

# Smithfield



# Friends

**Newsletter November 2005**

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

Vol. 18

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**Parsonage:** 762-5726

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**Recording Clerk:** Connie Bair-Thompson

**Pastor:** Marnie Miller-Gutsel

**Treasurer:** Cindy Keene

**Ministry&Counsel:** Diane Gauthier

**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**

### Other Events

#### **Meeting Indoor "Yard" Sale Saturday, December 3**

Cathy Sleeth is chairing the upcoming indoor yard sale at the meeting house on **Sat. Dec. 3rd from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.** She is looking for people who are able to make firm commitments for the following time slots.

Friday, Dec. 2nd - set up sale from 5:00 p.m. until around 8:00 p.m. (This will involve moving some of the items stored in the loft to the basement and organizing and pricing)

Saturday, Dec. 3rd - 8:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. - having fun selling our great stuff

Saturday, Dec. 3rd - 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. - removing all unsold items to the trash, to the Salvation Army, etc.

To avoid a build up of fire hazardous material, all items not sold need to be removed from the meeting house. Please bring any items you want to donate to the basement the week prior to the sale. Please call me or e-mail me if you're able to help out. ([bodhi56@aol.com](mailto:bodhi56@aol.com); 508-384-6591). Cindy Keene has volunteered to put ads in the newspaper for us. I'll contact her after volunteers sign up. *Thank you.*



#### **Uxbridge Ecumenical Thanksgiving Service**

Time to break out your woolies and plan to attend the annual **Ecumenical Thanksgiving Service** at the old **Uxbridge Meeting House**. Join Smithfield Friends and the many other friends of this wonderful old colonial era Meeting House at 9:30 Thanksgiving morning. Come early for the choicest (and warmest) seats near the great fireplaces and be prepared for an inspiring treat as we share the words and music of Thanksgiving (and still get home in ample time for dinner and the big game). Easy to find: the Meeting House is on the old Quaker Highway (Rte 146A) leading into Uxbridge; it's on the southwest corner of the junction with Rte 98 (Aldrich St.).

## *Letter from Marnie*

Dear Friends,

Luke 27-29 goes right against what we see as our “normal” impulse--to react against our enemies with anger and outrage; when we are hit, our impulse is to hit back. But Jesus says, “Love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you, pray for those who insult you. If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn the other to him...”

There are certainly plenty of people who claim--even loudly claim--to be Christian, who nevertheless behave as if Jesus had never said any such thing--or if he did, that he couldn't have intended it to be used in this particular situation, or that particular one, since it's obviously unrealistic. Yet we have historic examples like Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr., who not only lived this way in their personal lives, but who inspired large popular movements of non-violent resistance which changed the world.

And recently the *Providence Journal* reported an extraordinary example of “turning the other cheek.” It began in Israel during the first week of November, with an incident that was sadly unremarkable. The month long Muslim fast of Ramadan was coming to its end with a festival called Eid al-Fitr--a time to celebrate with feasting and gift giving. At a Palestinian refugee camp outside Jenin, in the West Bank, children were playing in the street with their new toys. Unfortunately, in the midst of it, some Israeli soldiers arrived looking for militants. They came under fire, and at some distance, saw a young man with a gun and shot him in the head. But the boy, Ahmad Khatib, was only twelve, and the gun was a toy. He was rushed to a hospital in Haifa, but died there.

That was the first report. When I read it, I thought, Here we go again. Now that will generate more outrage. It'll be made the reason for more revenge attacks and probably will become the excuse for another suicide bombing--just when things seemed to be taking a tiny turn for the better.

I was wrong. And was very glad to be wrong. There may be some who will still try to exploit the original incident. But the response of the boy's parents was extraordinary. Instead of raging out of the hospital, calling for revenge, Ahmad's parents agreed to donate his organs. Another 12 year-old, a little Druze girl, received the new heart she had spent 5 years waiting for. A 14 year old with cystic fibrosis received Ahmad's lungs. Three other children and a 58 year old woman received his kidneys and parts of his liver. Six people got a new chance at life because his grieving parents chose to give it instead of calling for yet more death. When her son's body was brought home for burial, even in the midst of her grief Ahmad's mother said, “Part of our son is still alive. We gave life to someone else. We proved that we want peace.” Stunning words to hear in the middle of this seemingly endless and bloody conflict. It's not surprising that it was highlighted on Israeli news broadcasts as a gesture of peace.

Will it make any difference? Who knows, but the ancient rabbis taught that he who saves one person, saves the whole world. In other words, we do this one person at a time--perhaps when the Israeli children who received the transplants grow up, they will remember that they live because two Muslim parents chose life for 6 people on the “other” side. And perhaps they will live their lives differently than they might have. Better. More peacefully.

As we look forward to Thanksgiving, the beginning of our great holiday season, one thing we can most certainly give thanks for is the presence of people in the world who hold fast to the choice of life in the face of the “normal” death-dealing of the surrounding cultures.

Many blessings for Thanksgiving,

*Marnie*

## ***Clothes for MOWA Choctaw Friends Center:***



The Frechette's trip to the MOWA Choctaw Friends Center in Alabama has been changed to a Dec 3 departure. So there is still time to contribute clothing that can be brought there to be sold as rummage at the Center – something that supports the center and provides good clothing for a low price for impoverished families. Please bring BY NOVEMBER 27 to the meetinghouse clothing that has been cleaned and is in good condition, preferably folded and organized by gender and size. The loft room in the meetinghouse will serve as a staging area, and we will have boxes there. Sheets and linens in good condition and NEW underwear are welcome as well. If there is more than can fit in the van, the excess can be sold in the December 3 Meeting yard/basement sale.

## ***Public Hearing on the Peace Tax Fund Act Monday, December 12***



**9am-11am State House** (check at front desk for location) The Hearing will highlight: international, national and local spending priorities, civil liberties, voices of conscientious objectors and war tax resisters, voices of the faith community including traditional Peace Churches and others, historical perspectives of Roger Williams and religious freedom, voices of the victims of war and military spending, and a diverse array of local peace and advocacy organizations. Do you have a personal story to tell? Come to the hearing. Senators Chafee and

Reed are expected to attend.

*Can't make the hearing? Write to Senators Chafee and Reed. To make it simpler, post cards and labels are available in the meetinghouse lobby*

## ***Two Opportunities for Interfaith Thanksgiving Worship:***

- Evening before Thanksgiving, 7 PM at Holy Family Church, South Main St. Woonsocket.
- Thanksgiving morning, 9:30 AM at the historic Quaker meetinghouse in South Uxbridge. Refreshments following worship. Be sure to dress appropriately for the weather (the further from the fireplaces, the colder it is...)



## ***Joy to the World! Musicians and Readers-- We Need You!***

It's the easiest and most enjoyable volunteer work of the year: be a part of our regular Advent Meetings for Worship, and/or the annual Christmas Eve Candlelight Service. If you like to read aloud, or can sing (solo or ensemble) and/or play an instrument, sign up with Marnie or Ron.

## ***Benefit for the Interfaith Dire Emergency Fuel Fund***

This winter, you won't need to be among the poor and marginalized to feel the pain of rising fuel costs. But those who are in that category may very well face stark choices between things like heating their homes or feeding their children. You can help by attending the **benefit concert of sacred music by the Gregorian Concert Choir** for the Interfaith Dire Emergency Fuel Fund. It will be hosted by the **Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul** at 20 Fenner St. in Providence on Sunday afternoon, November 20, at 3 PM. Tickets are only \$10. For more information, see the bulletin board, or call the Cathedral office at 331-2434.

## ***Support for Caregivers***

For anyone who is caring for someone with serious illness, **Home and Hospice Care of Rhode Island** provides two caregiver support groups in this area. They offer a caring and comfortable place to meet others in similar situation, to share feelings and learn tips on how to care for someone with a life threatening illness. They meet regularly from 5 to 6:30 PM at Harbor Hill Place in East Greenwich on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday and at Tockwotton Home in Providence every 2nd and 4th Wednesday. They are open to anyone, including those who are not currently using hospice care. Participation is free. For more information, call 727-7070.

## ***New Years Retreat at Woolman Hill***

From Friday evening, December 30, 2005 until Sunday morning, January 1, 2006, Woolman Hill in beautiful Deerfield, MA, will offer its **annual silent retreat**. A variety of individual and community activities will be available. Fees are on a sliding scale. For more information, see the flier on the bulletin board, telephone 413-774-3431, or e-mail <retreats@woolmanhill.org>.

## ***Sex, Drugs, and Rock'n'Roll (!)***

----is the provocative title of this Woolman Hill Workshop **Workshop for Parents and Teens** planned for January 22-22, 2006. For details, check out the flier on the bulletin board, telephone 413-774-3431, or e-mail <retreats@woolmanhill.org>.

## ***Toys Needed for Child Care Area***

Call for Friends to donate good condition, safe to use toys to the new and improved child care area we would like to create. Please bring to the Meetinghouse or see Connie Thompson.

## ***The Worshipping Community***

In a discussion led by Ministry & Counsel a few weeks ago, a number of Friends said that they felt that our sense of worship in community might be enhanced if we simply sat closer together facing each other. How to do that? The first Friends to come to the meetinghouse for worship might sit in the front benches immediately facing each other, and others can join them; when those benches get more or less filled, then the benches immediately behind those two can be occupied. Shall we try it?

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

**2005-60 Opening Minute** Smithfield Monthly Meeting met for a regularly scheduled meeting for worship with attention to business at 12:00 Noon on October 2, 2005. Eight Friends were present; Richard Frechette served as clerk. We began with a period of waiting worship.

2005-61 **Nominating committee for officers** The clerk asked us to approve Eunice Strobel, Suzanne Frechette and Cathy Sleeth to serve as a nominating committee for the officers of the meeting (Presiding Clerk, Recording Clerk and Treasurer). Friends approved. At our last meeting for worship with attention to business, we agreed to temporarily suspend the nominating committee process for committees (minute 2005-58).

**2205-62 Outreach committee report** For Outreach committee, Connie Bair-Thompson presented this report:

*Outreach committee has met six times in 2005; our last meeting was last First Day (October 30, 2005). At all of our meetings, much discussion has centered on these subjects:*

- *How lack of a consistent program for children of all ages may be the reason we don't attract and maintain more families with children.*
- *How we could increase our visibility in the community.*
- *How to make visitors feel welcome and give them the information about our meeting they may be seeking*

*We have discussed placing a larger sign in front of the meetinghouse that might allow us to change its message periodically to show that this is an active meeting. As a simple first step toward this, we agreed to investigate placing a banner with a "Quakerly" quotation from the bible or other source on the meetinghouse that would also change periodically. Quotations that have been discussed using are "Be still and know that I am God.", "...I have called you Friends.", and "The is no way to peace. Peace is the way." We ask Friends to approve spending approximately \$70 to create a banner and/or \$250 for a 4' x 8' "There is no way to Peace..." banner that FGC is selling.*

*Kathy Malin created welcome cards for new attenders that are now in our pews and in the foyer.*

*We advertised our Easter service in local newspapers, but no visitors attended.*

*Regarding the care of our youngest children, we recognize that we no longer have a safe, fun area anywhere for them to be and recognize that this is probably why new families with young children usually do not return to our meeting and current members are not comfortable bringing their small children. This has been complicated by the fire marshal's dictate that our upstairs may only be used for storage, as Young Friends had intended to create a childcare area there. Cindy Keene and Connie Bair-Thompson plan to meet soon to begin planning and working to create a child-friendly area downstairs for children and will invite Friends to join us when we do so. Cindy reminded us that Young Friends have raised over \$1000 dollars toward building improvements, some of which they would probably be amenable to using toward this purpose. The committee has also discussed hiring someone to provide childcare for small children during meeting for worship.*

*Cathy Sleeth has said she would be willing to organize a yard sale or holiday bazaar if Friends pick a date for it, with the understanding that she would need help and that all proceeds go toward our general fund. The committee asks Friends to consider this.*

*Outreach committee is very concerned with our dwindling attendance at meeting for worship and other events, and we ask Friends to help us and to hold us in the Light as we work to change this.*

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Friends discussed purchasing and displaying banners, as well as displaying more prominently a flag that was donated to the meeting years earlier by Doris P. Mowry that says "Peace" in many different languages. We agree that we would like to place some kind of sign or banner outside our meetinghouse to let passersby know more about our meeting. In the long term, we would like to create or purchase a new sign that would allow for a changeable message, perhaps relating to what the message will be on the next First Day. As a place to start, we authorize purchasing and displaying a banner with the phrase "Be still and know that I am God." We also agree to display the Peace flag outside.

Friends approve having a yard sale on December 3, 2005.

We have discussed the outreach committee's concern relating to childcare. We agree that providing a safe and welcoming space and a consistent childcare person is vital to the life of our meeting. We approve spending our funds and time to create a child-friendly area in our basement, as well as paying for a person to provide childcare each week. We ask outreach committee to coordinate the logistics of preparing the childcare space. Connie Bair-Thompson, Cindy Keene and Dottie Bushnell (subject to her agreement) will serve as an ad hoc committee to recruit and select a paid childcare person.

**2005-63 Spiritual nourishment of our children** Although we wished to address the question of the spiritual direction of our children and youth, we find ourselves out of time to adequately do so. We agree to address this in a focused interest group at our upcoming meeting retreat.

**2005-64 Closing Minute** No further business arising, Friends closed with a period of waiting worship, intending to meet again for business on December 4, 2005, God willing.

*Respectfully submitted,*

**Connie Bair-Thompson**  
Recording Clerk

*And oh, how sweet and pleasant it is to the truly spiritual eye to see several sorts of believers, several forms of Christians in the school of Christ, every one learning their own lesson, performing their own peculiar service, and knowing, owning, and loving one another in their several places and different performances to their Master...For this is the true ground of love and unity, not that such a man walks and does just as I do, but because I feel the same Spirit and life in him...walking sweetly and harmoniously together in the midst of different practices.*

*-Isaac Pennington, Works, 1681*



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