Day of Discernment, at Sessions last summer, that youth work stands as one of our foremost priorities. In many, many places children are used to make needs visible and compelling—“the poster child”—and yet children receive very little by way of resources. It is important that the Yearly Meeting treats children differently. Throughout the staffing discussions many voices have acknowledged that our youth work is one of the things that the Yearly Meeting does best, and one of the things most cherished by our members, and there has been a strong recognition that these programs require and deserve support. Such recognition is rare in American society (just look at what is happening to our schools) and can’t be taken for granted even among Friends. What decisions we ultimately make as a Yearly Meeting about the structure of our staff will reflect our commitment to children—we can build these dreams too with the sculpey of our money, our time, and our love.

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### NEYM youth programs: a leading that feeds the Spirit (continued)

One of the most basic things asked of our programs is that they keep our children safe. But what does that mean? Our culture has become increasingly anxious about risks to children. In many places that concern has manifest itself less as a concern for happiness, growth, and well-being than as an anxiety about liability. Worry and care are not always the same thing, and we have remained very heedful as we assess and implement safety standards, that one of the most special things about our programs is that young people feel trusted here, held responsible more by the commitments of a community than by imposed rules. Not, of course that we don't need many of those too. Youth Programs Committee has regularized and strengthened the processes of vetting volunteers for youth work, and organized trainings to build community, hone skills and address difficult issues. Ministry and Counsel's sub committee on child abuse prevention has developed a rich and useful set of guidelines addressing the specific risks of child sexual abuse, and the program coordinators and the Committee have begun the process of matching these guidelines to the particular contexts of our programs. We are very aware that most of the dangers to our children take less sen-

sational forms and that we need to keep working on developing better ways of handling all of the real risks that accompany caring for large groups of kids. As we guard against injuries, and fights, and bee stings, and food allergies, and addiction, and sexual abuse, and teasing, and exclusivity, we are striving to make a space where our children can take the risks of emotional honesty and spiritual openness. Thus our goal is to create programs where safety is grounded on trust and respect rather than on surveillance and fear. There is, of course, a balancing act here too. It would be easier, undoubtedly, to say that tree climbing is simply not allowed.

At a Junior High retreat all the young people and staff spent an evening hour writing letters to ourselves about what we need to feed our spirits. At a Junior Yearly Meeting retreat elementary age children wrestled with the question of what it means to have a leading. The seriousness with which these young people address these questions is astounding. They are questions we all need to keep asking. As the Youth Programs Committee struggles over our particular balancing acts we remains clear that this work is a leading that feeds the Spirit.

## Why do I do this?

*Betty Ann Lee, Junior Yearly Meeting Sessions Coordinator, Westport (MA) Monthly Meeting*

**I** AGREED TO DO THE JOB OF THE JUNIOR YEARLY MEETING (JYM) Sessions Coordinator because no one else volunteered no matter how long I waited! Honestly, it was one of those things. I was aware of the job vacancy because of my involvement with Youth Programs Committee, and I was relieved it wouldn't be my responsibility to find the new coordinator. She had left things in good shape; surely someone would step up to the task.

Months rolled by, and there were no volunteers. I had occasional contemplations about the position. Some of my thoughts were: I could do this but it's a lot of work... I would have a good group of staff already on board... but I can't sing and play the guitar....I can't stand another year of Business meeting and my husband will be busy all the time at Sessions anyway....I have some new ideas but it's going to be a lot of work.

### So it went on...

Well, by early spring I had several calls under my belt with the Friendly powers-that-be, and there was a lot of patient waiting going on. I was waiting for someone else to volunteer, and they were waiting for me. Finally I "got it," and gave in, and with trepidation said "yes, I would do it." In hindsight, I realize I am both overly responsible and have never been able to keep my hand down in a group when nobody else was volunteering.

Of course, I was greeted with lots of pats on the back and you-can-do-its. After many conversations, mailings, meetings and recruitment calls, I was on my way. Over the years, my spiritual beliefs and experiences, combined with my personal leadership style and abilities, have helped to shape the role of JYM Sessions Coordinator, my responsibilities, and the way I perform my duties.

Which brings me, after what may appear to be a long-winded introduction, to the spiritual underpinnings or "Why do I do this?"

I wasn't particularly called to the role but was led to seriously

consider it and in spite of my self-doubts and fear, to respond to the leading. Unlike the proverbial horse and water, I was unable to not drink. That water thing again! It flows throughout my spiritual journey. I continually am swept into spiritual floodwaters, sometimes keeping afloat and flowing with the current, while other times, succumbing to my fear and thrashing about and nearly drowning. Repeatedly, I am lifted (or thrown back) onto the shore, somewhat battered and seasoned, my rougher edges smoothed and feeling radiant as a result of my experience of being baptized and confirmed in the living waters and back on course with my God.

I have experienced being held so much in my life! I am trying very hard to do some holding in return. Rather than constantly being overwhelmed by the needs of the world, I have chosen to, hopefully, make some small difference, one person at a time. That's my calling actually, utilizing the gift I've been given—just me.

I pray very hard, humbly and with great humility that I might be true, clear and centered enough to be a vessel for Jesus' love and compassion in the world, that I may utter the words of his mouth, and that I may see and hear through his eyes and ears and respond as he would. I hope and pray that I can make things a little better because I was involved.

### How scary is that? Enter faith and hope!

So there you have it. I was thrown into this and, lo and behold, once I stopped thrashing and started floating, I discovered that it was right. I get to do many things that I like: planning, facilitating, coordinating, advocating, supervising, solving problems, communicating, and being on stage.

On top of this, my favorite and professional experience is working with and empowering adult people. So, by virtue of the infrastructure of JYM Sessions, I am surrounded by a fabulous, gifted group of JYM youthworker staff. They come to Sessions like all of

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us, spent from busy schedules and personal commitments, but excited and open to creating community with one another and with the children through which their ministry unfolds. My primary goal is providing for a safe, loving, spiritual community for all, in which the needs of my staff are met, thus enabling them to do likewise for the children in their care.

My experiences with people have me believing that personal integrity, spirituality, wisdom, communication, team spirit and a sense of humor are all integral qualities needed in order for our community to come together and stay together. Each of us need not have all these qualities, but I need to know that they rest in individuals in the community and can be drawn upon when needed. As the Coordinator, my efforts include attempting to bring out, enhance

or empower these qualities of leadership in my staff for the benefit of our community. I really love doing that and in return I experience being empowered right back! I am always breathless with awe when the miracle of true community happens and we are covered with God's presence.

This has sounded perhaps like terribly serious business, but it is, in fact, often light-hearted, laughter-filled, tender, silly and darn right, hard physical work, too! I return to this work year after year because I have been captured by that physical and spiritual experience of having been in, and held, by the presence of something so wonderfully loving and much larger than myself — illusive, yet waiting to be found again under the right conditions.

So, I keep trying.

## A call to youth ministry

*Gretchen Baker Smith, NEYM Junior High Yearly Meeting Retreat Coordinator, Westport (MA) Monthly Meeting*

**A**FTER ATTENDING A RECENT GATHERING at Beacon Hill (MA) Meeting to consider the future staffing of NEYM, my car broke down. I ended up riding home in a tow truck driven by an Army veteran named Jim. When he pulled my van onto his flatbed, he caught sight of the typical array of Quaker bumper stickers plastered across the back of my car and asked me, "So are you a teacher?" I replied, "Well, actually, I do youth ministry with Quaker children and teenagers." To which he replied, "Oh, you're a preacher!"

I started to protest, but it occurred to me that perhaps this good Samaritan was unknowingly eldering me. And so, as we barreled around the Boston Public Gardens, I gave him a quizzical smile and said, "Well, that's not a word we use a lot, but I guess I am."

My current official title is Junior High Yearly Meeting (JHYM) Retreat Coordinator, a word I've always had trouble with, precisely because it implies neither teacher nor preacher. I fully appreciate the importance of good organizational skills, but they alone do not nurture the spiritual gardens that I believe are at the heart of NEYM's Youth Programs. It is good to plan to have dinner at 6:30pm and then actually have the retreat program flow so that the meal is indeed at that time. It is far more important to be spiritually open and willing to be 20 minutes late when a group activity or holy moment is on the verge of arriving at that place of spiritual communion for which all of our souls yearn.

As a youth minister, I believe I am called to listen deeply for the openings to the Spirit in each young person and group, and to then channel prayer, presence and love in tender and appropriate ways that help them to find that of God in themselves, in each other, and in the world. This is something I do with both a healthy dose of fear as well as a constant stream of prayer and gratitude.

For all of my adult life I have been aware that children and I connect in an immediate, joy-filled way that not everyone else experiences. I used to say that something happens between us. These days, I understand it to be more of a knowing, like two people looking through an open window into each other's hearts and souls. Because I am the adult, I carry great responsibility and mindfulness for being

a safe, gentle, loving, appropriate, and mindful minister of God's love and presence every single moment that we are in relationship. It is an exceedingly serious and tender place to be. At the same time, I do this work with enormous joy, for I believe—except when I panic and momentarily forget—that love abides. The Spirit, God, the One whom I call Christ, called me into this work and is always available and present. Heaven on earth is here.

It is my work to do be faithful, but both the manna and the living water come from the Spirit. The actual words I use in a Friday night circle, a new friendship between two unlikely children, or the

creative process of an art project all may provide the openings. I marvel and celebrate them as they appear, and I feel deep ties of holy and loving fellowship with the other beloved adults who nurture and recognize them, too. No feast can every be as splendidly sweet as the communion that two or more of us on staff share when we mutually witness and savor grace in the moment.

Most of the time, I listen deeply and go gently. But there are times, especially in my role as leader of JHYM Retreats, when I feel myself led to publicly witness to the grace and power and presence of God amongst us—to preach. I believe our young people need us to encourage them into the sacred and gloriously wide plateau of grace and light that living in the Spirit can provide.

As I lay out clear expectations to the junior highers during our opening circles on Friday evenings of retreats, I speak deeply of how our community is a sanctuary, a holy and sacred place of respect, fellowship and Spirit, requiring a leap of faith on behalf of all of us. I share my vision and faith of what we can create and share as a spiritual circle, and I ask them to join me. We only have five weekends a year, plus another five days at Sessions, to renew and sustain a living, breathing spiritual community. As a preacher, it is my honor and burden to stand in the river, joyously, lovingly waving to these beloved teenagers, while saying "Come on in! The water's warm!"

Not all of us are teacher or preachers, but I believe that all of us are called to try to speak our simple truth as *way opens*. Our collective children need us to speak honestly and plainly to them from

*continued next page*

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**Our children need us to speak  
honestly and plainly to them,  
from the centers of our hearts,  
about our spiritual  
experiences...**

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### A call to youth ministry (continued)

the centers of our hearts about our spiritual experiences and relationships with God. It is an astoundingly radical thing to say that we as a body of Friends believe that the Spirit comes among us, giving us words to speak and work to do. Our young people want to hear how this is for each of us.

What do you do to center in worship? How do you stay peaceful when someone is yelling in your face at a rally because you are silently witnessing against the war? How do you reach for fellowship with people in your own meeting whom you aren't easily drawn to like and agree with? And oh, when was the last time you knew the presence of God to be right around you?

It is not the theology or the vocabulary that matters as much as the sincerity and honesty with which the stories and witnessing are shared while being in relationship. This is essential. Our retreat programs are all about community and the new growth and wellsprings

that spiritual friendships can so powerfully foster between and across generations. Of course, letting oneself be known requires that you give time and attention to your own spiritual growth—otherwise, you have nothing to say (after the first time), whether it be in words or actions. Children and teens are incredible radars of authenticity and truthfulness. If you dare to give them an opening into your truth and story, you'd best be ready, for they may well go there, posing questions that have you either rejoicing or yearning for an adult only discussion group!

I love and thrive on the spontaneity and the opportunities for growth and fellowship in this ministry and am so grateful for the community of adults with whom I do this work. There is so much life and joy here. I stand in the river, dear Friends, urging you to consider jumping in, too. Come in! The water is so warm!

What canst thou say to our children?

## Young Friends Rock!

*Lisa Graustein, NEYM Young Friends Coordinator, Beacon Hill (MA) Monthly Meeting*

*How do we live out the peace testimony in our environmental practices? When confronted with racism, sexism, or homophobia at school, how do I respond as a Quaker? How will spending 18 hours in silence with others deepen our community and my spiritual life?*

**T**HESE ARE JUST A FEW OF THE QUESTIONS THAT YOUNG FRIENDS (YFs) have taken up this year at retreats. The Young Adult Friends (YAFs) just met to learn more about racism, the World Gathering of Young Friends, and their Quaker call in the world today at their midwinter gathering. The youth of our yearly meeting are often referred to as the future of Friends. However, they are very much the present, delving into the topics that have been (too) challenging for older friends and always doing so with a sincere desire to go deeper, to enliven the Spirit within.

As the Yearly Meeting works on reorganizing its staffing structure, the commitment to staffing a full-time person to coordinate YFs, mentor YAFs, and build youth leadership is a solid commitment not just to the future of Friends, but to a vibrant “now” of Friends. The youth understand their responsibility as Friends—live in the Spirit that calls us together inwardly and outwardly. To be patterns and examples, to let their lives speak their faith and witness to God's beloved community.

As a Yearly Meeting, we are struggling. For too long, we have avoided talking about the really hard things at our core—our theological diversity, the racism and homophobia amongst us, how we deal with money, and our witness in the world. These issues are spilling out of the edges of our business meetings and worship. This summer, as the adults struggled with our membership in FUM, one Friend leaned over to me and whispered, “We should ask the Young Friends to talk about this issue while we just listen—and learn.” Perhaps it is time we slow down our own pressing agenda items and listen to our young people. We were elderled and challenged by their sense of the state of our corporate worship this summer at Sessions. Those adults who came to visit the YFs business meetings saw the depth of the YFs commitment to faithful process carried out

with tender hearts and community-focused minds.

As NEYM searches for someone whose full-time job it will be to listen to and support our youth, I invite you to listen to and support the youth near you. In ten years of working with YFs and YAFs, I have never met one that didn't have something fascinating to tell me and something real to teach me.

### How you can listen to and nurture our youth:

- Initiate a conversation—don't be scared—you were a teenager once too (and they've never been your age). Ask them what they are up to, what they care about, how it is to be a Quaker at their school, etc. Listen, be sincere, and listen.
- When youth come back from a retreat or event, ask them to share what is going on with YFs or YAFs, what they got out of it, what challenges the group faced, etc. The same can be done for non-Quaker events that youth attend.
- Get your meeting to create a small line item in the budget to support youth attending retreats, conferences, or other events that will nourish their spiritual lives. If you already have such a line item, make sure all your youth know about it, are encouraged to use it, and know how to access it.
- Get together with some other Friends and send care packages to your meeting's youth that are away at college, boarding school, work, or have been absent from meeting for while. Include a passage from your favorite Quaker writer and why s/he speaks to your condition. Get them a subscription to *Friends Journal*, let them know that you care about not just their well-being, but their spiritual lives as well.
- Learn about what your youth know about or are working on and invite them to lead an adult education session on the topic. We have youth who are expert on military counseling, white privilege, the civil rights aspects of hip-hop, expressing spirituality through dance, doing anti-racism/sexism/homophobia work, service work in this and many other countries, etc., and can connect their passions directly with their Quaker faith.

# Around the Yearly Meeting

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

• **Monadnock (NH) Monthly Meeting (MM)** member Helen Bliss died peacefully on 1/20/2006. Helen was a long-time active member of NEYM and one of The Meeting School's founders.

• **Vassalboro (VT) MM** is moving forward with renovations to their 1834 meetinghouse to improve handicap access and to rearrange and sound-proof rooms to allow for more flexible spaces for meetings and First Day School.

• **Hanover (NH) MM** has instituted a monthly Accountability Worship undertaken by the White Privilege and Racism Committee. The worship includes a carefully guided period of time for Friends to hold themselves responsible for individual acts, thoughts, and silences contributing to the racism in our society and our culture. The sessions are being conducted based on suggested guidelines prepared by Bert Skellie of **Atlanta (GA) MM**.

• **Durham (ME) MM** has hired Ralph Greene as a part-time interim pastor working approximately 20 hours/week through June 2006. He will deliver a message in meeting for worship twice a month, do visitation and provide input to Christian Education, attend to spiritual health in the meeting, as well as facilitate the search process for a full-time pastor. In other meeting news, on 12/18/05, Durham Junior Friends and Young Friends offered a message in meeting for worship that explored how Quakers used to celebrate Christmas, believing that the simpler the day, the more the heart could feel the importance of Christ's birth. There used to be no Christmas trees, stockings, Santa or presents.

• **Storrs (CT) MM** Pastoral Care Committee sponsored a Fall Meeting for Healing on 10/24/05. The meeting also has established a prayer circle that prays and holds people "in the Light." Requests are held in the circle for a week or however long it is "necessary."

• **Northampton (MA) MM** circulated a Witness Committee Survey to identify key social concerns. Recipients were asked to identify issues of particular importance and to share information about their current involvement, ideas for expanding involvement, and an indication of whether they are interested in working with others on the

issue. The survey results will assist Friends in finding others with similar interests and will guide the Witness Committee's activities. Also, the meeting approved a minute calling for "an end to all torture of any person anywhere for any reason." Their minute includes mention of the spiritual injury that occurs to those who inflict torture.

• **Plainfield (VT) MM** students in First Day School have created a number of board games such as "Religious Pursuit" and a cooperative board game. These games will be distributed to raise funds for the Heifer Project.

• **Cambridge (MA) MM** Ministry and Counsel arranged potluck opportunities for small groups of Friends to gather around a meal to speak and listen deeply and to begin (or further) any needed healing for those with strong feelings about difficult issues around child safety and prison ministry that have been facing the meeting recently.

• **Winthrop Center (ME) MM** sponsored a Karaoke Night and Christmas sing-along using karaoke equipment. Peggy and Mike Goodenough want to share their karaoke equipment with Friends and non-profit organizations as part of their personal ministry.

• **Keene (NH) MM** Outreach Committee sponsored a Religious Education Session on "Marriage Under the Care of Our Meeting" in October. The discussion identified many issues where there was considerable unity and a few areas where there was controversy. Minutes will be written about those areas where there is a clear leading. Then the more controversial questions will receive more discussion, prayer and discernment.

• **Smith Neck (MA) MM** hosted a Living Nativity display on 12/11/05 where the community was invited to experience "the sights, sounds and smells surrounding the birth of Jesus our Lord." Refreshments and harp music by Sarah Terrell completed the event.

• **South Berkshire (MA) MM** approved a minute requesting that all members and attenders as well as other members of the community who use their meetinghouse make every effort possible "to be free of scented products on the premises."

• **Mount Toby (MA) MM** is supporting three Young Friends who are leading a

monthly military counseling drop-in group for the community at the Men's Resource Center in Amherst. Attendees have a chance to get clear about their own beliefs and are offered help starting a conscientious objector file if they so decide. Adults are helping with written materials, snacks and rides.

• **Wellesley (MA) MM** hosted its traditional "Simple Gifts" event on Saturday morning 12/3/05. Children aged 3-11 came with a list of up to 8 names of beloved family members and friends. Two and a half hours later the children left with wrapped and tagged hand-made "Friendly" gifts for those on their lists. A \$5 donation per child was requested to offset expenses.

• **Middlebury (VT) MM** and **Old Chatham (NY) MM** have agreed to share care and support for a new worship group in Ticonderoga, NY that Mark Moss and Mary Kay Glazer have been led to begin. Until a community site is found, the meeting will be conducted each Sunday at 4pm in the Moss/Glazer home.

• **Smithfield (RI) MM** considered a query from **Rhode Island-Smithfield Quarterly Meeting** asking what it would mean for the meeting to be a peace center. As a result of their preliminary deliberations they have decided to post the FCNL sign "War is Not the Answer" outside their meetinghouse and to work through parents in their meeting and with other area faith communities on military counter-recruitment activities. They plan to offer conscientious objector counseling and support. Smithfield Friends are also considering issues surrounding the spiritual nurture and religious education of children and youth. They plan to consult with Beth Collea, NEYM Christian Education Coordinator, and with other meetings that struggle with this issue.



Smithfield (RI) Meetinghouse

## In other Quaker news

### NEYM seeks full-time youthworker

NEYM seeks full-time Young Friends/Young Adult Friends Coordinator, beginning 9/2006, to minister to the spiritual needs of high school and college-aged youth. Requires grounding in Quakerism, experience in youth work, skills in communication and retreat organizing. Applications accepted until position filled. Contact [fieldsec@neym.org](mailto:fieldsec@neym.org)

### New Treasurer & Accounts Manager

Nancy Isaacs, NEYM Treasurer, and Alison Hersey, NEYM Accounts Manager, both of Monadnock (NH) MM, have taken up the work of our "Finance Department" at the NEYM Office. We say goodbye and a heartfelt *THANK YOU* to Ken Hoffman and Jill Horton-Lyons for their good work in these respective roles over the past few years.

### Travel under concern about FUM

At the 2005 Sessions NEYM affirmed its disagreement with the sexual ethics portion of the Friends United Meeting (FUM) personnel policy. We minuted our intention to visit among yearly meetings within FUM, to know and become known, for further discussion on this concern. A fund was established to support Friends led to travel. The Ministry and Counsel Working Party on FUM is facilitating travel and has created an information packet to help guide Friends in this process. If you are interested in traveling under concern about FUM's personnel policy, the information packet is available through the NEYM Office. Monthly Meeting clearness and Permanent Board endorsement is required for all NEYM representatives traveling outside our yearly meeting. Contact [neym@neym.org](mailto:neym@neym.org)

### Draft F&P chapter on worship

From the *Faith and Practice* Revision Committee: "We are pleased to know of many meetings in the process of considering the draft chapter on worship (available from the NEYM Office and [neym.org](http://neym.org)) and have already received a variety of responses. We have heard that the 2/1/06 deadline is difficult for some meetings to meet. We welcome all responses, whether received before or after the deadline. We need to begin revising the chapter in February in order to present a second draft to the 2006 Sessions, but will be working on that revision throughout the spring. Individuals and groups are en-

couraged to read the chapter, discuss it, and send comments to [fandp@neym.org](mailto:fandp@neym.org) (preferred) or to Jan Hoffman, 343 West St, Amherst, MA 01002. We have also heard that more guidance on how to respond to draft texts would be helpful. The committee is in the process of producing a guide to considering draft chapters and will make it available when it is ready."

### 2006 BHFH Weed Lecture

The 2006 Beacon Hill Friends House (BHFH) Ernest and Esther Weed Memorial Lecture "Being Faithful as Friends: Individually and Corporately" will be given by Deborah Fisch, from Iowa YM (Conservative) and Coordinator of Friends General Conference Traveling Ministries Program, on Sunday, 3/19/06 at 1pm. Contact BHFH, 617/227-9118 • [www.bhfh.org](http://www.bhfh.org)

### New Pamphlet from BHFH

Beacon Hill Friends House (BHFH) announces the publication of *Report from the Middle: Reflections on Divisions Among Friends Today*, by Douglas Gwyn. The first of these two essays, "Sense and Sensibilities: Quaker Bispiritality Today" speaks to our need to understand what gifts come to us from the various strands of Quaker experience. The second, "Standing with the Lamb," the text of the talk Doug delivered at the Friends United Meeting Triennial this summer, is a powerful statement of the faith we can share and a challenge to live to. To order, 617/227-9118. • [www.bhfh.org](http://www.bhfh.org)

### Quaker Youth Pilgrimage

Learn about Friends, slavery and the Underground Railroad; about Friends witness today; about the variety of Friends. Serve by helping a yearly meeting session happen. Build a house with Habitat for Humanity; community by traveling together for a month; a cross-cultural community of 27 other Young Friends from many countries; lasting international friendships. 16-18 years old? Join the Quaker Youth Pilgrimage. Contact FWCC Americas, 215/241-7250 • [qyp@fwccamericas.org](mailto:qyp@fwccamericas.org)

### Quakers in the News (QiN)

There's an Internet service which might give NEYM Friends a new view of the 'face' of modern Friends. In this light, Quakers in the News (QiN) is a periodically updated col-

lection of 'snapshots.' The collection is made up of many individual news stories mentioning Friends. Twice per month, QiN sorts the collected attributes of current published news, in general interest news and broadcasts, and distributes these via e-mail. The sum of these records shows a composite view of the outward activities of our Religious Society. Maybe there is a thread of religious truth or spiritual energy—which shows in the outward fabric of Friends? See [qin2006.blogspot.com](http://qin2006.blogspot.com)

### Quaker Peacebuilder Camp

With a strong summer program for youth and a good institutional home at The Meeting School, the Quaker Peacebuilder Camp is led to undertake another dimension of its vision: intergenerational and adult-focused programs for monthly and quarterly meetings. Friends yearn for a more visible Quaker witness in this time of war, and the Camp seeks to help Friends develop the skills, understanding and relationships to become better organizers of nonviolent action, and to more deeply ground our witness in our spiritual lives. Please support the Camp with your prayers, with invitations to offer programs in your area, with financial contributions, and with names of youth who might attend next summer's camp 6/29-7/9/06. Contact John Humphries 860/236-5175 [jhumphries@igc.org](mailto:jhumphries@igc.org)

### QPCC Annual Conference

Quakers in Pastoral Care & Counseling (QPCC) will hold its annual conference 3/30-4/2/06 at Quaker Hill Conference Center, Richmond IN. The theme will be *We Shall All Be Changed: Experiencing God's Love through Life Changes*. Friends who are health-care workers, counselors, involved in pastoral care in their meetings and others interested in issues around healing and prayer are welcome! Contact [www.qpcc.us](http://www.qpcc.us)

### AVP Conference in New England

Alternatives to Violence Project's (AVP) National Conference 5/26-29/06, Stonehill College. AVP, founded by Quakers and prisoners, offers workshops in American prisons and beyond. The Conference provides time to learn new skills, meet other AVP facilitators (many are former inmates), and strategize how to better serve those incarcerated. Contact: [www.avpboston2006.org](http://www.avpboston2006.org)

# The 2005 World Gathering of Young Friends

*Holly Baldwin, Midcoast (ME) Monthly Meeting and Ben Guaraldi, Beacon Hill (MA) Monthly Meeting*

**T**HIS PAST AUGUST, 226 FRIENDS gathered together in the place where our Quaker movement first bore fruit, Lancaster University (UK), in the heart of 1652 country. Eleven Friends from New England attended—the second-largest delegation.

This past October, 81 Friends gathered together in the place where our Quaker movement has borne the most fruit: in Kenya (specifically in Kanamai, near Mombasa). Three Friends from New England attended—again, one of the largest delegations.

These two gatherings—collectively called the World Gathering of Young Friends 2005—were extraordinary events, filled with spiritual power and a sense of God fervently working in the world. They changed almost all whose paths they crossed. And they left us searching for what the next steps are. In the words of the gatherings' themes: "I am the vine; you are the branches...now what fruit shall we bear?" (John 15:5) and "Let us then see what love will do." (William Penn)

Both of us have written extensively about what the gathering was like for other publications. Here we will discuss the most significant part of each and the lessons of both for NEYM.

## Pilgrimage in England

The World Gathering in England was foremost intended as a pilgrimage. In spite of the desires of the organizers that we be near London, God called us to meet in Lancaster, specifically so that we could come to the place where Quakerism was born.

To fulfill this vision, there were two days of trips built into the conference. The first day we split into five different groups, going to Swarthmore Hall, Firbank Fell, and the Quaker Tapestry at Kendal. The second day we went to Pendle Hill.

Firbank Fell, also known as Fox's Pulpit, is the place where George Fox first preached to a multitude. The hill itself and the land nearby were extraordinary in their beauty. Small hills swept and undulated to the horizon, deserted except for tufts of grass and a narrow, winding road. The view from the top of the hill was breathtaking, especially when one imagined a crowd gathered underneath. As we gathered atop the hill, there

was a sense that someone should preach. No one did. That is, until most of the group had wandered off. Then a Friend preached deeply from the Spirit about the decline of our Society and about how faithless we Quakers can be.

More than 200 of us climbed Pendle Hill—the largest group of Quakers ever to do so. It was indeed steep. And high for a hill in England. And so green! When we were climbing the white of our clothing stood out against the hill—white raiment indeed. At the top of the hill, you could see miles and miles of tame countryside, broken only by fences and the occasional building. The wind whipped by us as we ate our food, took pictures, prayed, and raised our voices in song. We felt we were where God had called us that afternoon on that hill.

## Ministry in Kenya

Though the World Gathering in Kenya was hastily envisioned in response to visa denials, there was a clear sense that God was calling for an international team to visit the heart of Kenyan Quakerism in Western Province.

For three days, eleven of us visited over ten yearly meetings. There were grueling bus rides, startling landscapes, shocking poverty, incredible hospitality, and broad friendliness. We brought the good news of the World Gathering to many and preached about tolerance, equality, feminism, staying in community with those you disagree with, and the ability of God to turn evil into good. We saw the unending work that is laid out for the Quakers in Kenya, and the heroic attempts of our brothers and sisters to do it. And we formed deep connections among ourselves, feeling that we eleven were one large unit.

The Saturday after the conference, five members of this team flew away together. Eden Grace and I realized that these were five people from five continents boarding the same plane from Kisumu to Nairobi. They were all Friends and they were all friends. God had turned the denied visas into international friendship... the evil had become good.

## Lessons

We'll leave you with some of the questions that these conferences brought up for us, so you too can use the prism of our experience



*Esther Mombo delivers a message*

Photo: Rachel Stacy

to reexamine our beliefs and practices.

The number of NEYM Friends at these conferences remind us that we are strong. Indeed, we have one of the strongest and richest Quaker youth programs in all of the world. With that power comes great responsibility. How can we as young people minister effectively? How can we bring the Kingdom of God here now? How can older adults help us do that?

We are living in a yearly meeting with a legacy of reunification and a charism of building bridges. How can we help other yearly meetings form partnerships as we have with Cuba and Vihiga?

We are struggling with how—or whether—to stay united with FUM. By staying in relationship with these Friends, will we be able to hear God's voice in ways we are not able to otherwise? Is God trying to teach us something with this struggling?

Programmed worshippers who tried unprogrammed worship for the first time had a radical naivete about it, reminding us how programmed "unprogrammed" worship can be. Are we worshipping the silence? Are we staying longer than an hour when we are moved to? Are we truly meeting God in the silence?

Evangelism works. How can we reach out in ways that do not frighten us or others? Should we continue to reach out even if it frightens us? For each person that we draw in by being silent, how many do we lose by not being clear enough about our faith? What is pulling at our heart other than God? How do we engage those in our meetings who are not seeking God? Are we Quakers? Are all of these other people Quakers? What can love do through us? What fruit shall we bear?

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**New England Yearly Meeting of Friends**  
**901 Pleasant Street**  
**Worcester, MA 01602-1908**



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# THE NEW ENGLAND FRIEND

## YEARLY MEETING CALENDAR

### March 2006

- 4 Northwest QM—Burlington FM (VT)
- 3–5 Youth Worker Training—Woolman Hill (MA)
- 11 Ministry & Counsel—Beacon Hill FM (MA)
- 16–19 FWCC Section of the Americas Annual Meeting—  
Chuiquimula, Guatemala
- 17–19 Young Friends Retreat—Hanover FM (NH)
- 17–19 8<sup>th</sup> Graders retreat—Wellesley FM (MA)
- 25 Sessions Committee—Smithfield MM (RI)
- 3/30–4/1 Associated Committee of Friends on Indian Affairs—  
Sophia, NC

### April 2006

- 7–9 Elementary Retreat—Westport FM (MA)
- 8 Committee Day—Monadnock MM and the Meeting  
School (NH)
- 21–23 Young Friends Retreat—Mt Toby FM (MA)
- 21–23 Women's Retreat—Geneva Point Conference Center,  
Center Harbor NH
- 22 Falmouth QM—Durham FM (ME)
- 22 Sandwich QM—New Bedford MM (MA)
- 23 RI—Smithfield QM—Smithfield MM (RI)
- 23 Salem QM—Amesbury MM (MA)
- 29 Quaker Leadership Workshop—Location, TBA
- 30 Dover QM—Location, TBA

### May 2006

- 5–7 Jr. High retreat—Portland FM (ME)
- 5–7 Young Friends Seniors—Monadnock FM (NH)
- 6 Curriculum Workshop—Hartford MM (CT) [see p.2]
- 6 Vassalboro QM—Belfast/Orono MMs (ME)
- 7 CT Valley QM—Northampton FM (MA)
- 13 Permanent Board—Quaker City-Unity MM (NH)
- 19–21 Elementary Retreat—Woolman Hill, MA
- 20 Ministry & Counsel—Location, TBA
- 21 Friends Camp Open House—S. China ME

### June 2006

- 2–4 Northwest QM—Farm & Wilderness (VT)
- 10 Committee Day—Location, TBA
- 25–7/8 Mary Dyer Camp (Ages 11–13)—Friends Camp, ME

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

**2006 Sessions, Sat. August 5 – Thurs. August 10**  
**—Bryant University, Smithfield, Rhode Island—**

**Theme:** Holy Obedience, From Worship to Witness  
**Keynote:** Lloyd Lee Wilson, North Carolina YM (Cons.)  
**Bible Half Hour:** Tracey Peterson, Earlham College (IN)  
**Tuesday Night:** Peterson Toscano, Hartford (CT) MM