

Smithfield



Friends

Newsletter September 2005
Smithfield Monthly Meeting of Friends
108 Smithfield Road Woonsocket, RI 02895

Vol. 18

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Pastor: Marnie Miller-Gutsel

Treasurer: Cindy Keene

Ministry & Counsel: Diane Gauthier

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 (2nd & last Sundays)



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Annual Picnic

Sunday, September 25 after Meeting

At Jeanne Kinney's home in Hopedale, MA

This will also be our end of the month pot-luck

Tennis and boating are available!

**Hopedale is located off Rt. 16 close to Milford Regional Hospital.
64 Dutcher Street (across from town park and tennis courts)**

Letter from Marnie

Dear Friends,

An English poet found Osermons in stones.¹ I find them in landscapes, which reveal so much about human beings. Landscapes are always alive, and somewhat (though not entirely) defenseless, and our treatment of them reveals the kind of human beings we are.

I especially love the landscapes of Long Island, where generations of my mother's people lived, and where I spent most of my childhood summers. When I was a girl, vast tracts of it were under cultivation. Long Island was famous all over the eastern seaboard for its potatoes and cauliflower. The light sandy soil also produced acres of corn, tomatoes, cucumbers, squash, and peas. And it was said that Long Island had the best land in the country for growing the wonderful Fordhook lima beans--known to locals as "limar" beans.

But I haven't seen a Long Island Olimar¹ bean for decades--the land that grew them disappeared under acres of cookie cutter houses 40 years ago, during the first big housing boom that has now turned into a torrent of more and more luxurious developments.



But things always change, people say, and "you can't stop progress." But I think I am doing more here than grieving the loss of a landscape I loved as a child. I am challenging some of our current definitions of "progress," and suggesting that while it may be impossible to stop change, it is possible to direct and guide it in ways that are constructive rather than destructive.

For me, sod farms have become a symbol of this destructiveness. They seem so innocuous. They're open. They're green. What's to complain about? Oddly enough, while I was driving around this summer, grumbling about the

way sod has replaced more and more acres of potatoes and cauliflower, the image of Jesus came into my mind, shaking his head over the folly of human beings. Jesus wasn't a farmer, but he was a man of the countryside, intimately acquainted with the value of good land, and with the patterns of the seasons, of seed time and growth and harvest. In his preaching and teaching he constantly calls on images from the landscape. Might he not be troubled by the use of good farmland to grow nothing but grass to cater to the desires of the affluent for instant lawns?

Obviously sod farms don't cause the "invasion"--that is the only word for it--of the affluent. But their arrival drives up both land prices and taxes, making it more and more difficult for people of lesser income to find suitable housing, or to keep houses they already own, especially if they must live on moderate or fixed incomes. Many now find themselves forced out of the homes where they have lived for years, perhaps generations. The sod farms are a symbol of this triumph of the affluent over the interests of anyone else--and that Jesus did object to. And they symbolize not only the way of the easy, the convenient, the instant everything; they reflect the destruction of one community by another, the destruction of the agricultural community and its way of life. An older community where people knew each other and worked together for the common good is being replaced by a community of individuals who are largely focused on self, and on individual gratification.

Even the very crop--the sod--destroys the land. Every time a layer of sod is rolled up and taken away, it takes some of the soil with it. Its cultivation requires large quantities of fertilizer, herbicides, and pesticides--washed down by large quantities of water, which then carries this stew of chemicals into the streams or down into the ground water. No one involved in this process means to do harm. But neither do they wish to think too carefully about the long term consequences of catering to one's short term interests.

This is what Paul writes in Galatians 6:7-8. He was speaking metaphorically, but in this case, I think maybe we can read it literally: "A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please the sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction." And Jeremiah's prophetic vision is even more grim for those who ignore God's intentions (Jer. 12:11). The whole land will be laid waste, because there is no one who cares."

Peace,

Marnie

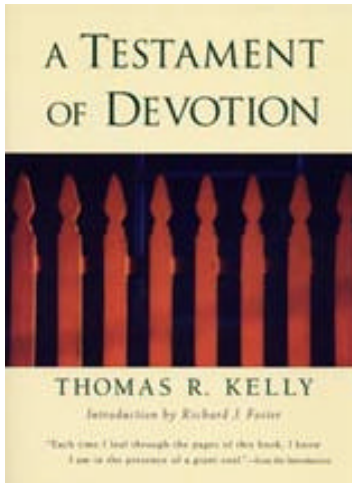


Save the Date!: Smithfield Friends Retreat – Redux!

The second retreat approved by the Lily Foundation will take place November 19 – 20 at Craigville Retreat Center at Cape Cod.

Registration reservations will begin in October. The committee will be sending retreat information and registration materials to meeting attenders.

-Regards,
Suzanne Frechette



“Reading in the Spirit”

The Library committee is sponsoring an experiment in " Reading in the Spirit".

Each Sunday we shall be reading together out-loud some of the Quaker classics that some of us have overlooked.

The reading will begin each Sunday at 9:45 and stop 10 minutes before meeting. We shall take turns reading a paragraph apiece. Those who don't wish to read may pass.

The first selection recommended by Liberty is : Thomas Kelly's *A Testament of Devotion*. Anyone is welcome to participate and there is no requirement to attend every week.

Young Friends Moving On

Congratulations to three of our family who have graduated from High School!

- * Rocky Malin has matriculated at Wentworth College in Boston, majoring in Industrial Design
- * Alex Malin is studying Culinary Arts at Johnson & Wales University in Rhode Island
- * Meghan Keene has entered Mt. Holyoke College, focusing on liberal arts (and hoping to join the equestrian team).

Feel free to write or e-mail them; their mail/e-mail information is included in the updated Smithfield Meeting Contact list.



Smithfield Friends Contact Book

New Smithfield Meeting Address Book: Updated as of 9/1/05. Copies are available in the meetinghouse, or you may request an electronic file in MS-Word or .pdf format be e-mailed to you (send request to Richard.Frechette@cox.net)

More from NEYM Faith & Practice Revision Committee:

The F&PRC has completed a draft of the chapter on Worship, which is now available for review. The Committee encourages Monthly Meetings to corporately review and comment on the draft, asking that responses be given February 1. Our Ministry & Counsel Committee will arrange the circumstances for a corporate review. However, a good starting point is for Friends to individually review the draft document. Copies are available at the meetinghouse, and can also be obtained via the Yearly Meeting, website (www.neym.org; click on “Committees”, then on “Faith & Practice Revision Committee”).

**Smithfield Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends
Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business: September 11, 2005**

2005-49 Opening Minute Smithfield Monthly Meeting met for a regularly scheduled meeting for worship with attention to business at 12:00 Noon on September 11, 2005. Nine Friends were present; Richard Frechette served as clerk. We began with a period of waiting worship.

2005-50 Marriage of Ron Belliveau and Diane O'Hara Diane Gauthier, for Ministry & Counsel Committee reported that Ron Belliveau and Diane O'Hara have requested to be married under the care of the meeting. Ron and Diane met with separate clearness committees, and the sense of each committee were that both Ron and Diane desired to enter into a loving and committed relationship. M&C recommended that the marriage go forward. Friends approved the marriage of Ron and Diane, the wedding to take place on Saturday September 11 at 4 PM at the meetinghouse.

2005-51 Worship at Uxbridge Meetinghouse Ministry & Counsel reported they have sponsored a worship group at Uxbridge for quite a few years, but it has been largely only Smithfield Meeting Friends that attend, and typically a handful or less.

Friends approved the laying down of the worship group at Uxbridge. Yet we feel that it is important to continue some form of worship at the historical Uxbridge meetinghouse. We wish to have Smithfield Meeting worship two or three times per year at the Uxbridge meetinghouse, leaving it to the Ministry & Counsel Committee to set specific dates, and to notify not only our Meeting family but also the Uxbridge community in advance of these occurrences. We will also plan to hold worship at Uxbridge for Quarterly Meeting on some occasions in which we serve as sponsor.

2005-52 Capital Funds Appeal In April, the Finance Committee initiated a Capital Fund appeal. The appeal letter had noted that the Building Fund was in a deficit position prior to our embarking upon a repair and improvement project at the parsonage. For the committee, Kathy Malin reported that Friends contributed \$3,075 from the appeal, which was a virtual match to the funds expended for the parsonage improvements. She thanked Friends for their support, but also noted that there remains a deficit in the Building Fund, which will increase with expenditures which will accrue in order to meet fire code requirements.

2005-53 Fire Code A State Fire Marshal representative conducted an inspection of our meetinghouse and presented a report of violations of the code. It is a substantial list and the addressing of all items would cost several thousands of dollars. Through the State Council of Churches, we have received a temporary reprieve from total compliance, but are still required to address the most critical items, which include: installation of a front door that is fire proof, includes a panic bar, and opens out; repairing the unfinished ceiling above the windows in the basement, installing additional code-level fire extinguishers and smoke detectors.

We request that the Building & Grounds Committee take necessary steps to address these high priority items as soon as possible, and authorize that committee to expend funds as needed for this purpose. We recognize that we may have to draw down from investments in order to accomplish this; but we ask Finance Committee to explore other alternatives such as grant requests and another capital fund appeal.

2005-54 Operating Budget We reviewed Treasurer's Financial reports of expenditures and revenues for last calendar year and for the first half of this year. Finance Committee Clerk Kathy Malin reported that we have a deficit of six to seven thousand dollars every year which has been subsidized by drawing down investment funds. Without major structural changes, we will continue with this pattern until we have drawn down all of our investment funds. The Committee is in the process of exploring the long term options such as: bringing in rental income; expanding the level of contributory support from our current Meeting family; expanding the base of contributors (i.e. increasing membership); rethinking the matter of compensating pastor or building caretaker.

These are long term issues. So the committee will in the next month or so present a 2006 budget that will require deficit spending. In the meantime, the Finance Committee will ask the Outreach Committee to take responsibility for yard sales and other events that combine outreach and fund raising.

Friends reflected that, a number of years ago, we gave up the practice of having a collection during worship, feeling that this took away from the worshipfulness. Nevertheless, we do need to have some form of constant visible reminder of the financial needs of the Meeting and of the responsibility of the Meeting community to meet those

needs. We ask the Finance Committee to find some way of accomplishing this. We also ask that Committee to mount a specific program sometime in the next several months to both educate our members on the financial realities and to solicit their increased giving.

2005-55 Closing Minute No further business arising, Friends closed with a period of waiting worship, intending to meet again for business on October 2, 2005, God willing.

Respectfully submitted,

Richard Frechette, Clerk

Epistle from the World Gathering of Young Friends

To all Friends everywhere,

Greetings from the World Gathering of Young Friends 2005. 226 Friends gathered together in Lancaster University, United Kingdom, from 16th – 24th August 2005. Our theme was 'I am the vine, you are the branches. Now, what fruit shall we bear?' taken from John 15; and William Penn's challenge 'Let us then try what love will do'. Among us, 58 Yearly Meetings and 9 monthly meetings and regional groups were represented, with speakers of more than twenty different languages. We were called to be gathered together at the place where our Quaker movement first bore fruit, the heart of 1652 country. We returned to our shared roots, to the birthplace of our collective spiritual identities. Through climbing Pendle Hill as a community, to live out George Fox's vision of a great people gathered together, we found a unity with the place and one another, among the bright green hills, surrounded by grazing sheep.

We felt great joy in being together and many Friends gave thanks for being here. However, our hearts were filled with sadness too. In the hall where we met there were many empty chairs, and we were always aware of those Friends who could not join us here in Lancaster. Many were absent because they were denied visas, others because they found when the time came that they could not join us after all. Their loss is our loss as well, for without their presence we could not feel their truth reflected in their words, their experiences, their faces and their smiles. However we could feel their presence in our hearts. We have selected 2 representatives from each region to go to a post-WGYF gathering in Kenya to share with these brothers and sisters the Love and Spirit that we felt in this gathering.

Twenty years have passed since the last World Gathering of Young Friends, held in Greensboro, North Carolina, USA. To what purpose were we summoned once more?

Here we tried each others' forms of worship, silent and programmed, songs in many different languages, scriptural readings, hand holding. We were open, amazed, stretched and blessed. We learned that the great presence in our lives can be called by many names, Jesus, Christ, God, Inner light, Spirit, Love or many others. Ultimately, through listening to the Spirit that moved us, not the words in which we expressed our movement, we strived to become one organism, one body made up of many different parts (1 Corinthians 12:13). We were united not so much in the expression of our faith as in our common desire to be unified and by the power of the Spirit amongst us during these 9 days. We were challenged to put aside the labels we hide behind, programmed, unprogrammed, liberal, evangelical, and come together as Friends of the Truth, seeking together for the common truth behind our language. We have not finished this process. We are only at the beginning of a long path, but the love and joy we have felt in being in this place together have allowed us to come this far, and we pray that they will lead us further yet.

The time here has been a chance to reflect on our lives. We have been challenged to recognize ourselves as God's children, and respond in willing devotion. The love we have found here is not for us to own but to share. We desire to show our love by doing good and avoiding harm to all people and to all the Earth. We must let others see this love and know its source so that they may come to share it.

The Spirit present in our gathering summoned us to be a gathered people, and spoke through the many different people and cultures here to remind us of its glory, power and purpose. The Spirit is at work in all of us, and it is calling us not to judge one another's forms of worship but to examine our own hearts, find our own calling. We are called to take what we have experienced here and give it back to our communities.

Far away meetings now have faces, stories and friendships that make them real to us. Bridges have been built at our Gathering which we call on Friends everywhere to nurture and support. We will keep this contact alive through exchanges, more frequent gatherings and opportunities to work together. Through this contact we will give strength to each other and share our gifts. We must face the future challenges of the Religious Society of Friends together.

Where we explored the theme of the vine and the branches we found that its fruits are born from love. We have experienced what Love can do in this Gathering, now let us try what it can do in the world.

Note: Kara Price and Karla Moran attended the World Gathering of Young Friends. We will find a formal opportunity for them to share their experiences and observations.

Recreation is relief and restoration; the ultimate basis of inward peace and security is trust in God, consciousness of His love and guidance, and whole-souled commitment to Him in work and play.

-Philadelphia Yearly Meeting: Faith and Practice, 1961



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