

Smithfield



Friends

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

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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 February/March

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

Other events

Sunday, Feb. 13 Peace and Social Concerns meets following Worship
First Day School Committee meets following Worship
Thursday, Feb. 17-- Ecumenical Lenten Service at St. Mark's Lutheran Church, 871 Harris Ave.,
Woonsocket, 7:30 PM
Sunday, Feb. 20 Slán agus beannacht leat (see below) following worship
Thursday, Feb. 24-- Ecumenical Lenten Service at St. Paul's Roman Catholic Church, 48 St. Paul St. 7:30 PM
Thursday, March 3-- Ecumenical Lenten Service at Smithfield Friends
Sunday, March 6 Meeting for Worship led by Richard Frechette
Monthly Meeting for Business
NEWSLETTER DEADLINE FOR MARCH



Slán agus beannacht leat
("Goodbye and Blessings With You")
Marnie's 'send off' gathering

**Marnie's sabbatical leave begins the end of this month...she departs on February 25,
returning at the end of June. Join us at a sendoff gathering – a pot luck, naturally –
following worship on
February 20**

Letter from Marnie

Dear Friends,

Panic time at the parsonage! I'm leaving for the great England/Ireland adventure in a very short time and I'm not ready yet!!!. (Those who know me will not be surprised.) But I am feeling more and more the truth of this leading--things have fallen into place and Way has opened. So many Friends have helped me in so many ways from working on the proposal and helping me do a variety of other things, to providing an array of guides, gifts, and gadgets to make for an easier, more fun trip. I am very grateful to everyone who helped in this wonderful community. Have there been glitches? Sure--like I catch my foot in the power cord of my "new"/used laptop, yanking it to the floor and leading to a visit to the repair shop--but all shall be well eventually.

I am now booked into my major bases of operation in England, which will be Birmingham (at the Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre) and London. Randy has asked me to continue these monthly letters--so my next one will probably be from London, unless I get terribly efficient and write it just before I leave (oh right--when pigs fly). I have also heard from the Archives in both Dublin and Lisburn (near Belfast, Northern Ireland) who are now expecting me. And some very nice news from the family front-- my younger daughter, Sabina, will be joining me for my loop around the Meetings in the south of the Republic of Ireland, and we are trying to work out financing for my older daughter, Reeve, to come too.

So it's all going to happen--and I think about Abram being sent forth from Haran: "Go, really go--from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land I will show you." (Genesis 12:1) Who, me? Well, yes, apparently so--though I seriously doubt that I will be made "a great nation," as was promised to Abram. But perhaps I might be able to come back With something to contribute to the "nation" of Smithfield, and maybe even to the wider "nation" of Quakerism. Because I'm setting off not just to dig up Quaker history, and track parts of the



journeys of Job Scott--I'm looking for what It means to "travel in the ministry" over two hundred years after Scott did it. What did Scott hope to do? One thing that emerges from his journal is a vision of drawing Quakers out of a sort of spiritual torpor. I can't imagine myself in that role, but might I be able to introduce some small numbers of Quakers to a refreshed understanding of Quakerism? Something which includes a slightly wider vision than they may have had before--simply by being a different sort of Quaker than many of them have previously met? (Past experience suggests that many Friends in the British Isles know that pastoral Friends exist, but they have never met one, and don't really understand how they fit under that vast umbrella called the Society of Friends. Are they "really Quakers"?) But then again, who knows what I will be led to when I get there?

Sometimes (often?) the real purpose of a journey doesn't emerge until one is actually on the way. And a fun adventure is, I hope, one of the rewards. On another occasion, God said to Abram (this was before he was renamed Abraham), "Be not afraid, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be great." (Genesis 15:1)

Friends, I ask for your prayers that this be so for me as well.

Love,
Marnie



Ecumenical Lenten Service -- Smithfield Will Host

Once again, Smithfield will host one of the annual Ecumenical Lenten Services. Our turn will come round on **Thursday, March 3**. The service will begin at **7:30**, and we need volunteers to hand out the Orders of worship, and to provide and set up refreshments downstairs. We have done this for a number of years now, and we have a regular set of visitors who look forward to experiencing our special kind of worship at this season. Please put the date on your calendars now, and plan to come, even if you don't volunteer for refreshments or programs.

**Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business:
January 30, 2005**

2005-10 AFSC Peace Ad

Smithfield Monthly Meeting met for a called meeting for worship with attention to business at the rise of worship on January 30, 2005. The single purpose of this meeting was consideration of a request from the local American Friends Service Committee that we financially support and be co-signators to the annual peace ad to be placed in the Providence Journal and other local newspapers. The clerk read the letter from AFSC and the text of the ad, which follows:

It's Time to Speak Truth to Power

Our government's actions to assert its will in the Middle East through military force have led to a widening spiral of violence and sadness that wounds us all. Tens of thousands of lives have been lost, and the toll mounts daily. In both Iraq and the United States, in the Sunni Triangle and in New England, our stubborn insistence on the use of force as the only way to resolve conflict has brought suffering, chaos, and death. The resources we waste on war starve our own communities of their basic needs.

Now, again, We Witness to the Futility of Violence

"One day we must come to see that peace is not merely a distant goal that we seek but a means by which we arrive at that goal. We must pursue peaceful ends through peaceful means. How much longer must we play at deadly war games before we heed the plaintive pleas of the unnumbered dead and maimed of past wars?"

— Rev Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

From its beginning, the American Friends Service Committee, as the service arm of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) has affirmed the futility of violence as a means to the resolution of conflict. Like the founder of Quakerism, George Fox, we continue to stand "against all violence." In opposition to the current policy of this government, we believe that self determination, reconciliation, and the non-violent resolution of differences are the practical paths toward lasting peace. In contrast to the present crisis in Iraq, non-violent action requires greater courage, yields more lasting results, and brings hope of healing.

Nonviolence Requires Us to be Brave

"Nonviolence is a weapon of the strong. Fear and love are contradictory terms. My daily experience . . . is that every problem lends itself to solution if we are determined to make the law of truth and nonviolence the law of life."

— Mohandas K. Gandhi

In keeping with the words and actions of those who have stood for truth and the honest search for peace, liberty and justice, we ask all people who share our concerns to join us in this pledge:

- *We commit ourselves to the practice of courageous nonviolence.*
- *We affirm our opposition to violence done in our names.*
- *We pledge to work for an immediate end to the war in Iraq.*
- *We call for peace.*

Friends expressed concerns about the excessive amount of words and the lack of specific actions in the ad. Nevertheless, we feel led to unite with the AFSC in this commitment. We ask the Clerk to sign the endorsement on our behalf and to request that, if possible, the ad be placed in a northern RI newspaper. We will contribute \$50 towards the costs of the ad. Last, we will forward suggestions to the AFSC relating to the wording of future ads.

Respectfully submitted,
Richard Frechette
Clerk

*Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business:
February 5, 2005*

2005-11 Opening Minute

Smithfield Monthly Meeting met for a regularly scheduled meeting for worship with attention to business at 12 Noon on February 5, 2005. Fourteen Friends were present. We began with a period of waiting worship. From the silence, the Clerk read an excerpt from a paper entitled "Characteristics of Healthy Meetings and Worship Groups" by Jan Greene and Marty Waton, which excerpt reminded us that a healthy meeting provides a place where it is safe to say, "This is what I truly believe".

2005-12 FUM Chain of Prayer

Friends last month had requested that we seek the date of May 14 for the 2005 FUM Chain of Prayer, a date coinciding with the Meeting retreat in Craigville. The Clerk reported that FUM has confirmed this date.

2005-13 Draft Preface to the Revised Faith & Practice

Earlier in the day Friends spoke to the draft preface in a worship-sharing format, and we brought those thoughts and prayers with us into business meeting. We wish to express our to those Friends serving on the NEYM Faith & Practice Revision Committee who have committed much energy and devotion and many hours in the development of this draft, and yet remain open to the continued input of other Friends around New England. That very act exemplifies the spirit behind the words of the preface.

In our worship sharing, some of us expressed concern that the preface lacked reference to specific revisions and specific more-recent forms of Quaker witness. But we resist the temptation to corporately call for these specifics to be included in the preface, instead allowing for the basic ideas expressed in the preface to take hold in our hearts. The statement in the second paragraph, “..the book contains records of Quaker spiritual experience which are drawn from the past and reach forward to the present...” seemed to particularly reach out to us and speak to our condition.

(Note: The following other matters were discussed at this meeting, but minutes on these matters were not formally presented and approved.)

2005-14 Report from Peace & Social Concerns Committee

2005-15 Report from Finance Committee

2005-16 Request to Rent the Meetinghouse

2005-17 Disposition of the East Blackstone

Meetinghouse

2005-18 First Day School

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From Ministry & Counsel:

Ministry & Counsel Committee has decided that, during Marnie's sabbatical leave we will have a mix of programmed and unprogrammed meetings during March through June, generally following a leapfrog pattern. Some of the programmed meetings will be lead by Friends of our Meeting, and others by Friends from outside of the Smithfield Meeting Community.

Worship on February 27 and March 13 will be unprogrammed, while First Day on **March 6** will be programmed worship lead by Richard Frechette. We expect to have the schedule for each first Day posted in the subsequent monthly newsletters.

Pot luck BRUNCH

The last Sunday pot luck in **February (2/27)** will be a brunch, not a lunch! So what does that mean? We're not sure...except to have you all think about what you could bring that would make it a brunch rather than a lunch. Also, at this pot luck brunch, we'll have an informal discussion about the state of our society, i.e. where are we as a spiritual community?

Meeting Retreat:

Saturday and Sunday May 14 and 15 at a retreat center in Craigville, right on the bayside of Cape Cod. There will be programs for both adults and children. More information will be presented in the March and April newsletter. The Lilly Foundation grant that has allowed Marnie to follow Job Scott's missionary Journey into the British Isles will also underwrite some of the cost of this retreat. Be sure to mark your calendars now!