

**Newsletter October 2003**  
**Smithfield Monthly Meeting of Friends**  
**108 Smithfield Road Woonsocket, RI 02895**

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**Parsonage:** 762-5726

**Internet:** [www.smithfieldfriends.org](http://www.smithfieldfriends.org)

**Clerk:** Richard Frechette **Recording Clerk** Connie Bair-Thompson **Pastor:** Marnie Miller-Gutsel

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

## CALENDAR FOR October/November

**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, Oct. 26

RI/Smithfield Quarterly Meeting at Westerly Meeting

**6:00 PM: Peace & Social Concerns Film Series: "Bowling for Columbine"** (Pizza will be served)

Saturday, Nov. 1

**FIRST FRIENDS 'Thanksgiving' pot-luck and celebration!**

Sunday, Nov. 2

Monthly Meeting for Business follows Worship

**NEWSLETTER DEADLINE FOR NOVEMBER**

Saturday, Nov. 8

**9 am to 2 pm: Harvest Fair**



## Harvest Fair

**Nov. 8 from 9am to 2pm**

Young Friends are planning a Harvest Fair on Saturday November 8th 9am-2pm. This coincides with the other area Christmas Bazaars. There will be hand crafted items, home baked goods, and yard sale items. Donations are needed. Please see Cindy Keene if you are interested in donating any goods or time for this event. Young Friends are donating all proceeds to the Mowa-Choctaw Friends School. Set up will be Friday November 7th, volunteers needed

## *Letter from Marnie*

Not long ago, PBS did a very interesting program on the hunt for the lost World War II German U-boat, U869. This submarine, one of Germany's newest and best, had originally been sent to attack shipping off the coast of America. These orders were later rescinded and the ship was sent new orders to return and patrol off Gibraltar, where it was presumed lost. But unbeknownst to everyone, it never received the new orders. It continued to the US coast, and was lost there; the program documented the long effort to successfully prove that a mysterious wreck off the New Jersey coast was in fact U869.

A fascinating story, but what really struck me was the strange contrast between then and now. Today, Germany is our ally. German institutions cooperated fully in the effort to prove that the wreck was the U869. And it is legitimate to ask, why did it all have to happen that way? When the divers placed the spare parts box from the U869, with identifying tags, in the hands of the Germans, they said, "It's come home." It was a strangely moving moment. The divers were recognizing the humanness of the young men who died under our coastal waters. They were not the "Nazi monsters" we were told we had been fighting (and I vividly remember those days). They became just young men, with homes and families, like the many American boys who died over there. It raised the issue that too seldom gets raised: Why can't we see that truth at the time? How does ideology – ours or theirs – manage to overpower truth?

This question became very powerful in the last segment of the film, which focused on a crewman of the U869 who had fallen ill at the last moment, and so had been left behind when it sailed. When the first film clips were shown on German TV, this man, now grown old, was overwhelmed by his memories of the war. It all came back, including the nightmares. When the television crew interviewed him, his final comment was this: "All we had to endure – and for no reason!"

What a powerful comment on war! "All we had to endure – and for no reason!". Here we all are, nearly 60 years later – allies, recognizing our common interests and common humanity. Yes, the "good guys" won. And Hitler needed to be stopped, and his evil notion of a 'Thousand Year Reich' destroyed. But how did he and his cronies suck in so many in the first place? What was happening in Germany that left the people wallowing in pain and corruption and economic collapse, and made the Nazi solution seem so appealing? The answer is very

complex, but one thing is clear. World War II ended very differently from World War I; instead of doing things that left the Germans full of distrust and resentment, we made friends of them. Neo-Nazis still rise from time to time in Germany, but they don't have the mass appeal that Hitler did. The majority of Germans no longer see the alleged advantages of fascism. And this reveals the deep truth of the old German veteran's remark. It didn't have to happen the way it did. We are friends now. We could have been friends then. We could have done things differently, so that Hitler might have just been some obscure extremist, a failure, a footnote to history. It was all "for no reason." Instead of scrambling to fight the Hitlers once they are upon us, can't we learn to "take away the occasions for all wars" before they start? "Seek peace and pursue it." (Psalm 34:14).

-Love, *Marnie*

### ***Don't Forget!***

Smithfield Friends Peace and Social Concerns presents a viewing of **Bowling for Columbine Sunday, Oct. 26 at 6:00 PM.** *Pizza will be served!* Discussion follows the film...if you've not seen this important examination of violence in America...*don't miss it!*

### **Schedule and program for our Quarterly Meeting - 26 October at Westerly Meeting.**

We are disappointed that we will not be holding our retreat this fall but we hope that many of you will be able to make it to Westerly for the day. Please let us know of ages of any children planning on attending First Day school or of the need for child care during the program or business sessions. Note that Westerly Friends will be providing a pot-luck lunch.

10:00 - 10:30 arrivals

10:30 - 11:30 Meeting for worship

11:30 - 11:45 Reflections and announcements and introductions

11:45 - 1:00 Coffee, fellowship and potluck meal provided by Westerly Meeting

1:00 - 2:00 Program with Anna Galland of AFSC SENE on opportunities for letting your "Lives Speak"

2:00 - 3:30 Quarterly Meeting for Business

Smithfield Friends Meeting Presents

## First Friends

### A Thanksgiving Celebration of Friends and Indians



**S**ince William Penn's 'Great Experiment,' Quakers have recognized and honored 'that of God' in Native Americans. And Smithfield Meeting has had a long relationship with the Mowa Choctaws of Alabama.  
*Come and celebrate the living history of Friends and Indians!*

**Saturday, November 1  
5:30 PM**

- Pot-luck "Thanksgiving" Dinner
- Presentations on
  - "The History of Quakers and Indians"
  - "The Story of the Choctaws"
  - "The Mowa Choctaws Today"
- Children's presentation: "The White Feather" – A true story of how a small Friends Meeting made peace with the Indians.
- Mowa Choctaw Friends Academy "Wish List" items to be collected\*
- Donations welcome for Mowa Choctaw Friends Academy (Smithfield Meeting will match first \$100 collected!)

For the "Feast", please call Eunice Strobel – **First Friends** pot-luck coordinator – with what you plan to bring or for suggestions

**\*Mowa Choctaw 'Wish List': Children's clothing (all sizes): shoes : new underwear : socks : toys : bedding : school items (crayons, markers, backpacks, lunchboxes, etc.) : Christmas supplies (wrap, decorations, etc.)**

**Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business:  
October 5, 2003**

2003-48 **Opening Minute** Smithfield Monthly Meeting met for a regularly scheduled meeting for worship with attention to business at 12 Noon on October 5, 2003. Richard Frechette was presiding clerk, Connie Bair-Thompson was recording clerk, and 9 other Friends were present. We began with a period of waiting worship.

2003-49 **Post-war profiteering in Iraq** At our last meeting for worship with attention to business (reference minute 2003-45), Randy Oftedahl agreed to draft a minute stating our concerns about post-war profiteering that is occurring in Iraq. He presented the following minute, which Friends approved. We also ask our Peace and Social Concerns Committee to determine how best to present this minute to our congressional delegation, other organizations and the general public. If necessary, we authorize that committee to develop a shortened version of this minute for submittal to newspapers.

*Last Spring, the Smithfield Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends publicly expressed concern about the United States initiating war against the Government of Iraq. We faithfully follow the call of Jesus to love our enemies, and we felt that there were many other avenues of resolution of conflict not yet explored.*

*But our country did move ahead with preemptive attacks. The war on Iraq in March and April of 2003 led to widespread destruction of much of Iraq's social, historical and political infrastructure. Thousands of Iraqi civilian deaths have resulted from the war, and many thousands more have been injured. Major Iraqi institutions such as museums, schools and businesses have been devastated or destroyed by the war or the resulting chaos. Months after the United States declared the successful removal of the Iraqi regime, much of the country's infrastructure remains in shambles; many Iraqis continue to live without electricity, access to minimal health care or other public services, or even potable drinking water.*

*We believe that any country that wars with another country has a responsibility to rebuild what it has destroyed. Hence, we applaud any effort of our government to rebuild in Iraq so that the Iraqi people have a hope for a better future. However, this re-building should not result in excessive profiteering by select politically influential companies.*

*We are concerned that publicly disclosed information suggests activities that are potentially unethical and suspect. Such actions cast suspicions*

*by the world community on the U.S. motives for the Iraq war and reconstruction. These actions taint the efforts to help Iraqis build their own country and determine their own future, and weaken our own democratic principles of public accountability and the rule of law.*

*We therefore call on our Congressional representatives to take the following steps:*

- 1. Co-sponsor the Sunshine in Iraq Reconstruction Act (H.R. 1901 and S. 876), requiring public disclosure of noncompetitive contracting for the reconstruction of Iraq.*
- 2. Call for open Congressional hearings on war profiteering and conflict of interest. Demand that all postwar dealings with and in Iraq be legal, legitimate and fully accountable.*
- 3. Propose the re-instatement of an Excess Profits Tax on all American corporate profits made in Iraq that are above peacetime industry averages. Such a tax is historically rooted in American history, serving as a vital control on war profiteering during the Civil War, both World Wars, and the Korean War.*

*In his support for an excess profits tax during World War II, President Franklin D. Roosevelt said, "I don't want to see a single millionaire created in the United States as a result of this world disaster." The idea that individuals or American corporations may profit handsomely at the expense of the Iraqi people is repugnant to all civilized societies. We call on our elected leaders to assure that business dealings that develop as a result of the Iraq War be conducted in an open, ethical and accountable manner, as justice and our democratic principles demand.*

**2003-54 Request for annual support from Quaker Meeting House Assoc. (Uxbridge Meeting House)**

We have received a request from the Quaker Meeting House Association for dues/contribution to support the Uxbridge meetinghouse. Friends agreed to give \$50 for this purpose.

**2003-55 Naming of a Nominating Committee**

The clerk recommended that Connie Bair-Thompson, Diane Gauthier and Eunice Strobel serve as the nominating committee for the coming year. Friends approved.

**2003-56 Closing Minute** No further business arising, Friends closed with a period of waiting worship, intending to meet again for business on November 2, 2003, God willing.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Constance Bair-Thompson  
Recording Clerk

*What follows is the State of Society Report from the 2003 New England Yearly Meeting of Friends, held in Massachusetts in 8<sup>th</sup> Month of this year.*

## **New England Yearly Meeting**

### **343<sup>rd</sup> Annual Session**

#### **State of the Society Report**

*Sing and rejoice, you children of the Day and of the Light. For the Lord is at work in this thick night of darkness that may be felt. Truth doth flourish as the rose, the lilies do grow among the thorns, the plants atop of the hills, and upon them the lambs do skip and play. Never heed the tempests nor the storms, floods or rains, for the Seed, Christ, is over all and does reign.*

State of Society reports by meetings across New England speak of an exciting work of the Spirit among us. The reports speak with joy about three kinds of caring that we are drawn to: care for the individual soul, care for the meeting, and care for the world at large. Perhaps this is the single most important message for us to meditate upon this year: God is at work among us, and we are gratefully responding, while we also see where we can do more.

Many meetings write that they have been engaged with antiwar work during the past year. In times like these, our inward beliefs are revealed in outward testimony, and we sometimes learn unexpected lessons. Present day Friends are less apt than in previous eras to speak of themselves as a “peculiar people” (1 Peter 2:9); that is, as a people called by God to a unique witness. But we have been made freshly aware that on some points, at least, we are at odds with the culture around us, and, however inadequate our response, we do in fact hold some pieces of a vision different from that promoted by the larger society. This can be uncomfortable for many reasons.

As we stand on street corners, or engage our neighbors or government officials about peace and war, we find that “peculiar” can sometimes be viewed as “unpatriotic.” Yet we cannot congratulate ourselves too much on the unpopularity of our stance, because we know that our testimony is not just against this or that unjust policy. Rather, we are called to witness to a different way to inhabit the world, living in “that life and power that takes away the occasion of all wars.” This beloved phrase, upon reflection, implies depths of integrity, simplicity, faithfulness,

and reliance on God which we may not feel ready to claim for ourselves. This discomfort, if it is taken into the workshop of prayer, can be very fruitful of new insight and fresh concern. Several meetings speak of addressing difficult issues such as racism, pacifism, and the diversity of our own theological beliefs. One raises the query, “As we work so sincerely to effect reconciliation in the world, have we been attentive enough to effecting reconciliation within our own meeting community?”

Yet in this time of stress we see more people being drawn to us. Many meetings report that there has been an increase in the number of attenders and inquirers. In part, this is because Friends have been public about our witnesses. Furthermore, meetings report that they are doing more than they have in recent years to reach out into the community, in part because of the issue of George W. Bush #2007 out of other concerns—so seekers find us. As in years past, however, when conflict has attracted the interest of the outside world to Quakerism, we are challenged by those who come to us. Is our spiritual life deep and rich enough that newcomers can see that the peace testimony is a fruit of a life which has many dimensions? Is there a danger that those who see us primarily in terms of the Peace Testimony can change what it means to be a Quaker? Again we must wrestle until we come to understand the nature of the blessings bestowed upon us.

It is remarkable how many meetings report meetinghouse building or renovations, in response to a sense of growth and vitality. In contemplating the “act of faith and hope” that an addition to the building represented, one meeting reported being “aware of the many ways in which the meetinghouse is truly a spirit house: the outer form that holds our inner life.” We note with concern that some meetings report that they do not seem to be keeping their youth. The vitality of First Day School programs or the lack of such programs is a central concern of meetings.

Many meetings are small, and if they find solace and nourishment in worship and witness, they also find few to carry the meeting’s work. While intervisitation has increased, our Society’s health would be greatly enhanced if more Friends took on the concern to visit other meetings. We have said this to ourselves many times. We are grateful for those who have taken to visiting their Friends in simple friendliness or under a concern, but what choices are we making which prevent more of us from doing so?

In this as in other aspects of our meeting lives, we have much to learn about the simplicity that comes from faithfulness to a few concerns. As Thomas Kelly wrote, "The outer distractions of our interests reflect an inner lack of integration of our own lives. We are trying to be several selves at once, without all our selves being organized by a single, mastering Life within us. Each of us tends to be, not a single self, but a whole committee of selves." Here are to be sought some of the roots of our unfaithfulness, our half-responses to the Light, our inability to live creatively into and through conflicts when they arise among us.

Nevertheless, we can take courage, Friends, because we are not doing this alone, but rather in partnership with God, and, as one meeting reported, "When we have become one with His spirit, it is no longer we who live, but the power of the Spirit that lives through us," however imperfect our response. Hence the note of joy with which this report began!

We close with three passages from the report from the Allowed Meeting at the Massachusetts

Correctional Institution at Norfolk (under the care of Wellesley Meeting), as a reminder of the power to be felt, the healing and refreshment, when we wait upon the Lord:

"I saw on the bulletin board Society of Friends, and I said, 'I need friends.' I walked in and heard quiet. I really enjoyed the first part of the meeting, the quiet time. I enjoyed it, and I came back. During the quiet time I get a good feeling, an elation, for a split moment. It felt good and wholesome."

"When I first came here, I watched people. The people here act the same way outside (the meeting) as they do in it. That impressed me. I like being around people who are really real."

"I am quite certain that without the Quaker meeting here at MCI-Norfolk, especially during the early years of my incarceration, I would have sunk into revenge and despair. The weekly dunking into the spiritualities that are so present in the Quaker environment have given meaning and sustenance, indeed, to this outcast life."



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