

Smithfield



Friends

Newsletter March 2004
Smithfield Monthly Meeting of Friends
108 Smithfield Road Woonsocket, RI 02895

Vol.16 _____ No.157

Parsonage: 762-5726

Internet: www.smithfieldfriends.org

Clerk: Richard Frechette *Recording Clerk* Connie Bair-Thompson *Pastor:* Marnie Miller-Guttsel
Treasurer: Cindy Keene *Ministry&Counsel* Rhoda Mowry *Newsletter:* Randy Oftedahl

CALENDAR FOR March/April

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 (1st & 3rd Sunday)

OTHER WORSHIP UNDER THE CARE OF SMITHFIELD MEETING OR RI/SMITHFIELD QTLY. MTG.

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

EVERY WEDNESDAY 4:00 PM: Unprogrammed Worship and discussion at ACI(Maximum)

Other events

Sunday, March 14

First Day School during Worship
Peace and Social Concerns meets following Worship
Regular Meeting For Worship at Uxbridge, 4 PM

Sunday, March 28

First Day School During Worship
Pot-luck lunch following Worship

Thursdays through April 1

7:30--Ecumenical Lenten Vesper Services,
various Community Churches--see below for schedule

Thursday, April 1

Smithfield hosts Ecumenical Vespers, 7:30 at the Meeting House

Sunday, April 4

Monthly Meeting for Business
NEWSLETTER DEADLINE FOR APRIL

Friday, April 9

Good Friday Tenebrae Service, 7 PM

Sunday, April 11

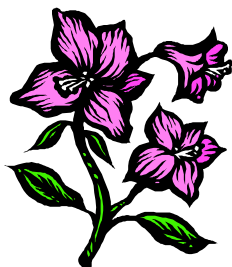
Easter Sunday

Sunday, April 18

RI/Smithfield Quarterly Meeting at Worcester Pleasant Street Meeting

Saturday, April 24

AFSC of Southeastern New England Conference: "Building a Culture of Peace and Justice", Providence (see inside for details)



**Good Friday Tenebrae Service,
April 9
7 PM**

Letter from Marnie

Dear Friends,

Usually the imminence of St. Patrick's Day inspires me to write about something Irish. But this year my letter will be about something a little more personal. As many of you know, my father died on February 5; he would have been 94 this month. What many of you don't know is how much of an influence he was on my spiritual life. Perhaps that story may inspire some of you to think about the people who have contributed to your spiritual journey.

My father wouldn't have called himself a "religious" man. He left the church he was raised in, because he found his scientific training conflicted with church doctrine. He might have accepted the term "agnostic," even "atheist," yet I saw him as a very spiritual man. He had an immense reverence for life, far greater than many who call themselves Christian and claim to believe in a loving God. He had little tolerance for hypocrisy, prejudice, or injustice, and from the time I was very tiny he taught me to care for the earth and all of its inhabitants. I never saw him treat any person, of any race or class, with anything other than the utmost courtesy and respect.



In Virginia in the 1940's and 50's, my little friends used the "n" word with great casualness in reference to black people. But it was absolutely forbidden in our house. When my parents hired a young black high school girl to look after me and my baby brother, they looked past her color and saw an intelligent and capable young woman. They encouraged her to go to college, and we all attended her graduation around 1950--we were among a handful of white faces in a sea of black ones.

Similarly, my father noticed that one of the workman at the college where he taught was a superior craftsman--though he was, in the town's terms, "po' white trash." My father encouraged him, and paved the way for him to become the supervisor of the maintenance crew. And my brother and I were encouraged to make friends with any child we liked; we were taught to look at character, not shabby clothing and dirty bare feet (I rather envied the bare feet, actually, but I wasn't allowed to go to school without shoes) I didn't know it at the time, of course, but I was being taught basic Quaker theology--that there is that of God in every person--because my father lived it.

And he had a greater honesty and integrity than any person I have ever known. Nothing ever tempted him to violate his principles. He epitomized the Hebraic ideals of "mishpat" and "tsedakah"--justice and righteousness. And gave the lie to the notion that one must be "religious" in order to be "moral."

He taught me to be skeptical of truth claims that could not be grounded in my own experience, and he taught me to explore widely--that included religion. From him I learned to pay attention to what the Bible actually said instead of to what somebody else told me it said. And when my exploration took me on a very different path from his own, he supported me--in honor of my going to seminary, he even decided to read the entire Bible--carefully--all the way through, so we could discuss it.

Jesus said that it was impossible to do good without the help of the Spirit (Mt. 22-33). My father was a devoted husband, a loving father, a good man, and a model human being--and a Spirit led one, whether he knew it or not. He may not have believed in God as many would define that term, but I am sure God believed in him.

love,
Marnie

Ecumenical Lenten Vesper Services

Once again various churches around the community are joining to sponsor weekly Thursday night ecumenical vesper services during Lent. Smithfield will be host on **Thursday, April 1, at 7:30 PM.**

Volunteers are needed, some to greet attenders as they arrive and some to provide refreshments for after the service (start the coffee, provide goodies, etc.) To volunteer, let Marnie know.

Schedule: March 11--First Baptist Church

March 18--St. Mark's Lutheran Church

March 25--St. James Episcopal Church

April 1--Smithfield Monthly Meeting

For more information, see the bulletin board.

Good Friday Tenebrae Service--Readers and Musicians Needed

Our annual Good Friday Tenebrae Service of readings and hymns will be held **Friday, April 9 at 7 PM.**

We need volunteer readers, and also hope to have some of our fine volunteer musicians. If you'd like to read, see Marnie. Volunteer musicians, see Ron or Marnie.

Call for Volunteers--Care of Worship at Uxbridge

Remember the gathering for unprogrammed worship in the old Uxbridge Meeting **every second Sunday at 4 PM.** We need volunteers to open the building, start the fire, close worship, and return the key afterwards. A simple but very rewarding ministry. See Richard Frechette for details.

Retha McCutcheon to Speak at Beacon Hill

Retha McCutcheon, General Secretary of Friends United Meeting, will present the annual Weed Memorial Lecture at Beacon Hill Friends House, 6 Chestnut St, Boston, MA, on **Sunday, April 18, at 2 PM.** Her topic will be "International Partnerships: A Shift from Traditional Missions." For more information, call (617) 227-9118.

Interested in Becoming a Spiritual Nurturer?

Could you have a calling to become a spiritual nurturer for others? The School of the Spirit offers a two year training program designed to accommodate those who feel this leading, but wish to continue staying involved in their own family, work, and Meeting life. Test the waters at an introductory weekend at Powell House in Old Chatham in eastern New York, **March 19-21.** For more details, see the flier on the bulletin board.

Friends 16-35--Check the bulletin board!

Don't forget the Youth Pilgrimage in Europe (ages 16-18) this July and August. (contact the Friends World Committee for Consultation at 1506 Race St., Philadelphia, PA, 19102. ;E-mail <Americas@fwcc.quaker.org>)

And next year, the World Gathering of Young Friends (ages of 18-35) at Lancaster University in England in August of 2005. For information, see flier on the Bulletin Board.

Saturday March 6 was Martha Smith's 95th birthday. Her sister-in-law sent Martha a card with the following message:

"For a Special Friend:

- God made friends because stories, dreams, hugs and prayers are meant to be shared...
- God made Friends to remind us to laugh a lot and be really silly sometimes...
- God made friends to help us feel loved and accepted just the way we are...
- God made friends to shine his love in our lives in a very special way...
- With heart-to-heart birthday prayers and wishes for a friend who means so much."

That friend speaks our minds and hearts. Happy Birthday, Martha. We love you.

Quaker Peacebuilder Camp 2004

John Humphries, of Hartford Meeting, is leading an effort among New England Friends to establish a Quaker Peacebuilder Camp as a joint project with the American Friends Service Committee. The project seeks to help people develop the skills, understanding and relationships that will help them become better organizers of nonviolent action. We also seek to provide an experience of community that fosters spiritual practice and reflection as the foundation for faithful action. The curriculum will include the theory and practice of community organizing and nonviolent action, skills in group decision-making and discernment, outdoor recreation and physical labor, and hands-on experience with planning and implementing an action and/or a group service project. While the initial focus is on high school youth, our vision is intergenerational, recognizing that we are all seekers and need to improve our skills for effective action.

The primary session for this summer's camp is planned for June 24 to July 4. A portion of the camp will take place at The Meeting School in southern New Hampshire, while the other portion will be in Hartford, partnering with one or more organizations working with urban youth. If we have sufficient funds and interest, we may also do a second, shorter session in late August.

We invite Friends to support this project by adding your name to the list of Friends who offer their blessings and prayers of support. You can also make a financial contribution either to the general fund that will support program development, fundraising and recruitment or to our Scholarship Fund that will allow youth from lower-income families to participate. For more information or to add your name to the list of supporters, contact John Humphries (JHumphries@igc.org) 860/236-5175) or Brian Drayton (Brian_Drayton@terc.edu); 603/654-6001). Tax-deductible donations can be made payable to "AFSC/Peacebuilder Camps" and sent to AFSC, 56 Arbor Street, Hartford, CT 06105.

Smithfield Friends: Additional Information on the Camp and supporting the Camp, and application forms for High Schoolers to attend the camp, are available in a file folder marked "Quaker Peacebuilder Camp 2004" in the meetinghouse lobby.

Minutes of Meeting for Business 3rd Month 7, 2004

2004-16 Opening Minute Smithfield Monthly Meeting met for a regularly scheduled meeting for worship with attention to business at 12 Noon on March 7, 2004. Richard Frechette served as clerk, Connie Bair-Thompson as recording clerk, and there were nine other Friends present. We began with a period of waiting worship.

2004-17 One Rhode Island Campaign For peace and social concerns committee, Bob Sumner-Mack asked us if we wish to join One Rhode Island. He said that One Rhode Island is an endeavor of the Poverty Institute at Rhode Island College that is attempting to get legislation passed which will help provide all people with basic needs such as food, shelter and access to health care. By joining One Rhode Island, we would publicly state our support for this legislation and will work with the Poverty Institute, corporately and as individuals, to lobby for it's passage. Bob Sumner-Mack offered to inform us weekly about the schedule of particular bills so that we can act accordingly.

We believe that resources are given by God to be shared. Therefore, we must be concerned about people in Rhode Island who don't have access to adequate resources to meet basic needs. We authorize the clerk to send in an endorsement of One Rhode Island, we will individually lobby our legislators in support of the One Rhode Island legislation and we authorize our peace and social concerns committee to appoint representatives to testify at committee hearings.

2004-18 Closing Minute No further business arising, Friends closed with a period of waiting worship, intending to meet again for business on April 4, 2004, God willing.

Respectfully Submitted,
Constance Bair-Thompson, Recording Clerk

A SNOWBIRD LANDS IN ALABAMA

Two weeks ago I began my adventure at the MOWA Choctaw Friends Academy. It's my first time ever in Alabama. Racing the impending snowstorm due in Massachusetts, I headed South down Rt. 95. There was sleet and snow falling in Washington, DC, and pure ice in N. Carolina. By the time I reached the Georgia line, I breathed a sigh of relief, changed my heavy winter coat for a spring jacket, and washed the salt off the old Toyota. The sun was shining in Jacksonville as I turned right onto Rt. 10 and headed west to Mobile. Beautiful country and smooth open roads. Next it was north again to Rt. 43, and the Jefferson Davis Highway.

At Calvert a sign said MOWA Choctaw Friends Academy – next left. I followed the sign but at the first corner, I stopped and went back to the highway package store for help. There was a woman who was putting her bag into the rear of her pickup truck. I shouted. She called back: "I'll take you there, follow me." Two turns and seven miles later, we drove into the dirt parking lot of the Friends Center. Doris Weaver, sixty plus, drove around, came back and said: "This is it." We shook hands and she was off. A true community welcome!

Jane and Norman Snell, the Directors, soon appeared and announced the hard truth: "You are now in the middle of no-where."

On Saturday afternoon, January 31st, I moved into Quaker Lodge where the bottom floor houses the school office, the copy room, a large foyer and a huge kitchen with long tables for eating. I climbed to my room on the second floor and was surprised to find a large central living room, another smaller, neat kitchen, and five bedrooms (beds for 12) with two bathrooms. Being alone, I selected the one bedroom with its own bathroom and settled in. The use of the facility is free and I provide my own food.

Sanktown, as this neighborhood is referred to, consists of mini clans or groupings of trailers with a house or two thrown in. Extended families stick together usually within walking distance of each other. Walking down the dirt roads nearby, I see small clusters of family compounds. Some are squatters, I'm told. Many live on government subsidies. "A brick house means a steady job." One teacher said: "I've never heard of some of the disabilities these people have."

One thing each family must have is a pickup or a car – some recent models – which is a necessity out here. The children who attend the school do not all live nearby. Parents or guardians drop them off at the fence at 8 am and pick them up at 3 pm.

On Sunday, the Snells and I attended the local Indian church, a five minute walk through the woods. "I grew up in a Quaker church in Indiana," Jane says. "There's not much difference."

The following Sunday, I travel 70 minutes south to Fairhope, Alabama, on the Eastern Shore of Mobile Bay, to attend the unprogrammed Friends meeting for worship. The Monteverde Friends Meeting in Costa Rica originated from this meeting when friends here migrated rather than be drafted into the military.

Both services met my needs in different ways. The local protestant church stresses conversion and the Scriptures -- sorely needed here. The more affluent friends on the eastern shore stress spiritual growth and social concerns. The local church Sunday school is studying the Book of Revelation, while the Fairhope Sunday school is reading aloud Richard Foster's Celebration of Discipline.

Nature surrounds us here: horses across the road; birds outside the window; small hunting dogs wandering – a spacious life filled with trees and sky. No population crush here. "I got me a deer with my daddy last week," a fifth grade boy told me. When a pre-school student greeted me from the front door of her trailer, she said: "Momma's cooking deer meat for dinner." Where do you go fishing I asked one student: "In my uncle's pond," he replied.

On Monday at the Friends Academy, I begin my first day substituting for the pre-school / kindergarten teacher who was attending her grandmother's funeral. Later I was assigned to teach a daily writing class for the 4th and 5th grade class. Then I began Wednesday computer lab sessions to help the various groups learn the keyboard. There are donated computers in all the classrooms as well.

In between time I work in the library which was first designed for high school students. We have twice weekly story hour and library skills time for each class. (The library also contains an array of adult and GED materials left behind when the state discontinued its much-needed adult ed. program two years ago.) Former students, now in 6th, 7th and 8th grades, sometimes drop by after school for help with homework assignments or tutoring in their weak subjects.

Three well-seasoned teachers spend 7 hours non-stop each day with their respective classes – eating lunch and going outside with them. At present the pre-school/ K class has 7 students; the first through third grade class has 3 students and the fourth and fifth grade class has 8 students. Total 18. Students come and go at will as families pick up and move suddenly.

Friends Academy has been losing students in spite of the individualized attention and small class size. The local public school at McIntosh averages 30 students per class and is currently under state mandate to improve. The free lunch, bus pick up, and no tuition are too attractive for many families. Friends Academy charges \$70. per month but thanks to the "adopt-a-student" program no student pays more than \$10. per month.

Recruitment outreach to the far-flung community is by word of mouth. When I spoke to the public librarian in Mt.

Vernon, the closest town, she said she had never heard of the Friends Academy and had no idea where it was – except later she remembered the sign on the highway. The tribal council on the reservation 10 miles away has not been approached.

Anne Hume arrived on Wednesday of my first week to orient me to the area, to the history of the school, and to the Choctaw reservation. She and her husband Bob were involved with the Friends Center since its origin in 1983 and she has been here every year since then. She and an Indiana man, a Friend by the name of Hunt, have invested much sweat equity in the center.

“You are now in the poorest county in the second poorest state in the Union,” Anne said. She talked about the possibility of running a van over to the reservation (10 miles by road – 3 as the crow flies) to pick up students and deliver them. Many students simply drop out of school and hang around. The government subsidized a new home-owner program on the reservation and two neighborhoods of perhaps 30 brick houses have been built.

Every student seems to have a degree of American Indian blood but the ethnic mixture is hard to discern in some students with blonde hair and black features. Rumor has it that the American Indians and Blacks are not harmonious in the McIntosh High School. Discrimination is still with us among these rural poor.

Home life remains problematic. Many children live with guardians. Different fathers are often listed for children in the same family. Spouses abandon mates and occasionally parents abandon children. Many grandparents raise grandchildren. Stable two parent families are the exception. The intricate web of “who’s living with whom” can only be fathomed by insiders who know the secrets of the community.

Norman Snell now maintains with the help of occasional work crews, Quaker Lodge, Turner Hall, Hunt Hall, his own home (where he and his wife and his mother reside) and two additional trailers that are sometimes used for teachers or visitors. Jane acts as principal by default.

There is no Friends Meeting for Worship at the center although there is space for one. Community outreach consists of a weekly rummage sale each Thursday evening beginning promptly at 5 pm when families line up outside waiting for the door to open. The rummage sale is Jane’s hobby and she is expert at making the donations look neat and attractive. It is first come; first serve. There is one price – 20 cents for all items from a man’s suit to a child’s pair of socks. By 5:30 they are cleaned out and everyone goes home.

Jane also sponsors Kid’s Club each Wednesday after school when Christian education merges with fun and games and song. Neighborhood children are welcome, as well as students, and often do attend. This is followed by a one dish supper meal (like chili or tacos) that Jane prepares the night before. Parents and neighbors appear like magic – a treat for all.

What will the future bring? Only God knows. Jane and Norman plan to retire in the near future. What can be done for a school with 18 students? A few years ago there were 49 students. Can the student population be built up again among this restless population? Could this school ever be a star like other Quaker schools that have lit up their communities?

Anne Hume believes a school advisory board would help. The local community could be more involved. More Friends need to know about MCFA. Anne says she has seen some social progress over the past 20 years. There has been definite financial improvement and there is less violence -- including fewer shootings.

My own suggestion would be to try to recruit retired, Christ-centered Friends to come here as volunteers for 6, 8, or 10 weeks on permanent annual assignments. Instead of sitting on the beach, seniors could act as teacher aides or supplement the existing classes with enrichment courses. A local woman already works here in the office as Norman’s administrative assistant, but there is a need for outreach to connect with residents and the outside world, and to do the accounting and paper work.

The weather in southern Alabama for the first two weeks of early February has remained in the 50 to 65 degree range with an even mix of sunny and cloudy days. It isn’t resort weather but it isn’t snow and ice either. The sandy, clay soil seems to soak up the rainwater as soon as it lands.

Thus far my sojourn at the Friends Academy has proven interesting and rewarding. The problems are not all that different from the inner city problems that seem to plague the urban poor up North. Too much alcohol; too much depression; too much violence.... Not enough education; not enough money; and not enough hope....

May the Lord bless our Friends on the Committee for Indian Affairs as they struggle to discern God’s will for the future of this mission-outreach and bless too those working to make God’s love visible in this place!

Jeanne Kinney -- Smithfield RI Friends Meeting, sojourning at the MOWA Choctaw Friends Center



American Friends Service Committee

a Quaker organization

AFSC SENE'S SPRING PEACE AND JUSTICE CONFERENCE

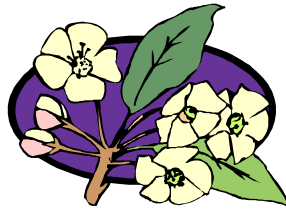
"Building a Culture of Peace and Justice,"

will take place on **APRIL 24, 2004** in Providence. The day will feature speakers, performers, and workshop leaders, raising several core questions:

- ❑ What is the role of the United States in the world today?
- ❑ What are the implications of the mass international movements for peace and social justice that emerged last year in response to the Iraq war?
- ❑ What can we do to sustain and strengthen the energy of these movements for peace, and for racial, economic, and social justice?

Speakers will include: Jonathan Schell (Author of the 1980's bestseller, *The Fate of the Earth*, and more recently, *The Unconquerable World*), Joe Volk (Executive Director of Friends Committee on National Legislation), Zia Mian (Noted physicist and anti-nuclear activist), Ramzi Kysia (Education for Peace in Iraq), and special musical guests to be announced.

Details will be available soon, or check www.afsc.org/sene for more information



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