

THE NEW ENGLAND FRIEND

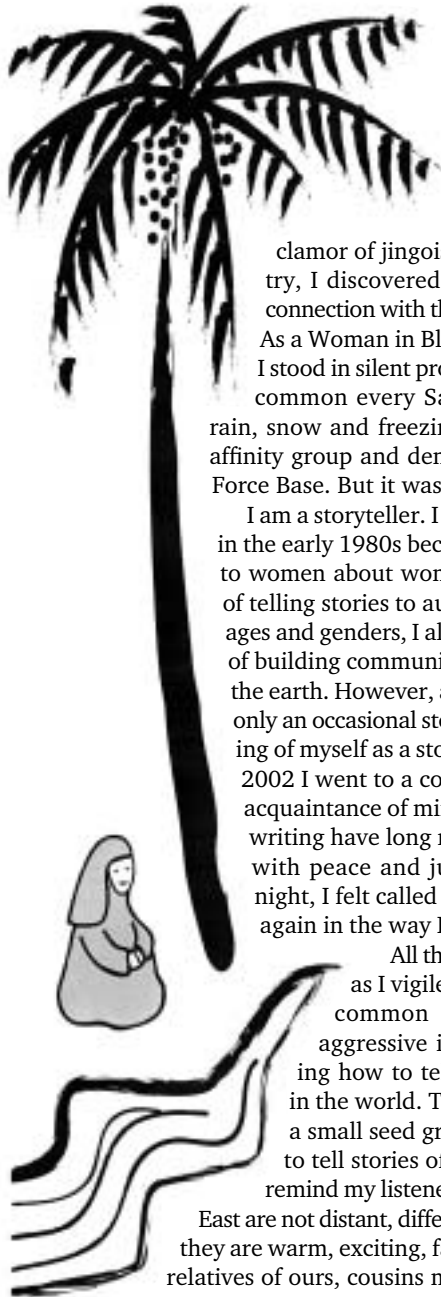
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The Spring Beneath the Tree—telling stories of the Middle East

Jay Goldspinner, Northampton (MA) Monthly Meeting



AFTER THE TRAGEDY OF September 11th I watched in horror as the U.S. government whipped up hatred against Middle Easterners and marched inexorably to war. Surrounded by the

clamor of jingoistic patriotism in this country, I discovered in myself a deep sense of connection with the people of the Middle East. As a Woman in Black, a pacifist and a Friend, I stood in silent protest on the Greenfield town common every Saturday morning, through rain, snow and freezing cold. I joined a magical affinity group and demonstrated at Westover Air Force Base. But it was not enough.

I am a storyteller. I first became a teller of tales in the early 1980s because I wanted to tell stories to women about women. Through twenty years of telling stories to audiences near and far, of all ages and genders, I always saw my work as a way of building community, fostering peace, healing the earth. However, a few years ago I was telling only an occasional story and was no longer thinking of myself as a storyteller. Then in November 2002 I went to a concert of Pat Humphries, an acquaintance of mine whose singing and songwriting have long reflected her active concern with peace and justice. Talking to Pat that night, I felt called to raise my own voice once again in the way I know best, by storytelling.

All through the winter and spring, as I vigiled weekly on the Greenfield common to protest this country's aggressive imperialism, I was pondering how to tell stories to promote peace in the world. The idea kept coming to me, a small seed growing, that I was being led to tell stories of the Middle East, stories to remind my listeners that people of the Middle East are not distant, different and threatening; rather, they are warm, exciting, familiar human beings—like relatives of ours, cousins maybe.

I had been connected with the Middle East all my life, it seemed to me. As a child raised Christian in America, I heard stories of Abraham, Moses, Jesus. I learned in grade school about the Fertile Crescent and the ancient civilizations of Sumer and Babylonia. I read *The Arabian Nights*. As an adult I was given poems by Rumi, I once tried to learn belly dancing, and I got

closer to Jewish culture through friends, holidays and stories. I was caught up in women's spirituality and the Sumerian goddess Inanna was one of my first guides. As a storyteller I told the story of Inanna. I had heard anecdotes of the wise fool Nasrudin.

When I started to gather material for a program of stories of the Middle East, I already had many stories to tell. In the months—spring to fall—I spent searching and researching I found more stories and more connections. I started reading the Koran for the first time, also Sufi and other Islamic writings and discovered with delight wonderful poems, and tales of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, of Moses, Jesus and other Muslim prophets whom I already knew. The title of my program, "The Spring Beneath the Tree," comes from a story in the Koran itself, about Mary giving birth to Jesus alone in the desert under a date palm tree.

A program of stories and poems began to come together: sacred stories, funny stories, handed-down and real life tales; Jewish, Muslim, Christian stories; voices from the present day and an ancient goddess myth. I found more stories than I could tell at one time; reluctantly I had to leave out the story of Mary Fisher, an early English Quaker who felt called by God to visit the Turkish Sultan (the Saddam Hussein of his time)—and she did.

Believing that the arts are an important way of furthering Friends concerns for peace and social action, I asked Northampton Friends Meeting to sponsor the first performance of "The Spring Beneath the Tree." On 11/8/2003 the worship room of the new meetinghouse was transformed into a comfortable performance space. With Middle Eastern music in the background and a lunar eclipse outside the windows, I told stories, read poems and shared thoughts. A highlight of the evening came when people in the audience, one after another, jumped up to tell Nasrudin stories. At the end the whole group joined in singing, "Now everyone beneath their vine and fig tree/shall live in peace and unafraid." In keeping with the purpose of the event, to foster peace and understanding of the Middle East, proceeds were given to Ramallah Friends School and the Amherst Middle East Education Committee.

A little over a year has passed since I was led to go back into storytelling—and then to create "The Spring Beneath the Tree, Stories of the Middle East." I feel that my storytelling is truly a tool in the non-violent struggle for peace and justice in the world. I am back to telling stories in various settings and I share my Middle Eastern and other peace stories almost every time I tell. A peace fellowship in Amherst is planning to sponsor another performance of "Stories of the Middle East." I am looking for other places—Friends Meetings, other faith and peace groups, schools—where people would like to offer this program to their community. And I am still vigiling on Saturdays at the Greenfield common.

Contact Jay Goldspinner at 125 Chapman Street, #1, Greenfield, MA 01301 • 413/773-8033 • rootworm@crocker.com

Quakers and Middle East Issues

Witness in the Levant



Levant: The countries bordering the eastern Mediterranean Sea; from Middle English, *levaunt*, the Orient; from Old French, *levant*, rising, said of the sun, to rise. —American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language.

Skip Schiel, Cambridge (MA) Monthly Meeting

WITNESS IS WHAT THE CHRISTIAN Peacemakers do in Hebron, accompanying children to and from school, monitoring checkpoints, asking soldiers why they are searching a vehicle or home, tracking arrests and detentions, and living in the Palestinian section of the city. In short, placing themselves in a hot spot, keeping their eyes and ears open, asking questions, using the authority vested in them by their Christian beliefs, namely, Christ's admonition to serve the other by doing justice, loving mercy, and walking humbly with one's Greater Spirit.

I was in Palestine and Israel for two weeks in November 2003, with a delegation sponsored by the Fellowship of Reconciliation. We were gifted with a meeting with these Peacemakers, walked with them as they performed their work, ate with them as they explained how they face death, and watched with them from their roof top the nearness of the Israeli settlements and the ever watchful and intimidating presence of the Israeli army.

Witness is what I try to do with my camera, practicing my trade as a socially engaged photographer, inserting myself into zones of conflict, turmoil, injustice, and sometimes danger to interpret what I slowly come to

understand of a situation. The camera helps me observe and comprehend—the simple act of slinging a camera over my shoulder invites my body to become an extension of the camera. And the camera helps me show and tell my experience later, portraying my sense of the reality to a larger audience.

I am much emboldened by many Quaker traditions. One, travel, going somewhere, watching and listening, sharing the load, building the community. Two, walking cheerfully over the earth responding to the deepest in all creation, whether drawn or repelled by those I meet and what I witness. Third, the testimony of simplicity, living a life that allows me to continue this witness, refusing to be overly snared by fear and the demands of the quotidian life. Fourth, and most crucially, following the teachings and examples of Jesus Christ himself, a man who like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. risked his life for the righteous kingdom.

To continue this witness I rely on my various communities, the Religious Society of Friends most importantly. I am grateful to it, and hope to visit meetings around the region with my slide show, "Facts on the Ground, Photographs from Israel and Palestine." Contact me at 617/441-7756 • schiel@ccae.org



Quakers, Jews, the Middle East, and me

Allan Kohrman, Wellesley (MA) Monthly Meeting

THIRTY YEARS AGO THIS MONTH I JOINED THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS. It was one of the most important decisions of my life, second only to marriage. As such, I read widely about Friends and spoke with a number of the elders of Friends Meeting at Cambridge. I believed that, as much as is possible, I knew what I was getting into. In most ways I did. But in one crucial way I did not.

I come from a Jewish background. What I did not know is how little most Friends know about Judaism. What little they do know is confined to the negative attitude toward Jews in the first four books of the Christian testament. In addition, I did not know that many Friends, especially those associated with the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), were already becoming pro-Arab and anti-Israeli, a process that began around 1967 and has only intensified until this day, except that now Quaker sympathies have narrowed to the Palestinians. What took me decades to realize was that Quakers' knowledge of Judaism and our attitudes towards the Israeli-Palestinian question might be intertwined. In other words, Quakers might unknowingly be anti-Semitic and we might then express our bigotry through our attitudes toward the Middle East.

For much of the last thirty years I remained silent, hiding my light under a bushel, in part because I wished to become a valued and trustworthy member of New England Yearly Meeting. I knew that if I spoke out at any length some would find my message disagreeable to say the least. I did rise in Cambridge Meeting in the mid-1970s to oppose an AFSC sponsored minute that I believed was anti-Israeli; I did the same on the floor of NEYM in 1990 in response to a minute on the Israeli-Palestinian issue forwarded by the Friends United Meeting (FUM) General Board and modified by the NEYM FUM Committee. But I vowed that I would never raise the issue on my own.

Things came to a head at 2002 NEYM Sessions. The NEYM Peace & Social Concerns Committee took a worthy minute from Northwest Quarterly Meeting on the Israeli-Palestinian question and chose to modify it in such a way that I thought the minute to be anti-Semitic. They did invite me to a meeting in June, and we agreed on wording. Then they met on the Saturday of Sessions and revised it. I was incensed and spoke out of anger on the floor of the yearly meeting. The next speaker called me "confused, arrogant, and ignorant." I was deeply hurt. The word "arrogant" is an old anti-Semitic epithet. Sometimes people use words without knowing they might be derogatory of Jews.

These events sorely tested my relationship with New England Friends. Some would not speak to me; others no longer trusted me to speak rationally on the yearly meeting floor. But at the same time I began to feel a leading from God that now was finally the time to speak out on this issue. I admit to problems here. Even though I am a stickler for process, I feel I cannot establish a clearness committee to test my leading because there are few if any members of my monthly meeting who know enough about Judaism and anti-Semitism so that I would be comfortable in sharing my deepest thoughts. I did lead a workshop at the 2003 NEYM Sessions, but my written statements were turned down by *Friends Journal* and AFSC's *Peacework*; moreover, my offer to lead a workshop at Friends General Conference next summer was declined. So to a certain extent I feel estranged from the wider Quaker world. Our eagerness to re-examine our relationship to racism is in contrast to our reluctance to examine our relationship to anti-Semitism.

Nonetheless I will continue to speak out on this issue as I am led. My ultimate goal is that we will consider all sides of the Middle East question, with a willingness to change our minds if we are led to do so.

I lack the space to discuss the history of Christian anti-Semitism, early Friends and the Jews, and twentieth century Quaker involvement in the Middle East. Those who wish to read a viewpoint different from that to which they are usually exposed may contact me at my email address below. Meanwhile, we ought to consider that when we rather blatantly take sides in a conflict, we become little different than the average left-wing pressure group. Moreover, we ought to consider that however confident we are that we are speaking truth to power, we might not have the whole truth.

Those who want to consider the issue of Quakers, Jews and the Middle East in greater depth may contact me at allankohrman@comcast.net

2002 NEYM minute on Israel & Palestine

The tragedy in Israel and Palestine persists. We are easily drawn into the fear-some political rhetoric of that conflict, but the work of peacemakers is far more difficult. Our work begins with deep prayer, deep listening, and discerning for the "seeds of war" in our lives. We know today, as Friends have known throughout our history, that it is our task to listen deeply, heal and nurture. We know this because of our experience of the Divine Light in our lives, as it compels us to reject using violence to solve conflicts.

Although rarely recognized by our media, there are committed peacemakers in Israel and Palestine. There are also peacemakers within the Jewish and Arab communities in our country. Friends need to stand with them, support their witness, and learn from them. There is also a great need within our own communities for dialogue about this conflict. We call on meetings throughout New England to lead this work, challenging all people of faith to work and pray for peace and justice, not to take sides.

Our century-long presence at the Ramallah Friends Schools gives Quakers a unique opportunity to continue to support peacemaking efforts in the region. We ask that our yearly meeting issue a call to New England Friends to send money and workers, as needed, to the schools and to Ramallah Friends Meeting, and to strengthen our commitment to their ongoing support.

We are also called by our historic tradition to provide relief and reconciliation to those who suffer on all sides of this conflict. We must seek ways to provide that ministry to both Palestinians and Israelis. The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) offers us the Palestine-Israel Crisis Fund. The Fellowship of Reconciliation offers us an Interfaith Peace-Builders Delegation to the region, and other opportunities exist. Whatever specific activities we choose, let us choose the path of peace.

The Friends School at Ramallah

Video: Wildflowers in the Holy Land

Paul Hood Journalist &
Christopher McCandless, Editor

IN MID MAY OF 2002 I WAS LED TO VISIT the Ramallah Friends Schools at a most difficult time in their history and to discover, if possible, the presence of God in every person as well as in the corporate structure of a Quaker school. How could such an institution, I wondered, hold to our historic principles and practices of reconciliation and peacemaking in the face of seemingly uncontrollable violence on every side?

The answer, it seems to me, lies in the enduring and everlasting presence of the Creator, whether called Yahweh, God, or Allah. Each spring, the hills and valleys of Palestine overflow with wildflowers. And in May, six weeks after a building had been bombed, flowers had already begun to rise through the rubble.

With digital movie camera and microphone in hand, I participated in all the activities for a month. Students, parents, teachers, and administrators voiced their painful experiences, their willingness to work for peace, and commitment of their lives to the work ahead. Despite the bombing and 24-hour-a-day curfew during April, the class of 2002 graduated on the appointed day in June... no small miracle and an occasion of great joy for all.

If you are interested in a showing(s) of *Wildflowers in the Holy Land* (58 minutes) to Friends and other like-minded people, please contact Paul Hood who will be travelling in the ministry. Let us view the film, talk about being peacemakers in the 21st century, and worship together.

Contact Paul Hood at 802/865-0403 • paulhood@together.net. All donations will be forwarded in their entirety to Friends United Meeting, for scholarships at the Schools.

A Friends School Teacher's first attempt to enter Israel

Jacob Kuntz, History Teacher at Ramallah Friends Schools

The following is excerpted from a letter Jacob Kuntz circulated to Friends. He successfully reached Ramallah on his second attempt to enter the West Bank.

ON 8/21/2003 UPON ENTRANCE INTO Israel I was taken into custody by security personnel at Ben Gurion airport in Tel Aviv. Only hours before, the Israeli military had imposed a complete closure on the West Bank and Gaza strip. No one was getting in or out. This was in response to a fierce and deadly suicide attack in Jerusalem.

I was led to a room with two women, both in their early twenties, who were to be my interrogators. They asked me where I was going. I told them that I was a teacher at Ramallah Friends School in the West Bank, and that I sought entry into Israel and the West Bank. I displayed letters from Colin South, the principal at the School, and from Retha McCutchen, the General Secretary of Friends United Meeting. It was to no avail. I was told that I was denied entry, and that I would be sent back on a plane that night. I tried to talk to them, but they turned their backs to me and walked out the door.

After I was interrogated and searched, I was sent to a local police station. I was searched a second time by guards who were about my age (early twenties), and placed in a cell. Before the guard closed the cell door on me, we had the chance to speak for a few moments. He asked me what I was doing in Israel. I told him that I was a teacher in Ramallah. When he heard where I was going, a bewildered look came across his face. "Ramallah," he said, "why in Ramallah." I told him simply, "they need a teacher of

history." He looked at me and said, "Now in Ramallah, a teacher is not important." I said to him, "Now in Ramallah, a teacher is most important." With that he closed the door on my cell.

Throughout the eight-hour ordeal, from the point of entry to when I was driven onto the runway and pushed up the airplane steps, I found simple moments of simple talk with my Israeli guards, and found that an overwhelming love had surfaced in me for them. When I left the jail for the drive to the airport, I was able to grab the guard's arm who had spoken to me in my cell. We looked at each other, and I said, "thank you." He nodded to me as I was ushered out the door.

I have not been deterred from my desire to teach in Ramallah. Actually, this experience has only validated my original passion for this assignment. The conflict between Israelis and Palestinians is not isolated in its tragic dehumanization. It is at its core the

basis of human conflict. Where a young Israeli guard can state with all assurance that a teacher for Palestinians is not important, there resides the evidence of a misplaced understanding.

I speak of a people mutually discouraged and afflicted by violence and suffering. I speak of a people who have become segregated in our modern times due to systems of government, and politics that fashion the quickest solution to a security problem. That young guard [and] the women who interrogated me... deserve more than what pragmatism, and radical fundamentalists have taught them about the lives of the Palestinian people. Palestinians deserve to see Israelis beyond the military apparatus shoved in their face every day.

Photo: Skip Schiel



NEYM delegation to Ramallah available for visits

Deana Chase, Kate Clark, Chris Jorgenson, and Blair Tatman took part in a February 2003 pastoral visit to the Ramallah Friends Schools sponsored by Friends United Meeting. These Friends have developed a slide presentation to share with you about their experiences. Contact the NEYM office to schedule a visit to your meeting or community group.

Around the Yearly Meeting

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

• **Portland (ME) Monthly Meeting (MM)** is holding 5th Sunday Extended Worship, based on practices of early Friends and offered as a workshop option the 2003 NEYM Sessions. Meeting for worship begins at 8am and continues through to the rise of the larger meeting for worship at 11:30am.

• **Weare (NH) MM** is circulating a minute of exercise on Quakerism and Christianity. The minute says in part: "We are united in acknowledging Quakerism's foundation as an interpretation of the Gospel, drawing strength from its Christian roots. We do not wish to enforce Christian expression on our community, feeling the tenderness Friends have always had for freedom of conscience, yet we are grateful for the Christian testimony of our members who are clear to offer it. We also believe that it is important for all in our meeting to engage with the Gospels, and to continue to explore the meaning of Christ as held by Friends.

"These considerations have taken on some urgency in our minds as we consider the current revision of New England's book of *Faith & Practice*. Because we come to God along many paths, and explore our relationship to God through all the complexity of our experience, we believe it wise and truthful to maintain our corporate testimony that Quakerism is a branch of Christianity, while also seriously respecting as precious the searching and dialogue through which each Friend must form his or her conscientious beliefs, and find his or her most truthful religious expression.

"We trust God to guide us as we seek honestly, and as we discuss and explore our diverse understandings. We trust also that as we stay in the daring, reverent, and child-like spirit that Jesus calls us to, we will be enabled to create and sustain a loving and dynamic community under God's leadership."

• **Smithfield (RI) MM** united on a minute stating opposition to post-war profiteering in Iraq. They ask their congressional representatives to, 1) co-sponsor *Sunshine in Iraq Reconstruction Act* (H.R. 1901 and S. 876), requiring public disclosure of non-competitive contracting for the reconstruction of Iraq, 2) call for open Congressional hearings on war profiteering and conflict of interest, and 3) propose the re-instatement of an Excess Profits Tax on all American cor-

porate profits made in Iraq that are above peacetime industry averages. Such a tax is historically rooted in American history, serving as a vital control on war profiteering during the Civil War, both World Wars, and the Korean War. In his support for an excess profits tax during World War II, President Franklin D. Roosevelt said, "I don't want to see a single millionaire created in the United States as a result of this world disaster." Full text of the minute is posted at oftedahl.com/SmithfieldFriends

• **Hanover (NH) MM** is writing a handbook of practices and procedures. As part of this process, each meeting committee has been asked to create a mission statement to be reviewed and approved by the monthly meeting. **Hartford (CT) MM's** Communications Committee has also begun to write such a handbook.

• **Wellesley (MA) MM** sent five Friends to represent the meeting at Puerto Padre (Cuba) MM's 100th anniversary celebration. Since 1993, Wellesley and Puerto Padre have been paired as sister meetings in the "bridge of love" between Cuba YM and NEYM.

• **Durham (ME) MM** Peace & Social Concerns Committee brought a minute on sexual orientation to the monthly meeting for consideration. After a considerable time for discernment, the meeting continues to work on the minute. In reflecting on the process, one Friend commented, "how good it is when we can approach difficult decisions in so careful, prayerful and thoughtful a way."

• **Plainfield (VT) MM** held its annual Christmas Carol Sing with a "Scripture Cakes" Baking Contest, "where everyone wins." Popular in the 19th century, scripture cakes were half recipe, half puzzle, where each ingredient was listed as a biblical verse and the baker had to decipher its meaning (e.g., 4 cups 1Kings 4:22 = 4 cups of flour). Cooks who read the citations whole chapter generally make more pleasing cakes.

• **Cambridge (MA) MM** Peace & Social Concerns Committee wrote to George W. Bush to "express our concern about the treatment and prosecution of Saddam Hussein." They "urge the trial of Mr. Hussein be carried out by a tribunal under United Nations authority staffed by Iraqi and international judges and prosecutors... Such a trial would

present an opportunity to break the cycle of revenge, hatred, and violence that has plagued the world. We believe strongly that this tribunal should not impose a death penalty. The people of Iraq have suffered tragically. One more death will not heal any wounds. A fair and public trial for Mr. Hussein might open the way for the treatment of other Iraqis implicated in the crimes of Saddam Hussein's regime through a process modeled on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa, rather than a process based on revenge."

• **Vassalboro (ME) MM** newsletter reports on the progress of the Maine American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) Peace & Justice Committee. Formed in January of 2002, the committee has sponsored two anti-militarism conferences "Sign up for Freedom," (11/2002) and "Recruiting for Peace" (5/2003) focusing on peace & justice alternatives for youth. The committee is looking to expand its work in trainings/workshops and in local schools.

• **Pondtown (ME) MM** and **Winthrop Center Friends Church (ME) MM** are conducting a joint discussion on Voluntary Simplicity. The curriculum, designed by the Northwest Earth Institute in Portland, OR, is an eight week course that "addresses the distractions of modern society that keep us from caring for ourselves, our relationships, and our environment."

• **Dover (NH) MM** has spent the last several monthly meetings in discernment about that perennial issue of announcements at the rise of meeting. What announcements are appropriate? Should Friends submit written announcements to the person having care of meeting? Should announcements be made only every other week? Can a well maintained bulletin board serve as a substitute to spoken announcements? The meeting is experimenting with several of these ideas.



Dover (NH) Meetinghouse

News from NEYM Clerks

From the Presiding Clerk

YOUR EVALUATIONS OF THE 2003 annual Sessions reinforced what we already know, that change brings mixed blessings. We received more comments and suggestions about business than I can ever remember reading. Thanks to all who took the time to articulate what worked and didn't work for you. The success of the attempted change seemed to depend on how you perceive NEYM Sessions and the right order of business.

NEYM has prophets who urge us to sail into God's work and anchors who remind us not to outrun our Guide. Some Friends have voiced regret that we no longer seem to wrestle with substantial concerns. All agree that we need to hear diverse voices and to engage in lively debate. Speaking in business meeting in NEYM is currently open to self-selected F/friends. In the past individuals adhered to disciplines of personal restraint that we have forgotten. Truly radical minutes take time, and more discernment, and time, and prayerful reflection, and time before we can reach a sense of the meeting. Few of us can envision business meetings that continue into the early morning hours; we would miss parents who must tend their children and those who need extra sleep.

Can we envision "doing business" as more than adults sitting in the same room trying to find the voices that translate God's will for us? Is a business session with 300 Friends the only time and place for diverse voices to be heard? Do you remember the year when workshops and worship sharing were shortened to allow for more corporate business time? We learned from that experiment that our small group times are also valued places where we engage in lively debate as well as connect and recharge.

While praying about how to set this year's agenda, I am paying particular attention to the following evaluation comments such as:

—*New format required Friends to do their homework as a first step to participating.*
 —*Friends need to be heard by other Friends in Sessions, even though this may not always further the issue immediately at hand.*
 —*Very risky change, but I liked every committee being prayed for.* —*I love more prayer, but popping in and out of prayer was difficult.* —*The over use of prayer seemed to succeed only to stifle discussion in this year's business. Silent prayer to begin and end business meetings is adequate*

Our process is inherently clunky, inefficient and peculiar and it takes a lot of time (sometimes) to know God's will. So be it. Whose time is this, anyway?"

—*Deana Chase Westport (MA) MM*

Ministry & Counsel

ON THE WEEKEND OF 11/7–9 LAST FALL, Ministry & Counsel had our annual retreat which also served as the kick-off of the Spiritual Formation Program for 2003–04, which this year is especially reserved for members of our committee (and a few spouses.) This made for an unusual retreat in that we were not all together all of the time, since many of our members were unable to commit to the seven-month long program. We are sure that this division will not lead to a lack of cohesiveness for the committee as a whole during the coming year.

Again we are urging Friends to participate in the several workshops and retreats that the committee is sponsoring this year. There has been quite a bit of time and energy that has gone in to the planning of these events. These were described fully in the last issue of *The New England Friend*.

A follow-up letter to our racism letter mailed last fall to all monthly meeting clerks has been mailed out by the committee in early December. This time we also have sent a list of resources and suggestions of things meetings can do to address the issue of racism in their meetings. We are specifically requesting a response to the letters from meetings. This anti-racism initiative of the committee is also to be mirrored in Yearly Meeting Sessions this coming summer, with the theme for the gathering "And who is my neighbor?" (Luke 10:29). We are looking forward to hearing from everyone on this important issue.

—*Bonnie Norton, Wellesley (MA) MM*

Permanent Board

GREETINGS, FRIENDS! I'm glad to be able to update you on the work of the Permanent Board this winter. We had a very productive meeting in November, and look forward to meeting again at the end of February. In November, we were able to set some important work in motion, which I trust will bear fruit among us in the coming months:

We appointed a Search Committee for a new Director of Friends Camp. The Search will be undertaken in prayer and discern-

ment, trusting that God is lifting up the right person for this important ministry. The Committee hopes to bring the name of a candidate to our February Permanent Board meeting. Please uphold their work in your prayers.

We appointed a Development Committee and approved its charge, as instructed by the Yearly Meeting last August. This new committee will help communicate the excitement and vitality of the Yearly Meeting and its ministries, and invite us all to participate in a spirit of abundance. I hope you will all become aware of their efforts shortly!

We took steps to implement the Yearly Meeting's decision to make the Administrative Assistant/Young Adult Friends Coordinator position a permanent one. This position was created almost three years ago using excess undesignated reserves, and has made a significant impact on our ministries with children, young adults, and intervisitation. Now that we must fund this continuing ministry through general donations, I hope you will pause to reflect on the extraordinary spiritual and programmatic growth of the Yearly Meeting over the last decade.

Much other important work falls to the Permanent Board as well. We received a returned travel minute from Marion Athearn on her travel to Ohio Yearly Meeting Conservative, and appointed five Wellesley Friends to represent us at the centennial of Puerto Padre Meeting in Cuba. We read one memorial minute, and also remembered our Board member and faithful friend Bob Philbrook, who died in September. We approved an updated set of personnel policies and encouraged the Personnel Committee to continue its project of bringing our personnel structures more in line with the current staffing levels of the Yearly Meeting.

Like the first Council of the early Christian church in Jerusalem, we desire unity—not just among ourselves—but with God who is truly present among us as the leader of the church. We seek always to subject our decisions on church governance to the test of God's will for the kingdom on earth. This is the source of the great pleasure I feel in serving as clerk of the Permanent Board. In these days of Lenten preparation, and looking ahead to the joy of Easter, I wish you the Spirit's increase in your worship and discernment.

—*Eden Grace, Beacon Hill (MA) MM*

In other Quaker news

Gathering on Peace Testimony & Faith

Jointly sponsored by NEYM Committees on Ministry & Counsel and Peace & Social Concerns, a "Day of Discernment on Ways to Keep the Peace Testimony Central to our Faith & Practice" will take place 2/14/2004 from 9am to 3:30pm at Wellesley Meetinghouse. Meetings are asked to send at least one "activist" Friend and one "contemplative" Friend for a dialogue between what at times seems like opposite poles of a broad spectrum. Contact: Marguerite Helen, 617/964-7932 • mugsm@mindspring.com

Committee on Aging Needs Info

The NEYM Committee on Aging would like to know the names of Meetings who have worked on death and dying issues and have resources on file. Contact Deborah Haviland PO Box 38 Cushing ME 04563 • 207/354-8714 • haviland@midcoast.com

Keep Friends "Religious"

The Ministry & Pastoral Care Committee of Baltimore YM has asked NEYM to respond to a minute, approved at BYM's 2003 annual Sessions, that urges Friends to use the full version of our name the *Religious Society of Friends* (Quakers) in all spoken and written communications. The minute has been referred to the NEYM Ministry & Counsel.

"New Visions for Changing the World"

4/17/04, 9am-3:30pm, Wellesley Friends Meetinghouse. Curious about the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) programs in New England, or how you can get involved with the AFSC activities? The New England Regional Office of the AFSC is holding a day-long gathering of staff, committee members, and interested Friends around the theme "New Visions for Changing the World: Refocusing the Light in our Service." Intended for the wider New England Quaker community, this gathering will provide an overview of AFSC programs and planned initiatives in the areas of urban youth, economic justice, criminal justice, immigration issues, international issues, and youth involvement. Moreover, the gathering seeks to foster dialog, and to explore ways by which both individuals and monthly meetings can contribute their talents to support AFSC programs. The keynote speaker, Paul Lacey, Clerk of the National AFSC Board of Directors and Professor Emeritus of English at Earlham

College will speak on "Seeing visions, dreaming dreams." One hour workshops, presented by New England AFSC staff, will follow the keynote address. Lunch will be provided. Young Friends and Young Adult Friends are encouraged to attend. Contact Robert Dove, 617/661-6130 • rdove@afsc.org

Native American concerns gathering

A Gathering of Friends on Native American Concerns will be held 4/28-5/1/2004 at Boulder (CO) Meetinghouse, both to learn more and to be more effective allies of Native peoples. Contact: Ed Nakawatase, 215/241-7131 • enakawatase@afsc.org

USFW? What's that?

The United Society of Friends Women (USFW) of New England is part of an international group of Friends women who gather to pray and support one another in ministry and service. USFW New England meets three times a year (more often in local chapters) for worship, sharing, and service to ministries around the world. They support projects in East Africa, Jamaica, Cuba, and the West Bank, and also seek to support the spiritual growth of the women of NEYM. Their next meeting, open to all, is 5/2/2004 at Weare (NH) MM. Nancy Shippen of Fresh Pond (MA) MM will share about her prison ministry. Contact Minga Claggett-Borne, 617/354-3808 • mingaborne@aol.com

Woolman Hill Retreats

What Would Gandhi Do? 2/6-8, Joanne Sheehan & John Humphries; *The Art and Spirit of Parenting*. 2/27-29, Bill Harley & Debbie Block, (co-sponsored with NEYM M&C); *Minding the Light: Guidance from Early Quakers*. 3/5-7, Brian Drayton & Maggie Edmondson; *Pastoral Care—A Circle of Love*. 3/26-28, Cornelia Parkes & Nancyrose Logan, (co-sponsored with NEYM M&C); *Aligning Your Money with your Values*. 4/6-18, Penny Yunuba, Carolyn Hilles, Jeffrey Kerekes. Contact: Woolman Hill, 413/774-3431 • www.woolmanhill.org

Summer "Quaker Peacebuilder Camp"

A group of Friends, and others from around New England, led by John Humphries of Hartford Meeting, are developing plans for a Quaker Peacebuilder Camp. The program will help people develop the skills, understanding and relationships to become bet-

ter organizers of nonviolent action. It also seeks to provide an experience of community that fosters spiritual practice and reflection as the foundation for faithful action. The curriculum includes the theory and practice of community organizing and nonviolent action, skills in group decision-making and discernment, outdoor recreation and physical labor, and hands-on experience with planning and implementing an action and/or a group service project. While the initial focus is on youth, the vision is intergenerational, recognizing that we are all seekers and that we can all improve our skills for effective action.

Friends are invited to help in three ways: You can write the organizers telling them of your support in prayer for this activity. You can ask your meeting to consider a contribution to the Scholarship Fund. You can make a personal contribution now that will support program development, fundraising and recruitment. The organizers will decide in early March whether there are sufficient resources for a pilot program this summer. Contact: John Humphries, 860/236-5175 • jhumphries@igc.org or Brian Drayton, 603/654-6001 • brian_drayton@terc.edu

Quaker House available for retreats

Quaker House, adjoining West Falmouth (MA) Meetinghouse, continues to be open fall through spring for small retreats or family gatherings. Ten off-the-floor sleeping spaces. Contact: David Douglas, Box 225, Pocasset, MA 02559-0225 • 508/563-6678.

FWCC Study Booklet available

In preparation for the Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) 21st Triennial Meetings in Auckland, New Zealand, 1/16-25/2004, a study booklet was prepared and circulated among Friends worldwide. That booklet is available in electronic and paper form upon request from the NEYM office.

Treasurer's Guide published

Philadelphia based Friends organizations have published *A Treasurer's Guide to Religious Organizations* designed to provide bookkeeping and accounting assistance to Meetings, churches, religious organizations and other nonprofit organizations. Available from Friends General Conference Bookstore, 800/466-4556 • www.quakerbooks.org

Presiding Clerk, Deana Chase ■ **Treasurer**, Ken Hoffman ■ **NEYM OFFICE**: 901 Pleasant Street, Worcester, MA 01602-1908 • 508/754-6760 • FAX: 508/754-9401 • neym@neym.org • www.neym.org • OFFICE HOURS: Tuesday–Friday, 9am–5pm ■ **Administrative Secretary**, Katharine Clark ■ **Administrative Assistant/Young Adult Friends Coordinator**, Karen Armstrong ■ **Youth & Education Secretary**, Christel Jorgenson ■ **Field Secretary**, Jonathan Vogel-Borne ■ **The New England Friend**: Editor, Jonathan Vogel-Borne; ■ **ARCHIVIST**, Marnie Miller-Gutsell, 121 Hope St., Providence RI 02906 ■ **FRIENDS CAMP**, Susan Morris, Director, P.O. Box 84, East Vassalboro, ME 04935 ■ **MOSES BROWN SCHOOL**, Joanne Hoffman, Head, 250 Lloyd Ave., Providence, RI 02906 ■ **NEW ENGLAND FRIENDS HOME–THAYER HOUSE**, Gretchen Condon, Administrator, Turkey Hill Lane, Hingham, MA 02043 ■ **YOUTH RETREATS**: Junior Yearly Meeting (JYM) Elementary Retreats grades 2-5, jymretreats.org; Kevin Lee 508/994-1638 and Gretchen Baker-Smith 508/997-0940; Grades 6-8, Karen Sanchez-Eppler 413/253-8943; Grades 9-12: Christel Jorgenson 617/625-4494.

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



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

February 2004

- 14 *Peace Testimony & Faith* – Wellesley FM (MA) [see p.7]
- 20–22 Young Friends Retreat – Wellesley FM (MA)
- 27–29 *Art & Spirit of Parenting* – Woolman Hill, MA [see p.7]
- 28 Permanent Board – Worcester FM (MA)
- 29 Dover QM – Dover MM (NH)

March 2004

- 6 Northwest QM – S.Starksboro/Wilderness MM's (VT)
- 7 Coordinating & Advisory – Location, TBA
- 12-14 Young Friends Gender Retreats – Location, TBA
- 13 Ministry & Counsel – Amesbury FM (MA)
- 18–21 FWCC America's Annual Meeting – Ottawa, Canada
- 19–21 Jr. High Retreat – Monadnock MM (NH)
- 20 Sessions Committee – Location, TBA
- 25 Ecumenical & Interfaith Relations – Concord, NH
- 26–28 *Pastoral Care* – Woolman Hill, MA [see p. 7]
- 26–28 Women's Retreat – Center Harbor, NH

April 2004

- 2–4 JYM 6th Graders – Westport MM(MA)
- 3 Committee Day – Hartford MM (CT)
- 16–18 Young Friends Retreat – Mt Toby MM (MA)
- 18 RI-Smithfield QM – Worcester FM (MA)
- 24 Falmouth QM – Durham MM (ME)
- 24 Sandwich QM – New Bedford MM (MA)
- 25 Salem QM – Framingham FM (MA)
- 27 Coordinating & Advisory – Worcester MM (MA)

May 2004

- 1 Vassalboro QM – Cobscook FM (ME)
- 2 CT Valley QM – South Berkshire MM (MA)
- 2 USFW – Weare MM (NH), Henniker, NH [see p.7]
- 7–9 Young Friends Senior Retreat – Location, TBA
- 7–9 Jr. High Retreat – Woolman Hill, MA
- 8 Permanent Board – Woolman Hill, MA
- 14-16 Ministry & Counsel – Woolman Hill, MA
- 21–23 Elementary Retreat – Woolman Hill, MA
- 30 Dover QM – West Epping/Gonic MM (NH)

June 2004

- 4–6 *Ministers & Elders* – Woolman Hill, MA
- 5–6 Northwest QM – Farm & Wilderness (VT)
- 12 Committee Day – Wellesley FM (MA)
- 18–20 YAF Retreat – Location, TBA

July 2004

- 3–10 FGC Gathering – Amherst, MA
- 18 RI-Smithfield QM – Providence MM (RI)
- 24 Falmouth QM – Location, TBA
- 24 Sandwich QM – Mattapoisett MM (MA)

August 2004

- 7–12 NEYM Sessions – Bryant College, Smithfield, RI
- Theme:** "And who is my neighbor?" (Luke 10:29)
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- Note: The *Faith & Practice* Revision Committee generally meets on the last Saturday of each month.