

Smithfield

Friends

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

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Parsonage: 762-5726

Internet: 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 September/October

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. 5

Meeting for Business at the Rise of Worship
NEWSLETTER DEADLINE FOR OCTOBER

Sunday, Oct. 12

Tentative: Peace and Social Concerns after Worship

Sat., Oct. 18 – Sun., Oct. 19

RI/Smithfield Quarterly Meeting Retreat: Clara Barton Camp, Worcester

Sunday, Oct. 26

7 PM: Smithfield Friends Peace and Social Concerns Film Series:
“Bowling for Columbine” at the Meetinghouse

Please call Marnie for Ministry & Council and other items

15th Anniversary
Smithfield Friends
Newsletter

Our newsletter is 15 years old! Friends will notice some changes as we “condense” down to two or three sheets to save printing and mailing costs. You can also download the newsletters in full color pdf files at our website:

www.smithfieldfriends.org. *Thanks for your many years of support, Friends!*

Letter from Marnie

Dear Friends;

Bible Half Hours at Yearly Meeting this year were rather different. The presenter we had invited couldn't come. (She's Cuban, and the State Department, in its infinite wisdom, denied her a visa). So a backup crew was assembled; they were the members of the panel who had already been asked to address the question of "Conflict". For Bible Half Hour, each person was asked to reflect on the "Peaceable Kingdom" section of Isaiah 11, which had inspired our Yearly Meeting theme, "Building God's Peaceable World."

So we had five different speakers – and five radically different responses. How amazing that the Spirit spoke in so many rich ways through a single passage! But one person included an image I want to share, because I think it has implications for our First Day School program. The presenter mentioned an old Quaker concept – the idea that though we can all be on the same spiritual journey, and all heading in the same direction, yet each person may be at a different place, and so may seem "different" from the others. Therefore we need to be forgiving of each other – in Isaiah's terms, to 'lie down together,' lambs and leopards, and be less critical of differences. And he added this idea – wherever we are on the journey, even if we're out in the wilderness somewhere, we are still being given manna – that mysterious Divine food which sustained the Israelites on their forty year trek.

So what has that got to do with First Day School? Just this: I suspect that some Friends hesitate to take on a First Day School class because they don't feel "competent" – forgetting that we're all at different places on the journey – so we all have different things we can share with the children. Not necessarily "superior" or "inferior" things – just different. And that's OK. And we shouldn't forget that we have all been given "manna" – and will be given more. And we can share this spiritual food in a very simple way.

Suppose, for instance, that people signed up to teach one or two sessions of First Day School, and selected a Bible story or Parable to share with the children – perhaps asked them to read it aloud or draw it or act it out or make puppets for it. And then teachers and students shared the "manna" they found in the story, and maybe things they wondered about (questions are "manna" too). Any of us can ask "What is this story saying to me?" It doesn't really matter if people come up with different views. We may sometimes laugh about the odd things children discover in Bible stories – but often they come up with very fresh and insightful things that grownups haven't

noticed because most adults have had too many years of other people telling them what the stories are "s'posed" to mean. Remember how differently the Bible Half Hour speakers approached the same few lines of text? We want our Quaker kids to do that, to ask how God is speaking the Word to them – not just to parrot what someone else tells them they are "s'posed" to hear.

The "manna" approach to First Day School – How about it Friends? Would you volunteer to teach?

-Love, Marnie

RI Smithfield Quarterly Meeting Retreat

The annual fall retreat of the RI/Smithfield Quarter will take place again this year at the Clara Barton Camp near Worcester on **October 18 & 19**. Details will be coming soon, so mark your calendars now!



Smithfield Friends' Peace and Social Concerns Film Series returns on **Sunday, October 26 at 7 PM** at the Meetinghouse for

"Bowling for Columbine"



The controversial Academy award winning documentary that asks the question, "Are we a nation of gun nuts, or are we just plain nuts?". A funny, provocative and frightening look at violence in America, and how we have come to (not) look at its role in our lives. *Some violence and profanity: high school and older*

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

2003-43 Opening Minute

Smithfield Monthly Meeting met for a regularly scheduled meeting for worship with attention to business at 12 Noon on September 7, 2003. Richard Frechette was presiding clerk, Connie Bair-Thompson was recording clerk, and 11 other Friends were present. We began with a period of waiting worship.

2003-44 Selective Service System and Conscientious Objection: Quarterly and Yearly Meeting Response to Smithfield Monthly Meeting's Minute 2003-41

In our June 22, 2003, meeting for worship with attention to business, we recorded our unity with the Connecticut Valley Quarter's minute relating to state laws requiring registration for Selective Service as a pre-requisite for any young man applying for a driver's license, matriculating to state colleges and universities or receiving federal student loans. Both RI-Smithfield Quarterly and New England Yearly Meeting have since united with this minute. The clerk asked us if we wish to take further action on this. Question was raised as to whether Yearly Meeting is taking action on this, possibly referring it to Yearly Meeting Peace and Social Concerns Committee. If they are, then perhaps we have the option of joining that effort, possibly by having someone from Smithfield Monthly Meeting or RI-Smithfield Quarterly Meeting attend the next meeting of that committee. The clerk will request a copy of any minutes from New England Yearly Meeting (both adult and Young Friends) to clarify this. The clerk will also obtain a copy of the Rhode Island law relating to Selective Service registration and we will append it to the minutes from our June 22, 2003 meeting for worship with attention to business. We will also refer our concerns to our meeting's Peace and Social Concerns Committee, as well as asking Quarterly Meeting to establish a Quarterly Meeting Peace and Social Concerns Committee to address this issue. Friends reminded ourselves that we can, as individuals, write to our representatives about our concerns. We can also volunteer to serve on local draft boards as well as provide information on conscientious objection to the greater community. As we work to help conscientious objectors, we should not forget about the larger issues of war, conscription and supporting those who choose to register for Selective Service and to serve in the military.

2003-45 Concern about Post-War (Iraq) Profiteering

Randy Oftedahl presented his concern that many corporations are making huge profits providing

services to post-war Iraq. He handed out material that details what is happening and how we can work to stop it. Randy asked if we wish to take some kind of corporate action to try to stop this profiteering, possibly by working to pass federal legislation that has been introduced requiring corporations to fully disclose how they are making money in post-war Iraq.

Friends thanked Randy for bringing this concern to us. We want to record that we share his outrage that American corporations may be profiting at the expense of the well being of the Iraqi people. We are very concerned that business may have been conducted in secretive and possibly unethical manner. We ask that Randy, with the help of others, draft a more formal minute on this issue for presentation at a future meeting for worship with attention to business.

2003-46 MOWA Choctaw Friends Academy & Center

Eunice Strobel brought to us a request from the Mowa-Choctaw Friends Academy & Center for supplies and funds. The Center serves a very impoverished band of Choctaws in Alabama. We were reminded that Smithfield Meeting has had a long relationship with the meeting, and we wish to rekindle that relationship. We will ask the Religious Education committee to consider creating a project that would tie our 1st day school children to the tribe while providing supplies to the center; we approve of Randy Oftedahl and Eunice Strobel planning some form of whole-Meeting educational & social activity related to the tribe and Center; we approve the Meeting's providing up to \$100 in corporate funds to the Center to match that raised as a result of the activity; and we approve the Meeting's covering the cost of shipping supplies gathered by Friends for the center.

2003-47 Closing Minute

No further business arising, Friends closed with a period of waiting worship, intending to meet again for business on **October 5, 2003**, God willing.

Respectfully Submitted,
Constance Bair-Thompson
Recording Clerk

Additional information on war profiteering is available at the Meetinghouse, or visit:
<http://www.southernstudies.org/>



From AFSC: Help Us to Speak Out for Peace

On Thanksgiving Day, 2003, the American Friends Service Committee in Southeastern New England plans to publish an “advertisement for peace” in the *Providence Journal* and other area newspapers. We have chosen statements that describe and reaffirm several ways to work for peace. Together, we can demonstrate a public mandate for sane and moral policies; and our wish for a future based on love, compassion, and mutual respect—not fear, recrimination, and dominance.

We Ask You to Join Us

This ad will reach hundreds of thousands of people across Rhode Island and southeastern Massachusetts, on a day when people are traditionally gathered together with family and friends. It’s the perfect time to reach out to a broad public with a message of peace. Please join us in signing, funding, and spreading the word about this effort. This ad can be a beacon for all of us who look to bring about a more just and peaceful world. Thank you for your support!

Text of ad:

THINK

A strong nation, like a strong person, can afford to be gentle, firm, thoughtful, and restrained. It can afford to extend a helping hand to others. It’s a weak nation, like a weak person, that must behave with bluster and boasting and rashness and other signs of insecurity.—
Jimmy Carter

SPEAK

We still have a choice today: nonviolent coexistence or violent coannihilation. We must move past indecision

to action. We must find new ways to *speak for peace*... and justice throughout the developing world, a world that borders on our doors. If we do not act, we shall surely be dragged down the long, dark, and shameful corridors of time reserved for those who possess power without compassion, might without morality, and strength without sight. —*Martin Luther King, Jr.*

PRAY

I pray for a more friendly,
More caring, and more understanding
Human family on this planet.
To all who dislike suffering,
Who cherish lasting happiness—
This is my heartfelt appeal.
—*Tenzin Gyatso, HH the XIVth Dalai Lama*

VOTE

By exerting electoral pressure, an aroused citizenry can still move its government to the side of morality and common sense. In fact, the momentum for movement in this direction can *only* originate in the heart and mind of the individual citizen. —*Helen Caldicott*

ACT

Peace is not the product of terror or fear. Peace is not the silence of cemeteries. Peace is not the silent result of violent repression. Peace is the generous, tranquil contribution of all to the good of all. Peace is generosity. It is right and it is duty.
—Archbishop Oscar Romero

for PEACE

Signed: [List of signers, arranged alphabetically within each town]

Cost of the ad is \$25 per signature. More info and registration forms are at the Meetinghouse. Details also available at www.afsc.org/sene.htm

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