Smithfield Friends

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

Vol.17 No.162

Parsonage: 762-5726 **Internet:** www.smithfieldfriends.org **E-Mail**: SmithfieldFriends@cox.net
Clerk: Richard Frechette *Recording Clerk* Connie Bair-Thompson *Pastor:* Marnie Miller-Gutsel
Treasurer: Cindy Keene *Ministry&Counsel* Diane Gauthier *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 (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, October 10	First Day School Committee meets after Worship regular Meeting For Worship at Uxbridge, 4 PM
Sat.-Sun. October 30-31	Quarterly Retreat at the Clara Barton Center
Sunday, November 7	Monthly Meeting for Business Newsletter Deadline for November

Characteristics of Healthy Meetings

By Jan Greene and Marty Walton

One of the responsibilities of field workers is to help meetings grow into healthy communities of faith where individuals and the community can deepen their relationship to God and be more responsive to God's leadings. As we have been able to work with meetings in all stages of development from tiny worship groups to large city meetings, we have come to recognize some of the signs of healthy, vital meetings.

- A healthy meeting has a clear sense of itself and what it is called to do and be. It cares for the spiritual development of all but does not demand that anyone be at any particular place in their development. It recognizes that all are on a journey and are bound to be in different places. It provides a place where it is safe to say, "This is what I truly believe."
- A healthy meeting will include all types of people. It will provide a spiritual home where individuals are supported in making significant changes in their lives, in deepening their relationship with God, and in discerning God's leadings. It will have people who challenge by their example and who others in corporate accountability. it will have people who differ in perception about how the larger society can better express the values the whole meeting cherishes, and who are willing to explore those issues.
- A healthy meeting will offer children a spiritual language and a spiritual home. Children are windows of the divine and will teach older Friends in a community that includes them. The meeting will also offer spiritual nurturing to older Friends. Some older Friends and Friends with chronic illnesses may be experiencing years of deprivation and may be in special need of spiritual nurturing. *–CONTINUED ON LAST PAGE -*

Letter from Marnie

Dear Friends,

During our unprogrammed worship on the last First Day of September, it became clear that the Spirit was moving us to consider the ways we look at and use the past. A Scripture passage kept floating through my mind during that time—it seems right for this letter. According to Genesis 13:19, when Pharaoh finally released the Israelites from the control of Egypt, "Moses took with him the bones of Joseph who had required a solemn oath of the Israelites, saying, 'God will surely take notice of you, and then you must carry my bones with you from Egypt."'

Some rabbis read this story in a very symbolic way--as if the bones are not just the bones of an old man who wanted to be buried back in the land where he was born. Rather, they are a symbol of the good things from the past of the whole people of Israel, a reminder of a time when they flourished, and were happy and free--and may be so again. We all need to take the best parts of the past with us. They give us knowledge and hope--they are an important part of us.

And that brings me to our application for the Lilly Grant. It's been accepted! (Hooray! Hooray!). My share of it will be used to follow parts of the path taken by Job Scott, the 18th century Rhode Island Friend, as he journeyed through England and Ireland. I'll be carrying my own version of the "bones of Joseph" in the form of my own personal copy of one of the earliest editions of Job Scott's journal, which was published in the early 1800's. This is a relic not only of Scott himself, but of the great age of "travelling in the ministry" when Friends like Job Scott became known not only nationally but internationally for the spiritual power and beauty of their ministry. Interestingly, in an age when this ministry was beginning to turn inward, and be directed only to other Quakers, Job Scott was known for frequently addressing his messages to non-Quakers--some of whom he found more responsive than his own people.

But "Dear Job" (as some Friends called him) and his journal are much more than a relic of a "quaint" period of Quakerism that was very different from our own. He is our past. This is literally true--he lived in Gloucester and Uxbridge and most certainly worshipped n the Smithfield Meeting House at various times in his life. But he is also a valuable part of the past of all Quakerism, and we can learn from his writings, his life, and the way he touched the lives of those he met on his travels. I am particularly interested in this whole business of travelling in the ministry. People do "travel in the ministry" now, but not with the same purposes. Is this a tradition that we should begin think about again?

Some parts of the past are best left buried where they are. When we look at the old Books of Discipline, and such things as their condemnation of dancing, or the wearing of 'extravagant and unnecessary periwigs," it all seems quaint and a bit silly. And, as you may imagine, I don't think much of the rejection of "hireling priests." But perhaps we need to do some discernment before we rebury everything. "Joseph's bones" could be more valuable than we think.

Love and blessings,
Marnie

Open House at Moses Brown School

Are you or your child wondering if the Moses Brown School in Providence might be the place for you? Check it out at the Open House on Sunday, October 24. See the Bulletin Board for details

Howard Zinn at Cambridge

Howard Zinn, noted historian, writer, and peace activist, will speak at the Cambridge Friends Meeting House Thursday, October 21, at 7 PM. This is a benefit for the Pat Farren Fund for Peace Works Magazine; donations are requested. For more information, see the bulletin board.

Fall-Winter Programs at Pendle Hill

Pendle Hill, the Quaker Study and Retreat Center outside of Philadelphia offers some wonderful opportunities for broadening and deepening you faith and understanding of Quakerism, including a weeklong course in non-violence, led by Dan Snyder. See fliers on the bulletin board. Scholarship aid is available.

FGC Outreach Efforts

The Friends General Conference has launched a special effort to improve communications with pastoral meetings in their midst, and are particularly inviting those meetings to become involved in programs such as their Traveling Ministries Programs. Brochures and fliers on some of these programs are posted on the bulletin board or filed in the pamphlet rack, and included materials on nurturing calls to ministry and couple enrichment programs. Check 'em out!

Rhode Island/ Smithfield Quarter

2004 Fall Retreat October 30th and 31st

The Barton Center, North Oxford, MA

All ages welcome

pre-registration required by Friday, October 29th (earlier is better).

Cost: (may be paid with pre-registration or upon arrival)

Overnighter	$30
Commuter	$20
Infant/toddler	$0
Family cap	$75

Registrar: Suzanne Frechette, sfreche105@aol.com; 401-769-4433;
46 Cherry Brook Avenue, North Smithfield, RI 02896;
please make checks payable to: "Smithfield Monthly Meeting of Friends"

Adult program focus—THE DRAFT

Reliable sources are saying that the current administration, if reelected, will likely reinstate the draft after the election. Are there specifics? Should Friends address this issue individually and/or corporately? If it becomes a reality, what role will Friends Meetings have with respect to conscientious objection among our own young adults and in the larger community? What are the current selective service rules about conscientious objection? Noah Merrill, the newly appointed local AFSC coordinator will participate in our forum as we engage in a mini training session on the topic.

Intergenerational Program Focus: About our Meetings

Retreat attenders from each Meeting in the quarter will have an opportunity to present the history and current activities of their Meeting.

Learn more about the Barton Center from their website www.bartoncenter.org

Schedule

- **Saturday**
  - Arrival — Anytime after 9 AM
  - Lunch — 12 noon (provided by Smithfield Meeting)
  - Adult program — 1:30 PM
  - Children's program — 1:30 PM
  - Free Time — 3:00 PM
    (will include some optional activities)
  - Dinner — 5:30 PM (provided by Worcester Meeting)
  - Intergenerational program — 7:00 PM
  - Free time/bedtime — 9:00 PM
- **Sunday**
  - Breakfast — 8:00 AM (provided by Westerly Meeting)
  - Adult Program — 9:15 AM
  - Children's Program — 9:15 AM
  - Worship — 10:45 AM
  - Lunch: — 12 noon (provided by Providence Meeting)
  - Meeting for Business — 1:30 PM

What to bring:

- Pillow
- Bedding or sleeping bag
- Basket balls, soccer balls, hiking shoes, tennis equipment, journals, art supplies, musical instruments, song books, binoculars, etc. for free time.
- (Please leave electronic toys at home for this retreat.)

Following the lead of Yearly Meeting, Friends are asked to help create a fragrance free weekend. Please be sensitive to others and avoid the use of colognes and other highly perfumed products during the weekend.

Directions to Barton Center: From Smithfield Meetinghouse:

Take Route 146 North to the Central Turnpike exit. At the end of the ramp, turn left. Proceed for approximately 10 minutes crossing over Route 395 to Oxford Center. At the 1st traffic light, take a right. This is Route 12 North; proceed for approximately 3 miles. Take a LEFT onto Clara Barton Rd. (watch for the sign for Clara Barton Birthplace and North Oxford Carpet Mills). Proceed 0.7 miles to the top of the hill. The conference center will be on your right.

Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business: October 3, 2004

2004-51 Opening Minute
Smithfield Monthly Meeting met for a regularly scheduled meeting for worship with attention to business at 12 Noon on October 3, 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.

2004-52 Guest speakers: Yat Paol and Peter Illyn
Friends expressed appreciation for our guest speakers this morning: Yat Paol, a Papua New Guinean Christian environmentalist and Peter Illyn from the U.S., who is head of Christians for Environmental Stewardship. Friends asked the clerk to send a letter of appreciation to these guests and approved a contribution of $50 to the organizations supporting their Christian environmentalism work.

2004-53 Nominating Committee
The Clerk submitted the followingpeople to be the Nominating Committee for 2005: Eunice Strobel, Jeanne Kinney and Connie Bair-Thompson. Friends approved and asked the committee to present their recommendations at the December meeting for worship with attention to business.

2004-54 Lilly Foundation Grant – Marnie Miller-Gutsell's Sabbatical
The clerk told us that our meeting's proposal for funding under the Lilly Foundation's Clergy Renewal Program has been accepted. Marnie is planning to go on a four month sabbatical on or around February 2005. She intends to follow portions of Job Scott's 1791-1792 religious journey through Southern England, Wales and Ireland. (Scott was a well-known New England Quaker and recorded minister who lived in this area and often worshiped with Smithfield Meeting.)

Our proposal included plans to hold two retreats around this time, possibly one during Marnie's absence and one after her return. We also intend to use the funds to pay for guest speakers to deliver the message on some First Days while Marnie is gone. Friends asked Ministry and Counsel Committee to plan worship services during this time. Suzanne Frechette, Elaine Bello and Connie Bair-Thompson agreed to serve as a planning committee for the two retreats, and Friends authorized them to draft others to serve with them as needed.

2005-55 House-sitting of personage during Marnie Miller-Gutsell's sabbatical
Marnie requested approval for her daughter to live in the parsonage during her absence, with the understanding that she would share the additional cost of utilities. Friends approved.

2005-56 Sale of potentially valuable antique items
The clerk asked if Friends wish to sell the cracked bench in the basement at our yard sale next Saturday. Friends agreed to sell the bench, but due to its historical significance and anticipated worth, we don't wish to include it in the yard sale. Friends also approved selling our soapstone sink, copper water boiler and an older print under glass. Elaine Bello and Bruce Buteau agreed to research how best to sell these items. Friends asked them to report what they find out to us. Once a fair market price has been determined, we will offer these items first to our own community members.

2005-57 Sale of music books
The clerk reminded us that we have two sets of music books we no longer use and asked if we wish to sell them at the yard sale or other venue. Friends agreed to sell these books to individuals or, if we can find a faith community that would like to use them, we would donate them for the cost of shipping.

2004-58 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 meeting house. Friends agreed to give $50 for this purpose.

2004-59 Quarterly Meeting Retreat – worship at Bolton meeting house
Suzanne Frechette asked if we were interested in worshiping in the Bolton meeting house during our upcoming quarterly meeting retreat. This meeting house was moved to Sturbridge Village and used to be part of our quarterly meeting. Friends expressed interest in doing this, but suggested we determine if there is interest in the other meetings in the quarter. If there is wider interest, Suzanne and Richard Frechette agreed to try to make arrangements with Sturbridge Village to worship in this historic meeting house and to learn more about its history.

2003-60 Spiritual Condition of our Meeting
The clerk said that several people have expressed concern about the spiritual condition of our meeting. Using the queries from New England Yearly Meeting Faith and Practice as a guide, the clerk asked whether we are in the right spiritual place as a community. Do activities of our meeting find their inspiration in worship, and do they, in turn, help to uphold our

worshiping group? Are all of our members (and committed attenders) encouraged to use their talents in the service of the meeting?

Friends expressed concern about our dwindling numbers of people who regularly attend our worship services. At the same time, we are hopeful that we can attract new people. We recognize a need to do more outreach. Friends talked about forming a committee on outreach to try different ways to attract new people and to make those who come through our doors feel welcome. In particular, we would like to attract families with young children. One simple way we can do this is to bring our own children to meeting and encourage them to bring their friends and their friends' families as well.

We also recognize that what we are experiencing is not unique to our congregation and may stem from our society's seemingly more hectic pace of life, which does not allow time or inclination for commitment to a faith community.

Friends asked Nominating Committee to consider who could serve on a Committee on Outreach to address some of these concerns. Friends also asked our pastor to continue researching the wider societal patterns that may be contributing to our dwindling numbers and to continue offering messages about this topic.

Respectfully Submitted,

Constance Bair-Thompson, Recording Clerk

-Health Meetings, continued-

- A healthy meeting has Friends who know a lot about what is going on in each other's lives. The meeting will include many extended families sharing much more of life than one hour a week. A healthy monthly meeting keeps in close contact with older Friends.
- A healthy meeting has active links with the quarterly and yearly meeting, with Friends' organizations, and with the surrounding community, recognizing that there is no real barrier between the meeting and the rest of the world. When a meeting is strong, its members and attenders will talk to others about how important the Meeting is to them. Visitors will be welcome and will sense the spiritual depth that this faith community offers.
- A healthy meeting cares for its corporate life - it acknowledges that it is more than just a collection of individual lives. It will discern those times when it has begun to move away from wholeness and will stay with difficult issues and wait for guidance from God. There will be recognition, repentance, healing, forgiveness. A healthy meeting will understand that conflict is inevitable in meeting that is vital and growing and that, properly addressed, working through the conflict can deepen the meeting spiritually.
- The healthy meeting will provide spiritual nurture for the "difficult" Friend, but will understand that protecting the safety of the meeting as a faith community has priority. It will not confuse "being loving" or "being Quakerly" with tolerating the destructive behavior of an individual, but will understand that setting firm limits is loving.

-From FGConnections, Friends General Conference, 1216 Arch Street 2b Philadelphia, PA 19107

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