

existence of racism, building support “beyond the choir” for one's concerns, and spiritual foundations for witness. Looking at some of these concerns through the cultural prism of “winners and losers” yielded many good insights.

Although we didn't find definitive solutions for all our concerns, we were able to sink deeply into most of them. Throughout the workshop Marshall's stories, anecdotes, and insights provided help when we needed them. We shared personal goals and stories, found much common ground, achieved new insights, and sowed seeds that we believe will bear fruit in our attempts to be faithful witnesses to God's will.

## **Annual IYM Women's Gathering**

By Dawn Amos

IYM women gathered for their annual retreat at McNabb in April, 2004. Margery Post Abbot of Multnomah Monthly Meeting (Portland, Oregon) led a workshop titled “Power, Faithfulness and Attentive Listening.” The women shared their experiences of the Divine Presence in their lives. They also shared tears, lots of laughter, and chocolate. Next year's retreat will be April 22-24, 2005 on the theme



“Discernment In Service Of Building A Support Network” and will include a quilting project. Mark your calendars!

## **Peace Resources Committee Activities**

By Andrew Bartles and Dawn Rubbert

On March 5, 2004, J.E. McNeil, Executive Director of the Center on Conscience and War (CCW), gave a presentation at Stevenson High School regarding conscientious objection. Fifteen students were expected to be at the presentation. There was instead the pleasant surprise of thirty-seven students in attendance.

Discussion ranged from the legal definition of a conscientious objector to how St. Augustine defined “Just War” and about how no war has yet met his criteria for “Just War.”

The next day, at the Lake Forest Meeting House, J. E. McNeil gave a nine hour class on GI Rights for those interested in volunteering as Military Counselors with Chicago Hotline for Military Alternatives in Chicago and with Catholic Peace Fellowship in South Bend, both new members of the GI Rights Hotline.

Both sessions were planned by IYM Peace Resources Committee (PRC) and Lake Forest Meeting.

Volunteers have met twice since their original training to study military regulations, role play phone calls, and otherwise prepare to begin answering phone calls in May or June. The GI Rights Hotline is a nationwide consortium of hotlines providing information and helping find solutions for active military personnel with questions deferments, conscientious objections, discharges, harassment, and assault. Trainees will answer calls originating in the Midwest.

On March 15, 2003 a training for Draft Counselor counselors was held at St. Louis Meeting. Sessions were planned by PRC with financial support from the local AFSC and four other smaller donors. Eighteen persons from Missouri, Illinois and Arkansas were trained. Two IYM Young Friends audited portions of the class.

Bill Galvin from CCW (Center on Conscience and War) was the trainer. He attended Meeting for Worship and spoke to the small group of youth who attended First Day School that day.

Several St. Louisans who participated in the training have become active in forming a Network (which does not yet have a name) to get information out into the community and local colleges and high schools regarding alternatives to military service. The Network, which is being founded at the impetus of and under the care of the St. Louis MM Peace Committee is also committed to bringing further training to area residents.

Plans are in the works for both further Draft Counselor training and Military Counselor training which hopefully will lead to the development of a local unit of the GI Rights Hotline

The next training for GI Rights Hotline volunteers will be on June 5th at Lake Forest Meeting House. An advanced training for volunteers who completed the March 6th session will also be offered that day.

A workshop about draft counseling and counter-recruitment is planned for Madison in the very near future. More information about these and other trainings is available from Elizabeth Sprague at [elizabeth@nisbco.org](mailto:elizabeth@nisbco.org) or on the CCW website at <http://www.nisbco.org/>

## Book to be Distributed to Monthly Meetings

Chris Jocius

IYM Religious Education Committee will distribute copies of *Quakers in America* to meeting libraries. Newcomers to meeting as well as attenders and



members will learn about our past and recent issues and discussions among pastoral and unprogrammed, Evangelical and liberal Friends in "*Quakers in America*" (Columbia University Press, 2003) by Thomas D. Hamm.

The author is a historian and archivist of the Friends Collection at Earlham College. The book is in the Columbia Contemporary American Religion Series. The main text is about two hundred pages supplemented by helpful aides on chronology, glossary, bibliography, and forty pages of footnotes. The author gives a broad portrait for the general reader of Friends history in America.

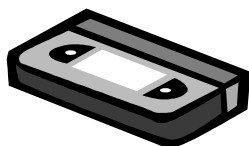
Chapters cover history, meeting for worship and business practices, five central areas of belief: worship, ministry, decision making, simplicity, and education among the various traditions, central debates of theology, leadership, authority, sexuality, identity, unity and diversity, growth and decline, worldviews, and Quaker women, marriage and the family.

Throughout Hamm weaves a mixture of historical and social dimensions among the central traditions that have united and divided Friends in America. This combination of strands are brought together to give the reader a wider perspective than previous general surveys

of Friends and one that offers a reading of our practices that gives a pathway for discussion and reflection. At IYM the author plans to give a workshop on Saturday.

## A Quaker Declaration of War

Now available —  
Video of “A Quaker  
Declaration of War”  
address to Illinois  
Yearly Meeting  
Friends by Chuck Fager, July 30, 2003



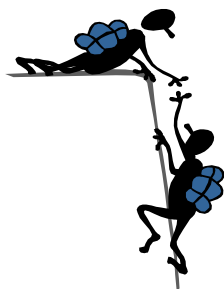
A professionally-taped, 1-hour video edition of Chuck Fager’s keynote talk to last year’s Yearly Meeting Session is available on video in VHS format for \$15.00 or DVD format for \$24.00, from QuakerBooks of FGC. Consult their tempting purple book catalog, visit/order on line [www.quakerbooks.org](http://www.quakerbooks.org) or call 800/966-4556 to order a copy for your family or meeting.

Building on the old Quaker notion of the Lamb’s War, Chuck challenged us Illinois Friends to take the long view, the strategic view and the prepared view of our activities and to look to the future as we express our faith in action. Radical action can also start in some pretty ordinary places. This is an important resource for individual and group study. It would also be a great gift for Friends beyond IYM or who have moved away and would appreciate recalling our Yearly Meeting sessions.

## Workcamp Experiences Abound

By Dawn Rubbert

AFSC/IMYM Joint  
Service Project (JSP)  
Since June of 1990,  
American Friends  
Service Committee  
(AFSC) and the



Intermountain Yearly Meeting (IMYM) have conducted a special form of discovery and service involving youth and adults. Our projects are designed to connect small, intergenerational groups (ages 14 and up - and not limited to Friends) with the work of AFSC in the U.S. Southwest including Mexico and with the Lakota on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. Spring break workcamps generally work with the Seri people in Mexico. There have been fall trips to Mexico in the past and much of the summer is spent at Pine Ridge. Mike Gray is the director and I am one of the people who serves on the JSP Oversight Committee. <http://www.afsc.org/imym2.htm>

Mexico Summer Project: Semilleros de Futuros  
Mexico Summer Project has been carried out by AFSC continuously since 1939. People of all faith backgrounds are encouraged to participate. Our partner organization in Mexico is Service, Development and Peace, A.C.(SEDEPAC), a Mexican NGO devolved out of AFSC's work in Mexico. SEDEPAC has developed a dynamic new program: Semilleros de Futuros: Youth for Peace and Sustainable Community. The aim is to provide a place for young people from different countries of the Americas, Europe, and the indigenous communities of Xilitla to work together on community projects, share from their diverse cultures and experiences, and learn ways to address the political, ecological and economic challenges of their present and their future. The most important part of the project involves the building of ecological stoves (Estufas Lorena) for members of the community. This is about an 8 week program. For more information contact Christina Repoley, 1501 Cherry Street Philadelphia, PA 19102 Phone: 215-241-7295 Fax: (215)-241-7026  
Email: [mexsummer@afsc.org](mailto:mexsummer@afsc.org) <http://www.afsc.org/latinamerica/int/mexicosummer.htm>

Summer Workcamps in Africa  
David Westling will be speaking about his

experience in Africa with this project on Thursday night at Illinois Yearly Meeting. African Great Lakes Initiative (AGLI). in conjunction with Friends Peace Teams, offers a workcamp experience to rebuild homes for people living in internally displaced camps and classrooms for orphans in Burundi, Rwanda and Kenya. The work is done in collaboration with local Friends. Contact:

[davidzarembka@juno.com](mailto:davidzarembka@juno.com)

#### Friends Workcamp Program

“Our first task in approaching another people, another culture, another religion, is to take off our shoes, for the place we are approaching is holy. Else we may find ourselves treading on another's dream. More serious still, we may forget . . . that God was here before our arrival.”  
—Author Unknown

This quote greets you at the Friends Workcamp Program website of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. They offer a variety of weekend and much longer projects including a summer in China (more on that below). Here's where to check them out.

<http://www.pym.org/workcamp/> Arin Hanson, Coordinator [workcamps@pym.org](mailto:workcamps@pym.org)  
Friends Workcamps 1515 Cherry Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19102 215 241-7236

China Summer Workcamp brings students from China, South Korea, Japan and the US to the countryside of Hunan province, China. From late July through mid-August the volunteers teach English to local children and work together on environmental projects. China Summer Workcamp, which opened in the summer of 2001, is a project of AFSC's East Asia Quaker International Affairs Representatives together with Westfield Monthly Meeting and Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. This program has been very successful and the couple who began it (the wife is Chinese, the husband grew up in Westfield Meeting) now work for the AFSC as field staff for Asia. Philadelphia Yearly Meeting has been

the organizational structure for the US portion of the workcamp.

<http://www.pym.org/workcamp/China/china.htm>

#### **Not specifically Quaker Opportunities:** **Council on International Educational**

**Exchange (CIEE)**, International Volunteer Projects, 7 Custom House Street, 3rd Floor Portland, ME 04101. Phone: (207) 553-7600 or (800) 40-STUDY; e-mail:

[info@councilexchanges.org](mailto:info@councilexchanges.org) (Include your mailing address.); web address: <http://www.councilexchanges.org> and **Jackson Area**

**Ministries**. JAM operates summer workcamp programs of various lengths from June to August in Appalachian Ohio. If you are interested in JAM work-camping, contact the office, or write to: Bob Davis, PO Box 603, Jackson, OH 45640. Phone/fax: (740) 286-1320 (call in advance before sending a fax); e-mail: [jamjar@bright.net](mailto:jamjar@bright.net); web address: <http://www.frognet.net/~jorobin> (2/04)

**SCI-International Voluntary Service (SCI-IVS)**, is the U.S. group of **Service Civil International**. SCI, which was founded after World War I by French Quaker, Pierre Ceresole, in his hope to create an alternative to military service in the form of workcamps, is now one of the major clearing-houses for (mostly) summer workcamps. The purpose of the workcamps is to promote international understanding and peace through three broad categories of service: physical work, social work, and work/study -- in the USA and abroad. Today SCI has 33 branches and groups in Europe, Asia, Africa and North America and a contact in Australia. Each workcamp has a local sponsor: for example, an environmental group, village council, or a community with people with disabilities. To apply, you must be 18+ years old for an overseas workcamp and 16+ years old for a US workcamp. There is no upper age limit. The SCI-IVS USA application fee for residents of the U.S. and Canada for 1999 was \$65 for domestic workcamps, \$125 for most

overseas workcamps. For camps in Asia, Africa, Latin America and Eastern Europe, the fees may be higher and vary by location. Volunteers arrange and pay for their own transport to and from the camp. The camp sponsor is expected to provide accommodation and food. For more information or to receive their *International Workcamp Directory* (which is usually published in late March-early April each year -- and costs approx. \$5.00), contact: SCI-IVS, USA, 5474 Walnut Level Road Crozet, VA 22932. Phone/Fax: (206) 350-6585 ; e-mail: [sciinfo@sci-ivs.org](mailto:sciinfo@sci-ivs.org); web address: <http://www.sci-ivs.org>

Volunteers for Peace: International Workcamps (VFP). Join volunteers from at least three other countries in over 1,500 social, environmental, conservation, restoration, archaeological, or agricultural work in over seventy countries. The length of service is 2-3 weeks; multiple placements in the same or different countries is common. VFP programs are open to volunteers of age 18 years or over in most countries. Dates: Most programs are May-Sep., Some Oct.-Apr. Cost: \$200 registration fee per workcamp covers meals and accommodations. Volunteers pay transportation costs. For more information, contact: Volunteers for Peace, 1034 Tiffany Road, Belmont, VT 05730. Phone: (802) 259-2759; fax: (802) 259-2922; e-mail: [vfp@vfp.org](mailto:vfp@vfp.org); web address: <http://www.vfp.org/> To receive their *International Workcamp Directory*, which is published in the spring of each year, send \$20 US to the address above.

## **Decade to Overcome Violence**

By Tom Paxson

The World Council of Churches (WCC) has declared the years 2001 through 2010 the "Decade to Overcome Violence: Churches Seeking Reconciliation and Peace." The seeds of the Decade were planted through the quiet and persistent work of the "historic peace churches" within the WCC from its inception to promote the centrality of peace witness to the

apostolic faith. In 1998 the 8th Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Harare, Zimbabwe approved a proposal formulated and proposed by representatives of the historic peace churches for a Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV).

The Decade was launched in April 2001 and the first meeting of the DOV committee of the US Conference was held on September 24th in Chicago-- less than two weeks following the attacks on the twin towers in New York City and the on the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. From the perspective of many in the United States, the world had changed.

Meanwhile, the WCC has been struggling to enlist the churches in the world to abandon the cult of violence and work toward building cultures of peace. In August of 2002 it initiated an "ecumenical accompaniment program in Palestine and Israel" to accompany Palestinians and Israelis in non-violent actions and concerted advocacy efforts to end the occupation. For example, Palestinians would be accompanied to their fields so that they could safely harvest their crops. This is an on-going program.

The focus in 2003 was the Sudan -- Healing and Reconciliation. The WCC has worked for peace in this war-torn land. This year, 2004, the focus is on the United States of America; the theme, "the power and promise of peace."

The U.S. DOV committee was charged to become part of, help instigate, and nourish the movement for overcoming violence and building cultures of peace. Toward this end, the U.S. Committee has invited its member churches to be active partners in the Decade to Overcome Violence, to share with one another their peace and justice work, to participate in the annual Lenten Fast From Violence, and to engage both theologically and practically this year's theme, "the power and promise of peace."

A wonderful example of the DOV's approach in the U.S. was the WCC's co-sponsoring an ecumenical

consultation March 8th and 9th on "Women in Peace processes," held in conjunction with the annual two-week meetings of the United Nations' Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). Over thirty women from eight denominations in the United States participated, and the panel on UN Resolution 1325 drew delegates to the CSW and persons from interested non-governmental organizations.

An evolving calendar of DOV- related events

*See the Decade to Overcome Violence  
web site  
[www.overcomingviolence.org](http://www.overcomingviolence.org)*

has been posted on the Decade's web site. The calendar includes the Interfaith Peace Seminar celebrating the 35th anniversary of Quaker House of Fayetteville, NC, and a conference on Genocide sponsored by the National Council of Churches (USA) hosted by the Armenian Orthodox Church. It will focus on Rwanda.

The web site contains much more than the calendar of DOV-related events. It is set up to receive suggestions for peace resources. This has just recently been added and depends on grass roots suggestions. Please submit suggestions. They could have a major impact.

The U.S. DOV Committee approved a final version of the 2004 Focus Statement at its March meeting. It should be on the web site by the time *Among Friends* appears. It also reviewed plans for an International WCC Scholars Gathering and efforts to connect the DOV to the liturgical calendar for those churches who structure their services in this way. A letter is being sent out to church leaders asking them to issue pastoral letters to congregations in their denominations urging them to reflect on the meaning of Pentecost in relation to the Decade to Overcome Violence.

Plans are being made for a major event in Atlanta, Georgia timed to connect it with the annual meeting of the U.S. Conference of the WCC. With the King Center and the Gandhi Center for Reconciliation, the Atlanta area is rich in resources.

In short, participation in the Decade in the United States is beginning to pick up and there are contributions each of you can make.

## **Indian Affairs and Olney School Reports**

By Grayce Mesner

On March 25-27, 2004 Neil and I attended the 135th annual Associated Committee of Friends on Indian Affairs (ACFIA) meeting at Olney Friends School in Barnesville, OH. Dick Haworth was a graduate of Olney, so I had been on this campus before - a lovely setting for a high school.

Olney is expecting seventy-two students in the fall of 2004. They have full senior, junior, and freshman classes and are now focusing on efforts to get 10th graders. The 2004-05 cost for tuition, room and board is \$21,000. If you know of any prospective students, let them know at [mainoffice@olneyfriends.org](mailto:mainoffice@olneyfriends.org)

ACFIA made the decision to have only preschool/ kindergarten at the MOWA Choctaw Center in Alabama for the next school year. They will still collect Campbell Soup labels and they can always use money for scholarships. The tuition for a student is \$70/month and scholarships are made available, through our donations, for \$60/month. Norman & Jane Snell will be leaving so they are looking for a new Director. Anyone interested? More information can be obtained at [www.acfia.quaker.org](http://www.acfia.quaker.org)

All sorts of volunteer work is welcome, for all ages - for long or short periods, at all centers. MOWA is trying to build up its Quaker library, so if people or meetings have Quaker books to get rid of, think of them.

## Envisioning the Future

By Beth Schobernd

Braving single-digit temperatures, snow, and the ever-present prairie wind, the group known as the “interim council” gathered near McNabb on January 31, 2004 to consider the future of the Illinois Yearly Meeting buildings and grounds. IYM committees represented on the council were Development, Finance, Maintenance and Planning, Ministry and Advancement and Site Envisioning and Building. Also participating in the group were Trustees, Clear Creek Friends, and the IYM clerk, treasurer, and field secretary. This was a “threshing session” where Friends shared information, concerns and ideas.

We opened with worship, then shared a simple lunch. Carol Bartles and Robin Johnson of Maintenance and Planning led us on a tour of the new property on the west side of the grounds, the dormitory, and the Meeting House. They explained the termite damage and other structural problems with the Meeting House and described the plans and timeline for repairs. Phase I of the repair work will include wood frame restoration in the front half of the building, painting, grading, termite protection, and possibly gutters/downspouts, carpet replacement and roof reinforcement. These repairs are scheduled to begin shortly after our 2004 annual sessions. Phase II, scheduled for 2005, would include repairs to the back half of the building, tuck pointing, and work on the sill plate, beams and joists.

Returning to the Clear Creek Room, Friends received progress reports from the several other committees concerned with the building and grounds. Bill Howenstine, clerk of Site Envisioning and Building (SEB) reported that the committee would interview architects on February 7. The chosen architect will have a conceptual design for Friends’ consideration at the 2004 Yearly Meeting sessions. (Note: see



article on next page.) SEB will be sending preparatory information to Monthly Meetings prior to the IYM sessions.

Development Committee clerk, Cathy Garra, reported on the work of that committee. A brochure describing the various IYM funds and how Friends can contribute to them will be ready by the March Continuing Committee meeting. Up to this point, IYM has collected money for its regular needs. We now need to move on to larger sums for restoration work and the new building. A capital campaign committee will be forming in the spring.

Sandy Huntley, clerk of the Finance Committee, brought Friends up to date on incorporation and insurance. The committee was charged at the 2003 annual sessions to proceed with work on incorporation. This project is nearing completion, and the committee will have a report on their progress for Continuing Committee in March. The insurance being investigated will protect the trustees and officers, cover drivers taking youth to activities, and provide sexual abuse coverage. (Note: Insurance has been obtained.)

Friends explored ways of engaging the Monthly Meetings in the vision of the future of IYM and

its buildings and grounds. Some Monthly Meeting members and attenders don't feel connected to the Yearly Meeting. Suggested strategies for raising IYM awareness among Monthly Meetings were:

- Visits to Monthly Meetings with video of Chuck Fager's 2003 IYM speech. Ask queries about the future of IYM and the Society of Friends
- IYM mission development exercises
- Ask them what IYM can and does offer to them
- Have those involved in Yearly Meeting carry the message to their respective Monthly Meetings
- Expand Yearly Meeting services to Monthly Meetings

The field secretary, SEB Committee, capital campaign volunteers and Ministry and Advancement were identified as resources to facilitate the process.

A Program Committee is being formed whose mission will be to envision the proposed new building as a Peace Place on the Prairie, working closely with SEB. The Program Committee will reach out to Monthly Meetings as part of a greater seasoning process to consider the possible uses of the new building.



Friends closed the day with worship and a greater sense of commitment to the future of the Yearly Meeting and to the building and grounds that host its activities.

## **Architect Chosen for Proposed "Peace House on the Prairie"**

By Bill Howenstine

The Fall 2003 issue of Among Friends described the vision of a new IYM building, a "peace house on the prairie." Since that was written, the IYM Site Envisioning and Building (SEB) Committee, as authorized by IYM 2003, devoted its fall and winter meetings to the selection of an architectural firm to develop a schematic design for an all-weather building for IYM and Clear Creek Monthly Meeting usage.

Resumes of 15 interested and highly qualified firms were evaluated, and interviews were conducted with four of these. In the end, the committee choice was The Troyer Group of Mishawaka, Indiana. This firm has designed many church buildings and has extensive experience in sustainable and environmental design. Members of IYM Continuing Committee may remember meeting last year in a Troyer designed building, the Mennonite Church of Normal.

On April 10 the SEB Committee hosted an open one-day workshop at McNabb, conducted by Randy Seitz, the Project Manager, and his Troyer team, to help them discern the possibilities for the new building as perceived by IYM Friends. About 25 members of IYM applied themselves to the task in small-group working sessions, large group discussions, and a walk over the land. The enthusiasm and energy generated were fairly palpable!

The SEB Committee will continue to meet with The Troyer Group to help them refine a final schematic design for presentation to Illinois Yearly Meeting in July 2004. We look forward with great anticipation to this next phase in the development of the "peace house on the prairie!"

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## Friends' Practices

Dear Friends,  
Below is a section proposed for IYM's Faith and Practice, that we are submitting for provisional acceptance for five years at this year's session of Illinois Yearly Meeting. It is text which was revised this year in response to the input we got from versions circulated in the past several years and from our visits to monthly meetings. It is the section on Friends' Manner of Decision Making.

We urge that you look at it before the yearly meeting session so that consideration can be well informed.

The Faith and Practice Committee  
Tom Paxson, Clerk

### Friends' Manner of Decision Making: A Quaker Meeting for Business

By Faith and Practice Committee, 24 January 2004

As many Friends as are able gather together to make the decisions that affect the meeting community. We begin by centering down in silent worship. If the business is difficult, or if the group feels keenly its need to be brought together in the Spirit, this silence may go on for a long time.

The clerk of the meeting introduces the items of business, one at a time. Some are small matters, while others are large; some appear mundane, while others deal directly with matters of faithful commitment. Each piece of business, regardless of its nature, is raised into the waiting, seeking silence.

Participants, when they feel led to speak to the issue under consideration, seek recognition from the clerk, and address the clerk or the meeting at large. All try to listen deeply to each speaker, trying to hear the guidance of God: the still, small voice which may find expression through

any one of us, or (more often) find partial expression in several Friends' contributions. The clerk keeps a slow, reflective pace and an atmosphere hospitable to many different perspectives. Sometimes quite opposite views are expressed; elements from such diverse perspectives may reappear later, in unexpected combinations.

Slowly, or sometimes quickly, an agreement emerges: Friends find unity in a particular course of action which seems right for the meeting. Often, this course of action differs significantly from any idea present when the issue was introduced. The clerk or others try to put this agreement into words, as they recognize its emergence. Before the item of business is done, the clerk or recording clerk will voice this "sense of the meeting" very explicitly, to check her or his understanding with the meeting; often, the minute recording the decision is composed on the spot and read back "in the face of the meeting." The actual decision takes place when this clearly formulated understanding is accepted by the assembled group. No vote is ever taken.

When the decision has been formulated to the meeting's satisfaction, the group settles into more silence before the next item of business which is introduced, and handled, in the same way.

#### Understanding The Process

Friends' approach to decision-making differs fundamentally from the decision-making processes in the world around us, whether in government, business, academia, volunteer organizations, or other religious groups. Our decisions are not based on the desires of the majority. Neither do they rest on compromises that seek to placate groups or individuals by granting some of their wishes. The sense of the meeting sought by Friends is that course of action recognized by the group as a leading for the group as a whole; often, this is understood in terms of finding the will of God for the meeting.

While we prefer our decisions to be unanimous, unanimity is not the goal of this process, and it is no guarantee.

In the Society of Friends, decisions about matters of business are the responsibility of the entire meeting. Our decisions are not made by an administrator or a council of representatives. Any of us may have some divine guidance on any matter; without each Friend's input the meeting community cannot have a full picture of what it is being called by God to do.

Meeting for business is based on deep, open, prayerful listening. We listen for guidance directly, and we also listen carefully and prayerfully to each other, expecting to find guidance from the same deep source in one another's words. This is the same sort of waiting and listening, the same openness to the leadings of the Spirit, that characterizes our meetings for worship. We wait together to be led as a body, just as we wait in meeting for worship for a leading to speak in ministry.

The spiritual growth of the meeting and of its people is the most important outcome of any piece of business. As a consequence, even routine business needs to be conducted in the Light. The processes that are used for small things will be the ones that come naturally when a more demanding issue arises. Our love and respect for each other, and our faith that deep springs of guidance and inspiration are always available, empower us to trust that a faithful path forward can be found. Meeting for business, like meeting for worship, can lead to the experience of a "gathered" meeting, which can be profoundly transformative for both the group and for the individuals involved.

#### **Working Together Toward A Sense Of The Meeting** **Some Advices on Participation in Meeting for Business**

- Hold the meeting prayerfully in the Light; hold each speaker and the clerks in the Light.

- Pay attention to the process, as well as to the issues. Quaker practice in meeting for business is best learned by first-hand observation and participation.
- Seek the good of the meeting as a whole, the will of God, the mind of Christ; be prepared to let go your personal preferences and individual comfort.
- Stay centered, or return if you find you have strayed.
- Give your full attention to the person speaking, and to the Spirit within. This kind of attention is incompatible with formulating your own responses while someone else is speaking.
- Allow others to complete what they are saying, and then allow some silence for reflection before you begin to speak.
- If another has already made your point, forgo speaking.
- Seek the clerk's recognition before speaking; address the clerk or the meeting as a whole, not individual Friends.
- Speak in the hope of serving the meeting's search for Truth. Your personal opinion, or your feelings on an issue, are relevant only insofar as they help in that search.
- Share the part of the Truth that is given you. The meeting needs the Light given to each person, in order to find the path that is right for it.
- Speak to the item of business being discussed. Stay close to the essentials that can help the meeting reach a decision. Stop when you are done, so others can hold your statement, and the business at hand, in the Light.
- In some larger meetings, it is a helpful custom for each person to speak only once to an item of business; in smaller meetings, especially when part of the work is gathering information, this is not always either practical or helpful.
- Let your speech be plain, simple, and clear. Argumentation, rhetoric, and swaying by appeal to emotion are all out of place in

meeting for business. This is more than a matter of group style: such simplicity supports an attitude of seeking, of listening for divine guidance.

- Support the clerks in prayer as they formulate the minute.
- After a matter is concluded, return to silence and center again in preparation for the next item of business.

### **The Roles of the Clerks in Meeting for Business**

The job of the clerk is to discern the will of God as it comes into focus through the meeting's common search for it. Where there is a recording clerk or assistant clerk, he or she shares this responsibility with the clerk. These roles are at most superficially analogous to those of the secretary and chair of a secular organization, and clerks with such experience will find that it does not always serve them well. Those clerking a Quaker meeting need to learn this job: by talking with other clerks and watching them at meetings for business, by attending to supportive feedback from their own meeting, and by reading or attending workshops.

Good organization provides a groundwork for good clerking. A meeting calendar, with dates that certain actions must be initiated in order to produce the outcomes the meeting expects, is invaluable. Preparing an agenda is important: identifying what items of business are to come before the meeting, choosing an order. It is prudent to make sure that committee clerks or others presenting business are prepared. The clerk should be aware of the history of past decisions related to present items of business. Preparing the agenda also involves considering beforehand which items of business could wait until a future meeting for business, if a decision proves unexpectedly complex or difficult, or if the Spirit moves in unforeseen ways. The agenda is never considered more than tentative; actual consideration of business should be left to the guidance of the Spirit. Reading a query at

the beginning of meeting is often used to help settle Friends in readiness for business.

While preparation of items of business is an important part of the clerk's work, so too is the spiritual preparation of becoming centered for the meeting. The clerk's task is to help the meeting community hear and recognize the will of God for that community. This task should come before the clerk's personal preferences, or even deep convictions; the meeting's trust that the clerk is seeking to assist that corporate discernment should not be abused. Quaker clerks stay out of the discussion and avoid contributing their own perspectives to the business at hand. On rare occasions when the call to speak seems imperative, the clerk will make it clear she or he is speaking, for a moment, as an individual member of the meeting, and then go back to impartial clerking. The clerks try to encourage an open, seeking atmosphere in which divergent perspectives can be voiced.

Discussions should be kept focused on the current item of business; a meandering discussion with little focus will not generally come to closure. The clerk may have to intervene to help Friends focus, interrupting digressions or personal sharing which is not relevant to the issue at hand. A secure trust that the clerk is not trying to influence the meeting's deliberations may make these interventions easier.

Composing and reading back the sense of the meeting immediately after it is reached is very helpful, especially with larger meetings or difficult decisions. "Minuting in the face of the meeting," as this practice is called, was the standard when minutes were written longhand in record books; the practice is frequently used today and has been found to be helpful. Clerks need not feel embarrassed by the time it takes to compose a minute, or to let the meeting reflect on it. They may ask for quiet while they write, reminding the meeting that this is an

opportunity to return to the center. Clerks may also ask to be held in the Light while attempting to capture the sense of the meeting, especially on a difficult issue. Reading back the minute provides a helpful check on everyone's understanding of the decision. Friends are generally clearer about the decision and more ready to implement it, when the meeting has paused to see and feel and savor the unity that has been reached.

### **Process for Items of Business**

Meeting affairs are sometimes delegated to committees or to individual Friends. At other times, a concern comes to the meeting for business from a committee or from an individual. Considerable preparation may be necessary to present the matter clearly; this preparation should be done beforehand. This may involve finding out the facts, doing the calculations, thinking things through, giving the matter careful and prayerful consideration.

Consider before coming to the meeting for business whether you are (or your committee is) providing information, or requesting seasoning, or recommending a decision. If your business requires a decision from the meeting, make your presentation clearly and completely, then step back. The clerk of the meeting calls for consideration of the matter. The meeting may need some time to come to the clarity that you have already reached and then may find itself led in a different direction. Trying to control the decision is an impediment to corporate discernment. The meeting should take the time to be clear about the responsibilities of its committees, especially what it expects them to decide at the committee level. Trust the work of meeting committees; the meeting should not expect, during meeting for business, to go over every fact and every consideration behind a recommendation.

In response to a committee's report the meeting minutes an action. Possibilities include acknowledging receipt of the report, accepting

recommendations from the report, and/or referring the matter for further consideration.

### **Challenges**

The primary goal of the meeting's decision process is to come into unity in God. The meeting and those participating in a meeting for business are urged to not allow the matter at hand to eclipse this fundamental goal. Thus the meeting should cultivate an openness to receive a truth that may be missing from the perspectives most frequently expressed, to be open to alternatives to preconceived ideas. The clerk should see to it that this process is not rushed; returning to silent worship can often help a meeting's ability truly to listen to the variety of perspectives within it. If unity in the sense of the meeting cannot be found with respect to the matter at hand, the issue is left for further seasoning. The old policy remains unchanged, or the new business not acted upon; the subject is set aside until another meeting for business to allow for more prayer, reflection, and conversation. The ultimate solution, and the group that takes the time to come to unity about it, are generally both the better for waiting.

Trying to hurry an item of business, either because the meeting has tired of it, or because the meeting for business is held in a strictly limited time period, often causes problems, and should be avoided. A meeting may search for a long time before it finds the course of action right for it. Other times, it is there early in the process, but it is long before the meeting is able to recognize its rightness. Friends' really creative or radical insights have often taken a very long time to reach full meeting support.

Occasionally, an agreement reached by the meeting reflects something quite other than the will of God. Friends may happen to agree for different, conflicting, reasons; when all are eager to act, everyone can have what they want by ignoring these differences. Major differences may become evident at a later step, however, making united action very difficult. Other times,

unanimity is reached because people have dropped out of the process, feeling unheard or unheeded. A unanimous decision, in cases like this, is unlikely to reflect any deep leading for the meeting, and is often better laid aside for a time.

Sometimes a sense of the meeting is seen to emerge, though a Friend present remains unclear that the course of action in question represents a faithful response by the meeting to the divine guidance it has received. When a Friend is not united in the emerging sense of the meeting, it may be because of personal factors or circumstances that intrude on her or his prayerful consideration of the issue; it may be because he or she discerns that the course of action toward which the meeting appears to be heading is not sufficiently faithful to the leadings of the Spirit; or it may be because he or she is simply unable to discern God's will on this particular matter. If a Friend not drawn into the unity of the emerging sense of the meeting, believes her or his disunity is not so grounded as to warrant the meeting's further attention, the Friend may ask to "stand aside" so as not to impede the meeting's work. A Friend who has a clear leading, or "stop," that a proposed action is not appropriate should clearly communicate this concern. It is a responsibility to do so even if it is uncomfortable for the individual or for the meeting. Typically a meeting will not proceed if even a single individual is not in unity. This is not to say that an individual Friend has the prerogative to block a decision. But the meeting should be extremely cautious in accepting a course of action where one or more Friends present have expressed contrary leadings. It should weigh heavily whether moving ahead with the matter at hand is not less important than the loving fellowship of the meeting. Our practice should reflect faithfulness to the expectation that divine guidance will lead the meeting into unity when all humbly submit themselves to the divine will.

## **Learning About Quaker Business Process**

By Mariellen Gilpin

Married one Sunday, the next Sunday John and I went to worship in the Friends meeting. We were quietly welcomed and encouraged to stay for potluck. The lady who was holding the potluck invited us herself. "But we didn't bring anything for a potluck," we said shyly. "We're having loaves and fishes, didn't you know? Plenty for all," she told us. Soon we joined committees and settled into the life of the meeting.

Although we both attended worship regularly at the Quaker college, the college meeting had not invited non-members to participate in meetings for business. Our new meeting, on the other hand, encouraged us to participate fully in meeting decisions, even though we weren't yet members. "Silent worship is just one part of Quakerism," a woman told us. "Our business meetings, and our method of coming to decision by reaching a sense of the meeting, gives Quakerism much of its vitality." Intrigued, we began attending meetings for business.

I was accustomed to voting as a method of making group decisions. Watching an entire group of people work together to achieve a sense of the meeting was an eye-opening experience. In Quaker business process, one member can "stand in the way" of any decision; there is no majority rule; a decision is taken unanimously or not at all. At one early meeting for business, everyone present was in favor of a particular decision. But one man, who happened not to be present, had said he was opposed. The clerk said he would talk to the man who disagreed to see if he felt he should stand in the way. And at the next month's meeting for business, the man told us he would not stand in the way. It was only then that the business meeting moved ahead. I liked Quaker process. Nobody was run over roughshod in a Quaker meeting.

After one business meeting I rode home with a dear Friend who told me the Greek word usually translated as *with* in *I am with you always* could also be translated as *I am among you always*. That night I composed a letter requesting membership in meeting. I wrote, "In our meetings for business I have experienced God's presence among us." Quaker business process had become as important to me as silent worship.

The business meeting when I officially became a member, however, did not go easily. Bentley, a member of the meeting, had recently left his wife and five kids to set up housekeeping with a 19-year-old girl. My friend Ruth and I taught the teen group, and the teens invited teens from several nearby meetings for a weekend Quake. Responsibility for the Saturday program fell on Ruth and me. The adults in meeting threw themselves into making the Quake a success — providing lodging, carrying in casseroles, suggesting fun things to do.

Tina, oldest daughter of our errant Friend Bentley, invited all the teens to her father's house on Saturday night. I knew nothing of the plan until Tina and her best friend Betty came to tell me after supper. I was exhausted — I had been working steadily since early that morning, and it was now late evening. In my inexperience, I hadn't imagined the kids, who had been going strong for twelve hours, would need further entertainment in the evening. Nothing was planned. I knew the meeting had been reaching out to Bentley, his ex, his children, and the young woman. I asked a parent and she agreed, so off trooped the teens to Bentley's house. Ruth and I crawled home to bed.

After Sunday worship the teens left for home, having planned to meet again at our meetinghouse two months later. Ruth and I were worn out, but Sunday night was business meeting, and we went especially to thank the assembled Friends for their wonderful support

for the weekend. I started my thank you speech.

Susanna, mother of one of the teens, interrupted. When Susanna was mad at someone, she threw them out of the nest. Bentley had offered the kids beer, and opened what he had on hand: three cans for about 22 teens. (John said, "Three beers for 22 teenagers? It's a wonder Bentley didn't have a riot on his hands!") Susanna's son had a few sips and came home from a Quaker gathering with liquor on his breath. It was Ruth's and my fault. Susanna made no mention of Bentley. We were at the business meeting, Bentley was not, so Ruth and I got the brunt of her anger. Ruth and I were horrified. Hurt that we were held responsible for Bentley's lack of good common sense, we wept. And this was the meeting for business in which I became an official member of the meeting.

Friends rallied. The mother who let the teens go to Bentley's house acknowledged she had agreed, and told me she should have shared her reservations. The clerk told Ruth and me Susanna's father had died an alcoholic. Her anger was about more than us, and more than Bentley. Bentley, paramour in tow, came to worship next Sunday and publicly apologized for giving the kids beer. Betty's mother lectured her because she and Tina had not considered Ruth's and my role as the responsible adults—their spur-of-the-moment decision had gotten us in trouble, not them. Betty apologized. Another mother explained that the meeting's efforts to reach out to Bentley did not mean the meeting wanted him influencing their children. And an elder Friend invited me to her apartment for supper. She listened while I cried. She didn't take sides. She simply listened, and I felt better.

That happened in January. At the February meeting for business, assembled Friends would agree on a plan for the teens to hold the second Quake. The Youth Revolution was in full swing; the newspapers were full of the generation gap. On every teenager's lips were the words, "Don't trust anyone over 30." Ruth

and I were 27, the generation between the kids and their parents. We felt for both sides: we didn't want any harm to come to the kids, and we also understood the teens felt they were suffocating — we had felt that way, too. But we had been in our early twenties when we stopped obeying our parents. We had been old enough to have good sense. The kids were too inexperienced to make the kinds of decisions they were clamoring to make.

Also, some of the kids were not clamoring for freedom; we needed to find a way to keep them from being exposed to pressures they clearly didn't want. As I prayed, it came clear: the teens needed to be able to stand in the way of reaching a sense of the meeting, along with the adults. There would be no need to rebel against authority if there were no authority figures. Of course.

Everybody turned out for the business meeting. The adults presented their guidelines for the March Quake. The kids disagreed uproariously. They declared the meeting was entirely unreasonable. Adults were doing a power number. "This isn't about power," I said. "Everybody here — teens and adults alike — can stand in the way of any decision. We're Quakers here. We're working for a sense of the meeting here." Silence fell. I challenged everyone to remain silent until someone saw a way forward.

Betty, the teens' clerk, spoke quietly in the silence. "Do some of the adults have dirty minds?" She was asking, not accusing.

"Yes," said one adult quietly. "Can you help us find a way so our dirty minds won't work overtime?"

"What guidelines would the teens like to suggest?" asked a parent.

After a whispered conference Betty said, "The teens need to talk." The clerk called a recess. The kids went in another room to strategize

while adults headed for the bathrooms and refilled coffee cups.

I turned to Ruth. "I have a raging headache," she said softly. I did too.

"I have exactly two aspirin," I said. Ruth had none. "Here, you take one of mine, and I'll take the other." We swallowed our pills. Suddenly I heard Betty, sitting in a quiet corner sobbing. "Don't give up, Betty," I told her. "We'll come through this, all of us together. Our meeting has been through rough times, and we've come out stronger and wiser. The adults want the March Quake too. You'll see. It'll work out." Betty dried her eyes, and I returned to Ruth. "Is that aspirin working yet?" I asked.

"I think so, a little," she said. "How about you?"

"I don't feel any worse," I told her. "I think I can make it through this business meeting."

The clerk reconvened us. After the opening silence he asked what guidelines the kids proposed. Betty spoke. "We want to start with the hottest issue first." She paused, and looked at her list. "We'd like to be able to stay up all night Saturday night," she said.

A parent said, "I can offer my house for a Saturday night party." Another parent said, "Will the kids who want to sleep be able to?"

Betty said to the first parent, "Is there a way some could sleep while others stay up if they want?" The mother said there were doors between the family room and living room. Separate sleeping space could be arranged.

Another parent said, "It's going to be hard to find adults willing *and able* to stay up all night with you. Will you help us find people you'd like who would also be willing to stay up?" The kids could. Kids agreed if they stayed up late they would eat Sunday breakfast and go to worship. Kids who were awake would not wake

up anybody who was sleeping.

The clerk called for a silence. Then he asked, “How are Friends led? Are we comfortable with the kids staying up all night?” Silence ruled. Then one adult said, “I rest easy.” Friends concurred with nods. The kids breathed a sigh of relief.

“What’s next on your list?” the clerk asked Betty. Betty put her list in her pocket. “There’s nothing else we really disagree about,” she said. “The rest will work out.” Spontaneously teens and adults took hands around the circle. We sat silent, hands clasped. Love covered us like a cloak, warming us all.

All went home from the business meeting feeling fully a partner to the agreement. I loved these Friends. Our teens wrote all their friends about our loving sense of the meeting.

Again the teens converged for their March Quake. But two boys from a big city meeting left the Saturday night party and walked two miles to the university. The campus was a hotbed of student unrest—antiwar protests, skittish police, the sexual revolution. Racial incidents were not unknown. The boys returned safely, much to our relief.

I called a special business meeting with the teens before worship Sunday morning. A few adults from the meeting came in support. I told the teens that the entire local meeting, teens and adults together, had decided on the guidelines for the weekend, and the two boys had not followed the guidelines. I said, “Friends here will not be interested in hosting any more Quakes if they can’t feel their understandings will be respected.”

The two boys said there shouldn’t be any restrictions. There was a silence. A young woman smiled at us all and said, “Mariellen has told us how she feels, and why. The boys have told us how they feel, but they haven’t told us

why it was all right to leave.”

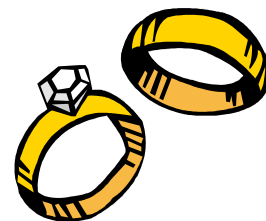
The boys were silent. One by one the young Friends spoke: the local meeting had invited them as guests, and the local young Friends had participated as equals in setting the guidelines. “We ought to show our appreciation to the meeting for inviting us by following the guidelines,” one teen said. The boys were unable to divide the group into us versus them. The teens decided the two boys were disinvented to the next Quake. Quaker business process had held firm in the face of the Youth Revolution. I loved the meeting. I loved what Quaker process could do to unite people with differing views.

Ruth and I admit to drawing a certain satisfaction at the next potluck, when Susanna ate several preserved persimmons. She just couldn’t stop eating them. She cleaned up the last one, drank off the remaining juice, and asked for the recipe. The persimmons were preserved in pure cherry Kirsch. It was a year or two before Susanna let me climb back into the nest with her, but to her credit she did. It probably helped that her son was in college. In later years she said she had never been angry. You don’t ever want to have Susanna not-mad at you.

## Why We Attend Special Occasion Meetings

By Margaret Katranides

People who are new to Friends may not realize all the ways that Meeting community differs from other religious congregations. One of these ways is in how important we are to each other. A group of people who gather regularly to seek God together and to share that Presence in the listening silence come to know each other at a very deep level. Experiencing God’s love together, we become connected to each other.



The attendance and participation of each individual, then, is an important part of the fabric of the Meeting. We don't attend only to find an hour's peace in the rush of our week, but to support each other in growing closer to the Spirit, and in learning to live with "Love as the first motion."

This is true not only of our weekly meetings for worship and our monthly meetings for worship for business, but also of our "special occasion" meetings — for marriage or for remembrance. These meetings, marking the significant passages of our lives, both honor and cement our connectedness, our life together in the Divine.

Because of outside influence, some Friends treat marriage and memorial meetings as if they were only for close friends and relatives of the people being acknowledged. Often, a person whose presence was missed at such a meeting, will offer as explanation, "Well, I really didn't know \_\_\_\_\_ that well." They have missed the significance of the meeting to our structure and well-being as a community. We need to reaffirm the place of these special occasion meetings in our communal life and growth in the Spirit.

In most of America, when a couple decides to marry, they draw up a list of friends and family who will be invited. When a Quaker couple wants to marry, they ask for marriage under the care of a Meeting; outside friends and family are invited, but it is understood that the marriage is taking place within the Meeting community. The meeting for marriage is at heart a worship meeting, not a performance by the couple or their families. It is as much a function of the Meeting as of the couple themselves. Within it, the structure of the Meeting changes, as two formerly separate people become a new family. The Meeting has approved this change, and participates in the meeting for marriage to acknowledge, celebrate and confirm the new alignment.

In a similar way, when a Friend dies, the Meeting gathers for a meeting for remembrance. Outside family and friends of that Friend are invited to share in celebration of their life, and to affirm their ongoing presence in Spirit. These meetings are often very powerful and joyful; we experience our thankfulness for the gifts of the Friend who has died, often learning more about those gifts as we hear from each other our treasured memories. And we take new courage and inspiration for our own lives as we hear of the courage and faithfulness of the deceased. The meeting for remembrance has another function as well; it acknowledges and confirms a change in the structure of the Meeting. This person's spirit remains with us, but we can no longer interact with her or him. Even when, as often happens, an elderly Friend has been physically absent from the Meeting for some time, death brings a further change, and thus alters who we are as a gathered people. The meeting for remembrance, then, brings us together to confirm this change in the Meeting, and to call us to recommitment to who we are now.

**Friends General Conference  
2004 Gathering of Friends  
University of Massachusetts, Amherst,  
July 3-10, 2004.  
"Simple Lives, Radiant Faith."**

Additional information is available from Liz Perch, Conference Coordinator, at the address below. Friends are urged not to let cost issues keep them from considering attendance.

1216 Arch Street, 2B, Philadelphia, PA  
19107 (215) 561-1700 or email  
(gathering@fgcquaker.org).

More information about the Gathering and FGC is available on the World Wide Web at <http://www.fgcquaker.org/gathering/>.

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## Meeting Reports

### Downers Grove Meeting

By Sue Styer

Downers Grove Friends Meeting (DGFM) has been building community within the meeting in various ways. Every Wednesday at 2 pm, there is a Meeting for worship with a concern for peace. On Wednesday, Dec 31, Friends gathered from 6-7 a.m. for the Worldwide Mediation for Peace. There is an active sewing group meeting Fridays at midday, to quilt and create other handcrafted items for the Downers Grove Heritage Fest. We hope that by participating in this festival, we can provide outreach to the Downers Grove area. We have also had small group dinners in homes this spring to share fellowship. Adult Religious Education meets twice a month and is reading *Plain Living: A Quaker Path to Simplicity* by Catherine Whitmire.

The process of building a new meetinghouse takes much care and time. We have looked into preliminary bids for contractors. The next step is to file an application with the county zoning board. In the meantime, we are switching from well water to city water, and will have the new line put into our current meetinghouse this spring. With all of this activity, we have called a meeting planned to share the latest information from the architects and contractors to obtain clearness to move forward with our new meetinghouse.

We were saddened by the deaths of several Friends long associated with DGFM. Jeanette George, former member of DGFM, living in Albuquerque, NM with her husband Richard, died in the winter. On January 13, Melba Snively died after many years of remission from cancer. There was overflow attendance at her memorial service. The reading of her "Book of Life Meditation," read at the service, moved us. Long-time members Louis Jones, died on February 7, and his wife, Mary Ruth Jones, died

on April 9. They had retired to Friends Fellowship in Richmond IN, and were for many years active members of DGFM.

We had joyous occasions this year. At the end of last year, Ingrid Olsen passed her physician's assistant certification and is now searching for a job. Betty Clegg celebrated her 81st birthday at meeting on March 14 with daughter Judy's family in attendance. We were delighted that Meredith Wolfe, daughter of Bruce and Pam, graduated from Ohio Wesleyan University May 9 with a BA in music.

### Duneland Friends Meeting

By Marlou Carlson

On November 8 and 9, 2003, Duneland Friends Meeting attended a retreat, "Inviting Sacred Story" facilitated by Doug Germann (Learning Works, Inc.) at the Lindenwood Conference and Retreat Center at Donaldson, Indiana. This was our first retreat in about half a dozen years and the first hosted by someone who was not from our meeting. Eleven of us gathered in at midmorning. Doug was an impartial outsider who could provide for us in a way none of us could. Doug was open and interested in learning about Friends. The retreat provided a balance of input from Doug and encouragement for participants to contribute. We started with worship and then met in small groups to share a sacred story about ourselves. Then we discussed the components of life journeys as a sacred story and developed a series of topics that we wanted to explore. Soon we realized that instead of sharing in small groups we wanted to explore the topics together. Through this process, we were able to develop our own understandings and to get to know one another better. The latter was especially true



since our membership and attenders have recently grown. By all accounts the retreat was successful and we wished we could have spent more time together. Walks on the grounds and viewing of the lunar eclipse were times for quiet and inspiration.

For some time Duneland Friends have been joining with Christian, Jewish, and Muslim congregations in an interfaith dialogue. The Religious Communities Task Force is under the care of United for a Purpose, a local organization dedicated to promoting understanding among the races, cultures, and religions of our area. In December Friends provided an opportunity for the Abrahamic religions to come together around the question, "Would you share with us a time when you felt close to God?"

In a Lutheran church fellowship room we arranged several round tables with flowers, candles, nature photographs by Roxy Jacobs, and pieces of driftwood to be used as talking sticks. Using a worship sharing format which we called "deep listening," participants were invited to answer the question about feeling close to God. They were encouraged to receive each other's responses with respect and without argument or even agreement, just as gifts.

We were amazed at the peace that came over the room, the depth of the responses from people of all the faiths, and the commonality that we recognized among us. Friends were blessed by this opportunity to be in the Presence with worshipers from other religious paths.

## **Evanston Meeting**

By Eleanor Johnson

We have chosen as our theme for 2004, *One World: Peace, Justice, Compassion*. A banner proclaiming this theme has been hung on the meetinghouse to the east of the front entrance. In March nine Evanston Friends, representing Trustees and eight meeting committees shared

their thoughts on what we are currently doing in relation to this theme and explored additional ways of "expressing the larger whole of which we are a part, grounded in the experiences of God's love." Specific suggestions were forthcoming with the hope that they will be implemented during the year.

Our annual Inquirers Group meetings began in February and will continue through May 7. Subjects covered include: Becoming Acquainted, What is the History of Friends?, What Do Friends Believe?, What Happens in Meeting for Worship?, How Do Quakers Do Business? What are Friends' Testimonies? These meetings provide a wonderful opportunity to increase our knowledge about Quaker faith and practice for both newcomers and more "seasoned" Friends.

A Pendle Hill Midwest weekend workshop was held at the Meetinghouse on March 19-21 to consider "Quaker Tools, Clearness."

We are considering a major renovation of the Meetinghouse. On April 4 Aubrey Smith, architect selected by the Trustees, presented detailed plans of proposed changes, including reconfiguration of the main entry, meeting room, library and committee rooms on the first floor; changes in the kitchen and men's bathroom on the lower level; and improvements to the caretaker's quarters and the outside stairs at the rear of the Meetinghouse. These proposals were greeted with enthusiasm, but much work lies ahead as we consider the various options, how we can meet the significant costs involved, and how to minimize the inconvenience to us as we conduct our usual activities.

A non-silent meeting retreat was held April 16-18 at Conference Point, Williams Bay, Wisconsin. The group shared thoughts on the meeting's theme and considered "What Does This Mean for Me and for Us?"

Our Evanston Guatemala Scholarship

committee has selected a student for the current year and has approved an \$800 scholarship to Vilma Josefina Esquit Choy, a Mayan entering her third year of study in journalism. This is the fourth student for whom we have provided scholarship money.

The children enjoyed an Easter egg hunt on the side yard in spite of the cool weather. On Recognition Sunday, Ministry and Counsel will present a copy of *Faith and Practice* and a letter entitled "Invitation to Membership" to the children graduating from eighth grade.

## Heartland Worship Group

By Roy and Carolyn Treadway

The Heartland Worship Group has decided to lay itself down as an independent Worship group in Illinois Yearly Meeting. There were too few of us and we met too infrequently to continue as a Worship Group.

We will continue to be in touch with one another and many of us will be active in wider Friends activities, including Illinois Yearly Meeting. While Heartland Worship Group has played a meaningful part in the lives of several of us for ten years, it is time to bring Heartland Worship Group as an independent worship group to an official close.

## Lake Forest Friends Meeting

by Mary Anne Wengel

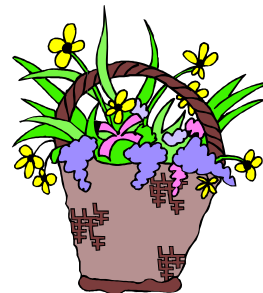
Greetings from Lake Forest Friends Meeting (LFFM)! During the last six months Friends have been busy! We've worshipped together, shared joys and sorrows with one another, reached out to help others, and have tried to keep the idea of God in everyone foremost in our hearts and minds.

We celebrated important events with several of our members. Our meeting welcomed new members, Michelle LaCognata and Jason Stacy, who were married in Chicago, December 27.

Several members of the Meeting traveled to Ripon, Wisconsin, to witness the marriage of member Christine Domanik to Mark Dudzinski. On November 8 member Betsy Warren shared with us some of the hard work and research that went into the writing of her recent book, *God, Caesar and the Freedom of Religion, Freedom of Thought, Conscience and Religion*, published in July 2003.

Our Forum and Intergenerational Committees were busy organizing educational and recreational events for us. We continued to examine the issues of peace in our world, specifically in the Middle East. Ed McManus, former reporter and editorial writer for the *Chicago Tribune*, briefed us on his visit to Israel and the West bank with a group called Interfaith Peace Builders. Stanley Zarowin from North Meadow Circle of Friends in Indiana discussed his trip to the West Bank. The Intergenerational Committee took us to the Newberry Library for an exhibit on Elizabeth 1. They also took us on a Christmas tree cutting adventure, and organized an evening of games that included Quaker Pictionary.

Our religious education groups are active. The younger groups are studying the Bible this year with discussions and dramatizations of some of the stories. Many of these dramatizations are shared with the Meeting and involve the musical talents of Friends, young and old. The adult group is reading and discussing the book, *Plain Living, A Quaker Path to Simplicity*, by Catherine Whitmire. Recently, our First-Day children helped us celebrate the beginning of spring by passing out bunches of flowers tied with ribbons. Mine are still blooming! Come and see us when you are in the area!



## Urbana-Champaign Meeting

By Mariellen Gilpin

We look forward to worshipping in the new meeting house. We've been told we can meet there any time, but Friends prefer to wait until there are bathrooms. A professional painter has painted it, some of the light fixtures are installed, and the dropped ceilings are in. It looks beautiful! The New Meeting House committee worked out an altercation between the architect and the contractor; the professionals learned a little about how Friends deal with conflicts, and now the builder and contractor work together amicably.

Peace Bazaar. Once again under Joan Nelshoppen's inspired leadership, the annual Peace Bazaar raised over \$3700 for eight peace and justice organizations, some local and some international. Joan has reached out to several other churches with a peace mission, and there were lots of new donors of stuff, and lots of new volunteers this year. Joan did a marvelous job of coordinating the actual event. We think she was everywhere at once, but maybe we overstate.

First Day School. There have been lots of activity, and lots of new children, on first and third Sundays, when Wee Friends meet. Religious Education committee has put together a program based on Quaker testimonies, and is actively working to nurture the children's spiritual life. We enjoy seeing the young faces at meeting, and seeing new families among us, even before we're in the new meeting house. Recently the kids heard *Clarence the Copy Cat*, a story about a cat that doesn't want to kill mice, and has to seek alternative ways of getting the mice out of the house.

Family Worship. On March 7 we held a family worship. We read the story of Noah's Ark, sang some songs about Noah led by Brenda Koenig and Drew Phillips, and then had Grand Silence for half an hour. During Grand Silence, Friends

did handwork or other quiet work while worshipping. Bags of art clay were available for adults and children, so that Friends could fashion animals and people for Noah's Ark during the Grand Silence. The Noah's Ark will be displayed in the new meeting house.

Meetings for worship are quiet and meaningful. Attendance is growing. We wanted to hear more spoken ministry; we wondered if Friends were censoring themselves, or if perhaps the leadings were personal and not for sharing. The last few Sundays, however, there has been good ministry from some new voices. It feels good. There has been good fellowship after worship. Business meetings have been small. Our sessions have not been contentious but still stressful, because we keep needing to approve small incremental expenditures for the new meeting house: first an alarm system, and then professional varnishing of the mullioned windows throughout the meeting house. Many have volunteered, however, for landscaping the property and helping out two elderly Friends.

*Betty Steiner* fell, and while the nursing services were gearing up to the new level of care, several Friends pitched in. Betty has recovered her initiative now, and sits up in bed writing a book about her early life with the help of Mariellen Gilpin. *Gardiner Stillwell* has been told he is terminally ill, and his daughter Susan is taking a leave of absence from her job in Boston in order to keep him at home. Gardiner has invited Friends to visit, and several Friends have done so. With both Betty and Gardiner, the ministry is very much a mutual undertaking.

Peace and Service has worked to promote peace. They have gathered lesson plans on peace and conflict resolution through research on the Internet. They plan to send the results of their research to the Israel-Palestine Center for Research and Information, in order to increase peace education in schools in both Israel and Palestine. Peace and Service also actively contributes to efforts for restorative justice in

Champaign-Urbana.

The Tuesday evening study group has read Elaine Pagels' *Beyond Belief*, and is reading the *Gospel of Thomas* using a commentary they found on the Web for the obscure passages. They are gearing up to spend one Tuesday a month reading Jessamyn West's *Quaker Reader*, with the participation of both new and old attenders. Several new attenders have expressed interest and ordered books.

*What Canst Thou Say?* Mariellen Gilpin continues on the editorial team for this newsletter on Quakers, mystical experience, and contemplative practice. She has been using email to publicize WCTS to yearly meetings around the world. Recently she received an email from Tauranga, New Zealand, explaining that it cost more to send money to the US than it did to subscribe. She suggested he just contribute to his local meeting and she'd see he got an email subscription. He emailed back that he lived in a very rural area and had no local meeting, but he'd been thinking of starting one, and her proposal made him think he definitely should, so he could contribute to it. We are pleased to think WCTS may be the catalyst for a new meeting half a world away.

Kory, Cynthia and Connor Ching have been welcomed into membership. Several new attenders have swelled our ranks in worship.

## Upper Fox Valley Quaker Meeting

(formerly McHenry County Friends Meeting)  
By Bill Howenstine

After consideration and seasoning over a period of months, our meeting united in April on a change of name as (shown above.) For a long time we had recognized that many of our members and attenders came from outside McHenry County, and the vague appellation "McHenry County" had little appeal in defining where we meet.

Furthermore, we had come to believe that the word "Friends" had little meaning to people of our area, who were accustomed to hearing of groups such as "friends of the library," "friends of the college," "friends of this or that," etc. They might make a joke about "Quaker oats", but at least they recognize the word "Quaker" as applicable to a religion.

Also, we have become more mindful of "that of God in all creation" and therefore wanted to choose a name that recognized our relationship with our natural world. It is hoped that this name change will help us in our outreach to non-Friends and prospective Friends. Hence, Upper Fox Valley Quaker Meeting.

The change in name is reflective of a general upsurge of energy and spiritual enthusiasm which we feel in our meeting. We still meet in homes, but increased attendance makes us scurry sometimes for additional chairs. Our discussions after Meeting for Worship are so rich that we have gravitated from having a snack to having a pot-luck meal after every Meeting for Worship.

Our once-a-month Spiritual Formation programs are well-attended and enriching. Members of our meeting are actively involved in the McHenry County Peace Group, and our meeting is forming a new Peace and Social Justice Committee. Greater participation by our members in activities of other Quaker organizations – e.g., Youth Quake, IYM committees, Metropolitan Chicago General Meeting, Quaker Earth Care Witness, AFSC – has been invigorating.

Finally, we have been pleased to welcome several new members during the past year. However, we regret we will be losing Friend Dick Taber to Foxdale Village, State College, Pennsylvania, in May, even though he promises to come back at least once a year on his cross-country travels.

## **Book Review – Call to Deeper Communion**

By Mariellen Gilpin

A recent Pendle Hill pamphlet, titled *Call to Deeper Communion*, is by Marcelle Martin. In it Martin, a frequent writer in *What Canst Thou Say?*, writes about the practice among early Friends of holding meetings for worship that lasted until the clerk decided it was over—sometimes three or four hours. Martin and her meeting wondered if the longer meetings for worship were part of the source of the vitality of early Friends ministry and worship. So they decided to experiment with holding three-hour meetings on Saturdays once a month. They agreed that Friends with back trouble could lie on the floor or a bench if need be, and that bathroom visits and walks on the meeting house grounds were okay during these longer periods of worship. They provided child care, and they had a simple lunch together as well.

The pamphlet is Martin's report of some of the leadings and other experiences they had during those longer meetings. They found that the first hour of worship became a time of deeper settling-into the silence, and that some very moving ministries only became possible in the second and third hours. Martin quotes Carol Roth, another WCTS writer, simply standing in worship and saying, "Something Holy has entered the room," and the shared sense of that Visitation among the members of the group. Martin herself during one of these meetings found the courage to initiate a battle to stop her addiction to a stomach medication; she felt the task laid upon her by that holy presence.

### **The Source**

By Sylvia Spotts

They gather, these Quakers, simple,  
seeking in silence,  
as befits their custom.  
And as the silence grows  
there enters a breath amidst them,  
rustling once about,  
drawing them up, as in a net;  
gathering the separate bodies  
into a closer reality;  
connecting their lives again  
towards a wholeness of purpose.

And they sit — alone, but together.  
serene is their silence;  
steadfast, their searching.  
And each of their separate energies,  
imbued with the breath — the "Light  
which lighteth every man" —  
becomes a living part of a great whole;  
each connected to the others  
by the common breath;  
by the One which is All —  
breathing them all  
into One.

### **An Invitation to Read *What Canst Thou Say?***

*What Canst Thou Say?* is a quarterly newsletter on mystical experience and contemplative practice -- a Quaker worship-sharing group in print. Friends from around the US and occasionally overseas share their personal experience of Spirit. Themes for upcoming issues will be Precognition (August), Darkness (November), and Spiritual Experience and Activism (February 2004).

Send name and address to Mariellen Gilpin, 818 West Columbia, Champaign IL 61820, for a sample copy with queries for upcoming issues. Or email [m-gilpin@uiuc.edu](mailto:m-gilpin@uiuc.edu). If you can receive attachments in PDF, we can email a copy. Save a stamp and save a tree. *WCTS* is \$8 for four issues a year, \$15 for two years. Subscriptions can be sent to *WCTS*, c/o Margaret Willits, PO Box 5082, Sonora, CA 95370.