

# Smithfield



# Friends

**Newsletter April 2005**  
**Smithfield Monthly Meeting of Friends**  
**108 Smithfield Road Woonsocket, RI 02895**

Vol. 17

No. 168

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**Clerk:** Richard Frechette

**Recording Clerk:** Connie Bair-Thompson

**Pastor:** Marnie Miller-Gutsel

**Treasurer:** Cindy Keene

**Ministry & Counsel:** Diane Gauthier

**Newsletter:** Randy Oftedahl

## CALENDAR FOR April/May

**EVERY SUNDAY**

**10:30 am: MEETING FOR WORSHIP**

**Child Care Available**

**LAST SUNDAY OF EACH MONTH: Unprogrammed Worship and Pot Luck Lunch**  
**Children's First Day School during worship (2nd & last Sundays)**

**OTHER WORSHIP UNDER THE CARE OF SMITHFIELD MEETING:**

**SECOND SUNDAY OF MONTH 4:00 PM: Unprogrammed Worship at Uxbridge Meetinghouse, Uxbridge, Mass**

## 1<sup>st</sup> Day Worship Schedule

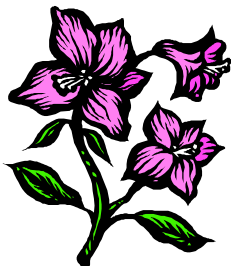
- Apr 24 Programmed worship led by Susan Kay (Smithfield Meeting member sojourning at Storrs Meeting) – rescheduled from April 17
- Apr 24 CHILDREN'S FIRST DAY SCHOOL during Meeting for Worship
- May 1 Programmed worship led by Liberty Goodwin
- May 8 Unprogrammed worship
- May 15 Worship at Meeting retreat in Craigville
- May 22 Programmed worship led by Pieter Byhouwer
- May 29 Unprogrammed worship
- June 5 Programmed worship led by Richard Frechette
- June 12 Unprogrammed worship
- June 19 Programmed worship led by Connie Bair-Thompson

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## Smithfield Meeting Retreat

May 14 & 15 in Craigville on the Cape. If you have not already received your personal notice and registration form in the mail, please contact Suzanne Frechette (401-769-4433; [SFreche105@aol.com](mailto:SFreche105@aol.com)).

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**Meeting Yard Sale - Saturday June 25. Save your stuff and mark your calendars now!**

## *Letter from Marnie*

Dear Friends--

A belated Happy Easter! I'm back at Woodbrooke again, returning from London after my whirlwind tour of southern England and south Wales. I'll be glad to relax for a while and do what my mother used to call "catching up with myself." It's hard to believe that I've been here for over a month now, most of the past two weeks steadily on the go.

By and large, it's been rewarding and interesting, barring a few frustrations. Travelling by rail has been great--the train service isn't as wonderful as it was before Maggie Thatcher's government hacked it about, but you can still get to any major city--and some not so major--simply by going to the station and buying a ticket which can be used on any train that day--and there will be at least one every hour, sometimes two. It was the busses that outfoxed me. On Good Friday I was trying to take one from Gloucester to Nailsworth, site of one of the oldest and most famous of the Meeting Houses that Scott visited. They don't run every hour, so I missed (by ten minutes!) the last one that would allow me to get one back later that day. Since I had no interest in spending the night in Nailsworth, I had to miss it. Oh well--next time.



But Gloucester was an interesting experience in other ways. There's a large and very beautiful cathedral here, parts of which were built in Norman times. On Maunday Thursday, I made a special effort to finish off my investigations of the Quaker records at the Public Records Office so I could get to the Evensong service at the Cathedral. Evensong is my favorite Anglican service. It's all prayers (though many priests slip in a little message in the form of a long prayer) and in churches with active choirs, many of the prayers will be sung or chanted. Gloucester has a choir school and a professional choir, and this service was sung by a choir of eight men, including two very fine

counter tenors. The whole service was lovely, but the music was special. Cathedrals were made to be sung in, an old the anthem was a little jewel of a piece by Palestrina. When you hear it soaring and echoing through the vast spaces, you know the meaning of "Cathedral." Yet the congregation was so tiny, we were nearly outnumbered by the choir and the clergy.

That made me a bit sad, but it reflects the state of the Anglican church today in England. It's still the "established" church, but many congregations are tiny, and many lovely old parish churches have closed completely, and are being used for other things. (One in Oxfordshire was being used for the County Records Office--and a very nice one it made--the reading room was set up in the old nave, still furnished with stained glass and statues of saints.) And it led me to reflect on the early Quakers view of "forms," as they called the rituals and liturgy and the statues and stained glass and all the other "stuff" that had gotten attached to worship over the centuries. Large numbers of the English are no longer church goers; the "forms" no longer mean anything to them, no matter how beautiful. The Quakers always said they were "empty," although for many others, I believe they were genuinely avenues for meaning--and still are. But I think the Quakers sensed a deeper truth--that the meaning is not and cannot ever be a part of the form. And when the people--for whatever reason--no longer connect with that meaning, the forms cannot carry it to them, they cannot keep it going. Hence, early Friends liked to point to that moment in the Gospel of John where the Samaritan woman says to Jesus that "Our fathers worshipped on this mountain; yet you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship." Jesus replies that the place of worship is irrelevant, because "God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." (John 4:24) What does this mean for us now?

I am deeply convinced that this worship happens most fruitfully in community, because not one of us has the full measure of the Light. We need to come together with others often--and not just on Sunday morning--to experience that fullness. And that community is something that has been most wonderful to discover among Friends here. But that's for another letter---

Love,  
*Marnie*

## ***Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business: March 6, 2005***

**2005-27 Opening Minute** Smithfield Monthly Meeting met for a regularly scheduled meeting for worship with attention to business at 12:30PM on April 3, 2005. Richard Frechette served as clerk, Connie Bair-Thompson as recording clerk, and there were ten other Friends present. We began with a period of waiting worship.

**2005-28 Report from the ad hoc committee on the Disposition of the East Blackstone Meetinghouse**

Diane Gauthier presented the following on behalf of the ad hoc committee (Diane Gauthier, Jeanne Kinney, Rhoda Mowry, Suzanne Frechette, Richard Frechette):

- \* The committee has met once.

- \* They began a discernment process, creating two lists: one stating why we would want to maintain ownership of the meetinghouse, and another stating why we should not keep the meetinghouse.

- \* They have determined that their first two preliminary tasks are:

- o To find evidence that Smithfield Meeting actually owns the property: i.e. that our meeting has the right to choose what to do with it. This will involve checking for records at the Blackstone Town Hall, the Yearly Meeting archives, the Blackstone Historical Commission.

- o To determine the status of the meetinghouse organization that has requested our action: i.e. are they incorporated, what are their bylaws, what is the likelihood of their long-term existence.

- \* Once these things are accomplished, they will then work towards a recommendation relating to the meetinghouse.

It was suggested that the legal records may be located in Mendon and not in Blackstone.

No decision has been made as to the disposition of the meetinghouse. We find ourselves reminded of our testimony of simplicity, but have different understandings of how that testimony relates to what we should do with that meetinghouse. We hold the committee in the Light as they continue to do this work.

### **2005-29 Report from the ad hoc retreat committee**

For the ad hoc retreat committee (Eunice Strobel, Suzanne Frechette, Elaine Bello) Eunice Strobel presented the following report:

- \* The committee has reserved Saturday and Sunday, May 14-15 for the retreat at the Craigville Conference Center, owned by the United Church of Christ.

- \* They have selected Jan Gregory Charpentier, pastor of the United Church of Christ in Upton, Massachusetts, and a former pastor of Smithfield Meeting, to lead the Saturday program, and to work with the committee in the preparation of the entire retreat.

- \* Hans-Dieter Gomes of Providence Meeting will lead a children's program simultaneously with the adult program. Infant and toddler care will be offered by a trusted person from outside of the meeting, and the older youth will participate in the adult program.

- \* A mailing on the retreat and sign up form will go out by the beginning of next week to all Smithfield Meeting Friends.

- \* They hope to provide for an extra night's stay at the Center for those who may choose to do so. This will involve an extra cost that would be paid by the individuals who choose to take advantage of this. We won't know about availability for this until closer to the retreat date.

- \* The Lilly Foundation grant budget includes \$5,700 for expenses of this and a second retreat. Smithfield Friends who attend will be asked to make a nominal contribution towards the retreat. The Committee asks for Friends approval for the Committee to determine the proper amount of compensation for Jan, Hans-Dieter and the Child-Care provider.

Friends approve of the committee determining the proper amount for compensation for Jan, Hans-Dieter and the child care provider.

### **2005-30 State of Society Report for 2004**

Rhoda Mowry read a draft of our State of Society Report for 2004. Friends expressed their gratitude to Rhoda for collecting our thoughts and putting them on paper. With some changes, the report was approved as follows:

## **Smithfield Monthly Meeting of Friends State of Society Report 2004**

We are a small Meeting within New England Yearly Meeting that is blessed with diversity. To some in our Meeting, Jesus Christ is central to their faith in a variety of ways. Others' experience of the divine is also informed by teachings of Universalism and Buddhism. But we all seek truth and are committed to sharing our respective faith journeys with each other.

In preparation for writing our state of society report we had a time of sharing where members and attenders walked of what has "worked" for them and what needs to have more attention paid to it. Our first day school has really struggled to provide to our children a sense of their faith and to make it a living, breathing faith. We tried having first day school twice per month, with the school-age children staying with their parents on the other Sundays, but found that many of the children did not come. We continue to pray about how to better address this need. Several people spoke of the positive ways that our Meeting is willing to work with individuals to address a particular need in order to include them in our community.

During the year we had a number of meaningful discussion about the meaning of membership within Smithfield Monthly Meeting. To that end we established a committee whose charge was outreach. We were saddened by the loss of one of our older members, and rejoice as we have added new members this year, including a young Friend. This gives us encouragement that our small Meeting will survive.

One significant decision made by us was the granting of a sabbatical leave to our pastor Marnie Miller Gutsell to follow the journey of an early member of the Meeting, Job Scott, as he visited and provided ministry to Friends in England and Ireland during the late 1700s. We were blessed with a grant from the Lilly Foundation that financially supported this leave. We set into motion ways our Meeting would "fill-in" during the four months she would be away, beginning in February 2005.

As a Meeting, we celebrate the many ways our community puts faith into action and tries to live faith day-to-day. Some of us are very active on the Yearly Meeting level while others work with the local communities on issues that are important to them and are part of our Friends testimonies.

### **2005-31 Financial support for Friends Camp**

We have received a request from Friends Camp for financial support. Friends ask Finance Committee to establish an amount to be used for camperships for youth in our meeting community, and that any left over funds be sent as a general donation to Friends Camp.

### **2005-31 Ruth Smith memorial fund, hearing system**

Friends were reminded that we had formed an ad-hoc committee to look into improving our hearing-assist system with funds from the Ruth Smith memorial fund, but that the committee has not met yet. We wish to activate this committee and will name its members at next month's meeting for worship with attention to business. We also want to remind ourselves that it is still important to speak loudly and clearly when speaking during meeting for worship as the microphone only amplifies our voices for people who use the hearing devices.

### **2005-32 Living Wills and advanced directives**

Stepping down as clerk, Richard Frechette reported that the New England Yearly Meeting's Committee on Aging is advising Friends' meetings to encourage its members to complete living wills and related types of documents. The committee is specifically recommending the use of a document called "Five Wishes" produced by the organization called Aging with Dignity that addresses end of life requests. He asked if we would allow him to lead a presentation on this and other types of documents some evening and to open the discussion to members of the wider community. He also asked if we would be willing to be a repository for such documents for people in our meeting community. Friends approved both requests and ask the clerk to work out how and where we can store such documents.

-Respectfully submitted,  
*Constance Bair-Thompson*  
Recording Clerk

## ***Reflections on the Death of the Pope***

Countless people - Catholic and non-Catholic - have been touched by the life of the late Pope John Paul II. There is no doubt that he was one of the most prominent religious figures of our time.

As I reflect on the life of Pope John Paul II, the impact that he had on my spiritual life and my sense of morals - and the legacy that he left as a spiritual-political leader of our world, I look back fondly on one of the most moving religious experiences of my life.

The Pope's passing allowed me a chance to gain a new understanding and appreciation of this unique, extraordinary highlight of my life.

It occurred in a storied, distant place - rich with history, grandeur, and ritual - really, it was about as far as you could get from the simplicity of a Friends Meetinghouse. Yet, I found that in this sacred place, rather than becoming distracted by the almost fantastic backdrop, it became an integral part of the experience - the presence of the Spirit was alive in the hearts, minds, and prayers of the thousands of God's people gathered there.

In April of 1999, as a freshman at Marist College, I was one of 60 "Marist Singers" selected to perform for the Pope at the Canonization ceremony of Saint Marcellin Champagnat (the Catholic ceremony where he was recognized as a Saint) at the Vatican.

Saint Marcellin Champagnat was the founder of the Marist Brothers - the order that started my college and numerous other educational institutions around the world.

More than a quarter of a million people had gathered in St. Peter's Square that mid-April morning. Thinking back, I can still remember seeing the "Popemobile" arrive, with the Singers being among the first people to see il Papa - "the universal father" - that morning.

After the fanfare of the Pope's arrival, with his colorful entourage of cardinals and other key figures, we were honored to perform a solo and even accompany the Sistine Chapel Choir in Latin liturgical songs throughout the Mass. We were seated directly behind the Pope.

I remember that the day began with a cool rain and then, during the solemn three-hour ceremony, the clouds began to clear and the hot Rome sun began to beat down on me. Not understanding the Latin being spoken, I was able to focus in on the meaning of the song (which I did understand), and take my own three-hour spiritual journey.

Often I simply looked around in awe. I was struck by the immense historic pillars, statues, and structures that surrounded me. The Pope was sitting just a few rows in front of me. I looked out and saw seas of people. I meditated. Prayed. I took part in the rituals that I did not understand, but I looked to those around me for cues.

At that time, I recall, the Pope's health was already failing. Yet while his voice trembled at times during the ceremony, I was struck by his dedication and the compassion that you could hear in his struggling, yet still powerful voice. Our hymns helped to carry his message.

As I sit here in silence tonight recalling my unique experience, I can still distantly hear the Pope's voice leading the canonization liturgy in the traditional Latin. I think back and remember the immense, moving power of the Spirit that I felt that day in St. Peter's Square, the historic significance of the area where I found myself at that extraordinary moment, and the strong presence of God so deeply alive.

While I am not Catholic, the experience of being there in the center of the Roman Catholic Church allowed me to gain an appreciation - an understanding - of my family's Catholic heritage. I found myself able to take part in the ancient rituals that had been a part of the deeply religious lives of my ancestors.

I could sense the spirits of those whom I had never known all around me. I like to think they were with me that day - so proud of my role in delivering the message of God - and our message of thanks to God - through song.

The whole experience allowed me to gain a more keen understanding of my own faith and its connection to Christ's message.

Getting back to my reflection on the contributions of the late Pope, as a Friend, I have great respect for this man that rose from humble roots to become a moral beacon for us all. As I reflect on the life of Pope John Paul II, I thank God for bringing us such a moving, powerful voice advocating for peace and social justice - his acts and strong messages about our responsibility to care for the poor, the weak and the sick. He was able to speak to both the heart and the head.

When you see such a key religious, political, and historic figure so close to you in person, you feel a personal connection to them. They transform from being just a figure, a voice, a photo or picture on TV, to being a person. It was difficult to watch the once vibrant, energetic Pontiff fade over the past few years. But despite his health struggles, Pope John Paul II gave us all comfort in seeing that suffering is a part of the human condition, whether a person is a peasant or a Pope.

He showed us that our struggles in life may not be easy, but they do not have to be a sign of weakness. While we may not have always agreed with his deeply conservative, traditional, views on many modern social issues, Pope John Paul II was truly an inspiration to us all.

May we, as our collective tribute to him, live by his example, by witnessing and working to create a more peaceful, compassionate, and just world.

—Aaron Frechette

### ***Clean and Green Day***

In commemoration of Earth Day and to carry out Friends' testimony of stewardship of the Earth, Young Friends will be participating in North Smithfield's townwide Clean & Green Day on Saturday, April 23. The Rain date is Sunday, April 24. Please join our team to clean up the Meetinghouse and surrounding area. We'll meet at Brigidos Market in Slatersville Plaza at 8:45 am, where we'll pick up bags & t-shirts provided by the town (please bring your own gloves) then proceed to the Meetinghouse to begin our cleanup. Our area will be Smithfield Road leading to Beef Barn. A free lunch will be provided to all volunteers at Homestead Gardens from noon-2pm. If you are interested in joining the Young Friends team (all ages welcome), please contact Cindy Keene or Aaron Frechette - [aarondf@cox.net/965-5295](mailto:aarondf@cox.net).

### ***More from Young Friends***

On April 3rd Smithfield Young Friends held their monthly meeting following meeting for worship. We discussed prepping the downstairs to be painted next Sunday following worship and other plans for the basement project. Aaron suggested that Young Friends should draft conscience objector letters to keep on file at the meeting. We also gave thought to some other service projects that we would like to be a part of including volunteering at St. Antwons and possibly working on a Habitat for Humanity house. A trip to the peace abbey was also an idea for the summer. Lastly we decided that we would like to be a part of the North Smithfield Clean and Green Day on Saturday April 23. -*Nathan St.Germain*



***Marnie's "Travels With Job Scott"***  
***Journal entries are online at***  
***www.smithfieldfriends.org - copies***  
***are also available at the Meetinghouse***

*Friends Meetinghouse, Lurgan, N. Ireland*

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