

Smithfield Friends



Newsletter November 2003 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: Bruce Buteau *Ministry&Counsel* Rhoda Mowry *Newsletter:* Randy Oftedahl

CALENDAR FOR November/December

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**

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, Nov. 9

Peace and Social Concerns committee meets following Worship

Thurs., Nov. 27

9:30 AM: Ecumenical Thanksgiving service at Uxbridge Meetinghouse

Sunday, Dec. 7

Meeting for Business following Worship

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE FOR DECEMBER



Ecumenical Thanksgiving Service Again at Uxbridge Meeting House

Once again everyone is invited to attend the annual Ecumenical Thanksgiving Service at the beautiful colonial era Uxbridge Meeting House. Join Friends and many others from the surrounding communities for our traditional gathering on Thanksgiving morning at 9:30 AM. The service will be led by clergy and members of area churches. Dress warmly (experience colonial style heating!), and come early for a good seat near one of the fireplaces. The Meeting House is just south of Uxbridge on the west side of 146A, at the intersection of Rt. 98.

Letter from Marnie

Dear Friends--

Early Quakers were often even more austere in their practices than their Puritan forebears, but they did like to proclaim that they followed Scriptural standards. Many Friends knew their Bible very well, so that's why I've often wondered how they missed verses like these from Psalm 98:4-6:

Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth, burst into jubilant song with music; make music to the Lord with the harp, with the harp and the sound of singing, with trumpets and the blast of the rams horn--shout for joy before the Lord, the King.

So somehow Friends missed those instructions about using choral voices and instruments in worship. Selective deafness, perhaps?

Anyway, one of the things I've always been thankful for is that I grew up in a musical household. My parents arranged for music lessons, though I didn't have the talent to become much of an instrumentalist. However, I did learn to read music, and I loved to sing. My father and his sister both played well, and had good voices. My mother didn't have much of a voice, but I distinctly remember all the songs she sang to us: Billy Boy, Animal Fair, Three Little Fishies, "Maresy Doats"--or however that's supposed to be spelled!

And when Thanksgiving arrived, it marked the beginning of the household group singing season. The wonderful old Dutch hymn "We Gather Together" was always part of our Thanksgiving dinner ceremonies, whether we were with friends and relatives, or just by ourselves. I remember being not quite sure what it meant when it said that God "chastens and hastens his will to make known" but I rather liked the rhyming. I did know--or thought I did--what "the wicked oppressing now cease from distressing" meant, and thought it was quite a good idea. To me it meant that God was going to start oppressing the wicked, and that would make them stop distressing us-- and since the Second World War was

raging, I naturally put the Germans in the role of the "wicked."

Of course it actually means that the wicked who are doing the oppressing will now cease from distressing anyone else. (At the age of six and a half, I was entranced by the poetry but not very sophisticated in following the grammar.) And of course I hadn't a clue that when the hymn was written in 1626, it was a celebration of the military victory that freed Holland from Spanish rule. Also, as the compilers of our hymnal, *Worship in Song*, point out, there is a certain tone of "naive righteousness" in the original words--the implication that because we are God's own special people, of course God is on our side and "from the beginning, the fight we were winning." But this tone isn't strong enough to bother me much, and I still love the old words, even if they reflect the sensibilities of an earlier age. I think we can still love the hymn, and the old words, even as we qualify them with our understanding that that although God is certainly against any oppression, whether from the Spanish, the Germans, or Saddam Hussein, ultimately God is on everybody's "side" and we--all of us--are ultimately God's "own." This old hymn is part of my heritage, and I love it, flaws and all.

Many blessings for a happy Thanksgiving,
Marnie

The Holidays Are Coming--So Sing and Rejoice!

Members and attenders of all ages, the holidays at Smithfield always include special services for which we need readers, singers and other musicians. So make a note on your calendar now that we will soon be calling for volunteers to do readings and music for some of our Sunday Meetings for Worship during Advent, and especially for our traditional Christmas Eve Candlelight Service. So if you like to sing, play, or read aloud, and would like to be a part of our holiday celebrations, please let Marnie know.

Quarterly Meeting Retreat, October 2004:

Smithfield Meeting is responsible for hosting the October 2004 Quarterly Meeting retreat at Camp Clara Barton. And this takes some...well...work. It includes coming up with a theme, identifying resource people, planning activities for young and old, working out a fair registration fee, etc. Here is an opportunity for persons who are more comfortable with being part of a task oriented group rather than a standing committee. And one doesn't need to be a long-time Quaker. The sooner we begin the planning process, the smoother the task becomes. To volunteer or to get more information about what is involved, contact Richard Frechette (769-4433).

Thanks to all Friends

...our First Friends celebration on Nov. 1 was great fun and fellowship!

In addition to lots of supplies, we collected \$103 for the MOWA Choctaw Friends Center at the First Friends gathering. Monthly Meeting had agreed in October to match any cash contributions up to \$100, so we will send \$203 to them.

Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business: November 2, 2003 abridged for newsletter

Financial Report Bruce Buteau presented a financial report for the period ended October 31 2003. (The report is attached to the official copy of these minutes). Overall, his report indicated that we were meeting budget; however, he reminded us that the approved 2003 budget carried an operating fund deficit of over \$6,300. Friends approved the budget. Friends also requested that the Finance Committee explore whether some of the Meeting invested funds should be transferred from the Pax World Fund to the New England Yearly Meeting Pooled Funds.

Support for the Rhode Island Peace Mission Our Peace & Social Concerns Committee has asked us to consider once again providing financial support to the Rhode Island Peace Mission. Bob Sumner-Mack our Meeting's representative to the organization, reported that the Peace Mission has expanded its base of membership to include more churches and peace-seeking organizations. A number of these member groups (including Smithfield Meeting) sent delegations to meet with the RI congressional delegation or their staffs to discuss peace matters. Bob noted that the Peace Mission has a very small budget, and they are hoping to expand their educational outreach this coming year. Friends approved contributing \$100 in support of their work. Friends also ask Nominating Committee to include the recommendation of a delegate to the Rhode Island Peace Mission to their tasks.

AFSC Thanksgiving Day Peace Ad The American Friends Service Committee – Southeastern new England Area intends to place a large advertisement in the Providence Journal and other area newspapers giving a message of peace. They seek co-sponsors. The Clerk noted that Quarterly Meeting has agreed to be a co-sponsor, and QM is encouraging Monthly Meetings and individuals to also be co-sponsors. We discussed whether Smithfield Meeting should be a co-sponsor. Friends were supportive of the idea, but some expressed concern that sponsoring this ad would also lend financial support to a newspaper (Providence Journal) that has had a history of suppressing pre-peace opinion in their news and editorial pages. We were

Sale of old organ/Harvest Fair Friends approved offering the old organ for sale at next week's harvest fair. Also, in order to open up meeting room to the

unable to reach clearness to go ahead with sponsorship. We encourage the AFSC to explore how to address this dilemma in the future.

Support for the AFSC-SENE Quarterly Meeting has reminded us that the American Friends Service Committee - Southeastern New England Area needs ongoing financial support. The Clerk reported that we had provided a \$100 contribution last year. Friends stated their appreciation for the work and commitment of our local AFSC group. We approve a contribution of \$150. But we also want to improve upon the relationship of the AFSC and Monthly Meetings. There needs to be a better connection between the money we provide and the work that we and the AFSC share. We recognize that the responsibility for realizing this falls on both sides – the AFSC organization and us.

St. James Baptist Church – 50th Anniversary Celebration Friends approved having Diane Gauthier serve as a representative of Smithfield Meeting to the 50th Anniversary Celebration of St. James Baptist Church. We ask that she bring our greetings and congratulations to that faith community.

Request from Yearly Meeting Sessions Committee We have received correspondence from the New England Yearly Meeting's Sessions Committee notifying us that yearly meeting will be held at Bryant College in August 2003. That Committee has asked that Smithfield Friends assist in the carrying out of various local arrangements duties, and that we appoint one or two Friends to serve on the Local Arrangements Subcommittee of the Sessions Committee. Friends noted that, in the prior sessions held at Bryant College (1997-2000), Smithfield Meeting bore the principle local arrangements burden. While we are willing to assist with local arrangements again, we would like assurances that other local meetings also do their share. Friends asked the Clerk to pursue this matter with the Sessions Committee Clerk. We note that many Friends outside of the area of Yearly Meeting experience difficulties paying the cost of room, board and registration, either because they are reluctant to seek equalization or because even the reduced cost is too great. We wish to explore various forms of hospitality that might provide relief to these Friends. We recognize that there are many logistics to be worked out in this matter.

First Friends : A History of Quakers and Indians

By request, here is the text of the narrative given at Smithfield Meeting's First Friends night celebration on November 1.



Some of you might wonder about the name we've given to this evening: First Friends. What does that mean? Well, partly it is a play on the term "First Nations", which is the term Canada uses for its native people and one which I feel is more appropriate than our term, "Native Americans", though both are more accurate of course than "Indians." But it also signifies the often unique relationship that Friends have had with native peoples since the earliest colonial days in North America.

Quakers have sought peace and friendship with Indians throughout our history – sometimes in radical contrast to surrounding culture, and sometimes in less successful ways that merely reflected Euro-American culture.

But from the beginning, the Quaker approach to the indigenous people of North America – like many other beliefs of early Friends – was very different from that of other settlers and other churches. When George Fox visited the Americas in the 1690's, he recognized that the Indians belief in a "Great Spirit" confirmed his view that there is 'that of God' in all people and that God can speak to and through people regardless of cultural or historical differences.

Fox's friend and early convert, William Penn, in the founding of Pennsylvania colony, insisted on fair and honest dealings with the local tribes; settlers in Penn's colony were not to be 'squatters' on the land, but negotiate fair payment to the Indians for the land they

settled on. In his letter to the tribal chiefs that led to the famous treaty of 1682, Penn wrote these words:

"I have great love and regard toward you, and I desire to win and gain your love and friendship by a kind and peaceable life...and if any thing shall offend you or your people, you shall have a full and speedy satisfaction for the same by an equal number of honest men on both sides"

Pennsylvania enjoyed what was called the "Long Peace", seventy years of peaceful relations with the tribes, while all the other colonies were experiencing continual conflicts.

Throughout the 1700's, Quakers set up missions among the tribes and served as intermediaries in conflicts between settlers and Indians. In the mid-1700's, John Woolman, the itinerant Quaker preacher from New Jersey, included a recognition of Native spirituality among his concerns when he wrote these words in his Journal:

"Love was the first motion, and thence a concern arose to spend some time with the Indians, that I might feel and understand their life and the spirit they live in, if haply I might receive some instruction from them, or they might be in any degree helped forward by my following the leadings of Truth among them."



There is the famous story of Woolman's leading to go into the wilderness and preach. An Indian man watched Woolman speak to no apparent audience, and while not understanding the words Woolman spoke, nevertheless understood the spirit in which they were spoken. He later sought Woolman out to explain that he wanted "to hear where the words come from".

In 1794, at the request of the Indians, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting sent representatives to the negotiations between the new United States government and the Six Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy, which resulted in the famous Treaty of Canandaigua, one of the most successful and honest treaties between America and the Indians.



Friends efforts in the years after the Civil War were often less successful. Concerned about corruption in the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs and the violent results of the western expansion, Friends petitioned President Ulysses Grant for better treatment of the western tribes. Grant, in turn, asked Friends to serve as "Indian Agents" to mediate treaty disputes and serve as liaisons between the government and the tribes, saying, "If you can make Quakers out of the Indians it will take the fight out of them." The Friends soon found that this "marriage of convenience" seriously compromised Quaker principles and left this arrangement to serve in other ways.

One of those ways was to establish missions among a number of tribes under the Associated Committee on Indian Affairs. Unfortunately, as was common practice among zealous missionaries of the time, Friends' ministry focused on attempts to "civilize" and Christianize the Indians. Friends boarding schools separated Indian children from the people and their customs in what amounted to a forced attempt at assimilation – a policy that was doomed from the start and accelerated the demise of Native culture.

But perhaps the low-point of Quaker relations with Native Americans came with the Allotment Act of 1887, an Act that Friends vigorously supported. The Act encouraged – perhaps pressured – Indians to settle on individual tracts of land for small scale farming. Like much of American Indian policy of the time, however, the latent purpose of this Act was merely to quicken the confiscation of what remained of Indian land.

Eventually, with the 20th century, Friends began once again to take a more enlightened view of Indian policy. When Congress passed the Termination Resolution of 1953, a bill that eliminated federal recognition of tribal "identity" in order to abrogate federal responsibility for health and educational services for the reservations, Friends led a vigorous opposition through the American Friends Service Committee, the Friends Committee on National Legislation, and grassroots support from Friends Meetings across the country.

In 1970, President Richard Nixon, a member of Whittier Friends Church in Whittier, California, ended the Termination policy with the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act, enabling tribes for the first time to administer federal assistance programs on reservations with native control. Friends rallied support for the Seneca's unsuccessful attempt to stop the Kinzua Dam in New York in 1964, which resulted in the loss of 10,000 tribal acres, and in the 1990's, our own New England Yearly Meeting help support the movement to restrict the James Bay project in Quebec, and its destruction of most of the remaining Cree land.



Sources:

Amanda Keil, "The Peaceful People and the First Nations: A Brief History of Friends and Native Americans." AFSC, Nov. 2001

Tokyo Monthly Meeting of Friends, "The Quakers and the Bureau of Indian Affairs," [online]:

http://www2.gol.com/users/quakers/quakers_and_the_bureau_of_indian.htm

Timeline of Native Americans. [online]:

<http://www.runningdeerslonghouse.com/webdoc208.htm>

The church can make its greatest contribution to community by persisting in its worship – by persisting, I mean in the practice of the presence of God. Again, community is simply too difficult to be sustained by our social impulses. It can be sustained only as we return time and again to the spiritual experience of the unity of all life. To put it in the language of the Quakers, community happens as that of God in you responds to that of God in me. And the affirmation that there is that of God in every person must mean more than “I’m OK, you’re OK.” It must mean a constant renewal of our sense of sacredness in every life.

-Parker J. Palmer, *“The Promise of Paradox”*



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