

Smithfield



Friends

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

Vol. 16 _____ No. 158

Parsonage: 762-5726

Internet: www.smithfieldfriends.org

Clerk: Richard Frechette *Recording Clerk* Connie Bair-Thompson *Pastor:* Marnie Miller-Gutsel
Treasurer: Cindy Keene *Ministry&Counsel* Diane Gauthier *Newsletter:* Randy Oftedahl

CALENDAR FOR April/May

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 (1st & 3rd Sunday)

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, April 11

Easter Sunday

Monday, April 12

regular Meeting For Worship at Uxbridge, 4 PM

Sunday, April 18

Bible Study at Connie Thompson's

Saturday, April 24

Quarterly Meeting at Worcester--See poster on bulletin board for program, schedule, etc.

Sunday, May 2

9-3:30--AFSC program, "Building a Culture of Peace and Justice," Beneficent Church, 300 Weybosset St., Providence

Fri.-Sun. May 7-9

Monthly Meeting for Business

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE FOR MAY

Jr. High Retreat, Woolman Hill

KURARAMA

To Live - A Life Free of HIV/AIDS

Please bring in the Kurarama kit items to Meeting by SUNDAY, APRIL 25 for delivery to the AFSC in Providence
In a large (2 gallon) zip lock bag, assemble a HYGIENE KIT using NEW items only. To ensure the same quality for all recipients, each kit must contain all the ingredients listed.

medium sized toothbrush

bar of bath size soap

6 oz. tube of toothpaste

3 oz. tube of petroleum jelly

washcloth

wide tooth comb

These items are desperately needed for AIDS orphans in Mozambique. The Kurarama ("to live") project is a nationwide project of the American Friends Service Committee, which will deliver these supplies to the children of Mozambique.

Letter from Marnie

Dear Friends,

It may seem odd that a pastor would decide not to see Mel Gibson's film, *The Passion of Christ*, even though I respect the responses of those who have seen the film, and feel that it has deepened their faith. I have no doubts of their sincerity.

My primary reason for not going to see it is that I have always had a strong negative response to graphic violence, and I don't believe that I could sit through it—or that I should make myself do so for some “spiritual” reason. When I was about nine years old, I walked out of a Saturday afternoon cowboy movie because the excessive level of violence made me physically ill--and “excessive” then was a whole lot tamer than now. Ever since, I have avoided films with a lot of graphic violence. By increasing our tolerance for staged violence, I fear we blunt our responses to the real thing.



However, I also have other concerns about the film. I cringe every time I hear someone say, “That's how it really was!” It isn't. Any time a director transfers something from the printed page to film, he interprets it; it is not possible to do otherwise. The basic plot and the main characters may be there, but nothing on the page will give a director sufficient detail to fill in the gestures, the expressions, even many of the actions and additional characters that appear in life but not on the page. And even beyond that, he chooses which moments to dwell on and which to pass over lightly, when to do closeups, when to focus on this character or that. He may even create or expand characters or actions, as Gibson does (according to the reviews) with the devil, who in the Gospel accounts of the passion appears only in Luke and John, and then only with Judas. In fact, Gibson added scenes which do not appear in the Gospels but are drawn from the mystical visions of a 19th century nun. This is Gibson's version of the



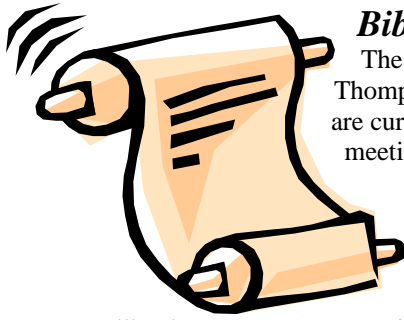
passion--it is not “how it really was.” It is not even how it was in the Gospels.

My second concern is that when we separate the life and teaching of Jesus from his suffering, death, and resurrection, we run the danger of overemphasizing Jesus' suffering and downplaying everything else; then it becomes too easy to ignore what Jesus spent most of his life on earth trying to get us to understand--the Kingdom of God. And second, I know of my own knowledge how this emphasis on suffering has been used to support violence. I have given pastoral care to women who have been beaten and abused by their husbands or boyfriends and have been advised by others to bear it uncomplainingly, as Christ bore the cross. Similar arguments were once made to slaves in this country. And what violence this does to the teachings of Christ!

Finally, I am troubled by the fact that graphic violence is very exciting and stimulating: it produces an intense emotional experience. Gibson is famous (notorious?) for his earlier films of graphic violence, such as the *Lethal Weapon* series, and *Braveheart*. He knows how to create emotional effects. But has he truly done more than this? As one of the old Uxbridge Quakers said of the emotionalism of the Great Revival Movement in 19th century New England, “Excitement is not religion.”

See the film if you wish. If it deepens your faith, and sets you on the road to a transformed life, well and good. If you learn something valuable from it, also well and good. But if it does not--why not? And then what is its purpose?

Love and Blessings for Easter,
Marnie



Bible Study Group

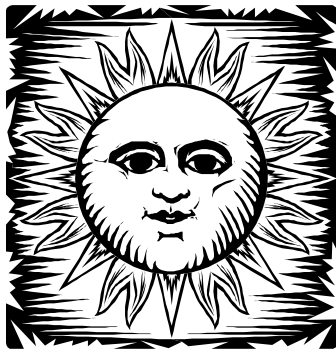
The new Bible Study Group will be meeting every other Monday, 8 PM at Connie Thompson's house. Our current topic is the meaning of the Sermon on the Mount; we are currently examining the Beatitudes. Join us for a fascinating discussion. The next meeting is Monday, April 12. Contact Connie for directions to her home.

The Old Meeting Membership Book

We are in the process of converting from the old, old Smithfield Meeting rollbook to a new one. Wanting to make sure that all information in the old book, listing membership date, date of death, etc. is correct before we transfer it, we ask that you take a few minutes reviewing the information relating to you or others know/knew, and either correcting the info on the correction sheet, or confirming the correctness (date, spelling, etc.) on that correction sheet.

Quakerism 101

It's been a long time since we held a discussion series on Quakerism. Are you interested in participating. Ministry and Counsel Committee would like your input as to whether a periodic two hour session would suit you best, or a dedicated retreat-type weekend (either overnight or two days). Please let either Diane Gauthier (clerk of M&C) or Richard Frechette (Meeting clerk) know of your interest and preference.



The Spring Gathering of the Rhode Island-Smithfield Quarterly Meeting

At Worcester-Pleasant St. Meeting 901 Pleasant St. Worcester

First Day April 18, 2004

11:00 am Meeting for Worship

Childcare is available by calling Karen Sargent (978-874-2201) by Tuesday, April 13

12:00 noon pot luck will be provided. Vegetarian and Vegan entrees available

1:15 pm. The Program: Michael True, "Peace, Conflict, and Non-Violence

Studies in India" Michael has recently returned from two months in India as a Fulbright lecturer visiting schools, universities and non-governmental

organizations involved in peace, conflict and non-violence studies. He taught American literature in India six years ago, and is the author of "An energy Field more Intense Than War: The Non-Violent Tradition in American Literature".

2:15 pm. Meeting for Business, Edward Baker, Clerk. April Claggett of Monadnock Meeting, will report on attending the FWCC (Friends World Committee for Consultation), triennial meeting in London. Introduction of the newly appointed replacement for Susan Morris, Friends Camp Director. Financial report on consolidating the accounts of the Aldrich Fund.

For more information: Meetinghouse tel 508-754-3887; Elliott Joslin, clerk 508-987-5556. Smithfield Friends who wish to attend can car pool; vehicles will leave the Smithfield Meetinghouse at 10:15 AM



First Day School Curriculum Workshop May 1 At Wellesley Meeting

The NEYM Christian Education Committee is sponsoring a full day of workshops, presentations, and opportunities for sharing challenges and successes. The \$25 fee covers lunch and a wonderful packet of take home materials. For registration or other information contact the Yearly Meeting office: (508)754-6760; <neym @ neym.org>.

Really Cool Summer Job Openings

Looking for a Quaker type summer job? How about one at Pendle Hill, the Quaker conference and retreat center outside Philadelphia? They are looking for grounds assistants, meal service/housekeeping aides, hospitality staff (driver's license required), and an organic garden intern. Room, board, and salary provided, except for the garden intern position, which is unpaid. For more info, see the salmon colored flier on the bulletin board.

Marketing Internship at Pendle Hill

Get on the job training in non-profit marketing--Pendle Hill has an opening for a marketing intern. Get experience plus room, board, health insurance, small stipend, and a chance to live in a Quaker community. For more info, see the blue flier on the bulletin board.

High School Students--Anytown Leadership Institute (RI) June 25-30

"Becoming the Change We Want to See in the World" is the theme of this annual leadership development program sponsored by the RI branch of the NCCJ--National Conference for Community and Justice (formerly the National Conference of Christians and Jews). It is for rising high school sophomores, juniors, and seniors (graduating seniors also welcome), and will take place at Camp Aldersgate in North Scituate on June 25-30, 2004. The program's goal is to empower young people to become leaders in the NCCJ mission to fight prejudice and bias of all kinds, and to learn how to create positive changes within communities. The total cost is \$450, and scholarships are available. More info on bulletin board, including an examination copy of the application; for extra forms and more info contact NCCJ Program Director Rob Jones at (401)467-1717 ext. 103, or <rjones@nccj.org>

Have a Quaker Summer!

All sorts of good stuff is in the offing for Friends this summer. China Camp has a new director, a Quaker with long experience in camp management, and Quaker kids can look forward to lots of great fun in Maine. Registrations are now being accepted-- see fliers in the foyer.

The FGC Annual Gathering will take place on the UMass campus at Amherst this summer, from July 3--b. Marnie will be part of a workshop on "Light From New England Quaker History," along with 6 other experts on New England Quaker History. Brochures in the foyer.

And its not too early to start planning for Yearly Meeting Sessions on the first full week August. We are back at Bryant College again--right down the road, and camping, commuting, and single activity visits are possible, even if you can't make the entire session.

So check out the bulletin board and tables in the foyer for fliers and brochures-- and plan a Quakery summer.

Explore-a-College

For college-minded rising sophomores, juniors, and seniors in high school: check out the bulletin board for info on the Explore-a-College program at Earlham, a Quaker College in Richmond, Indiana. For a modest cost, you can find out if Earlham might be right for you by exploring actual college courses and activities. The program runs from June 20-July 3, and you can try out everything from Metalsmithing to Japanese. Some scholarship aid is available. Application Deadline: for financial aid--May 7; final deadline June 4, 2004. Brochure is on the bulletin board

Announcement regarding fundraising:

The Harvest Fair 2003 (which was part Christmas Bazaar & Young Friends Yard Sale) was a great source of fundraising. It's never too early to start thinking about the Christmas Bazaar & the Young Friends Yard Sale 2004. This year the two events will take place separately. Young Friends' yard sale will be held in September or October and the Christmas Bazaar will take place in November to coincide with other area bazaars. Those interested in participating in the bazaar are asked to contact Cindy Keene. Volunteers are needed to sew & donate hand crafted items, baked goods and a few special items for a white elephant table.

Items are also needed for the yard sale. Please bring in any good used items and they will be stored upstairs in the "last" room.



Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business April 4, 2004

2004-19 Opening Minute Smithfield Monthly Meeting met for a regularly scheduled meeting for worship with attention to business at 12 Noon on April 4, 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.

2004-20 2003 State of Society Report Marnie Miller-Gutsell read a draft of our State of Society Report for 2003. With some changes and considerable discussion, the following report was approved: *[see report in this newsletter]*

2004-21 Membership request: Alex Malin Ron Belliveau and Suzanne Frechette served as the clearness committee for Alex Malin. For the committee, Suzanne reported that they had met with Alex and recommend him for membership without reservation and that he is clear in his decision to become a formal member of our meeting. Friends approved.

2004-22 Membership request: Kathy Malin Rhoda Mowry and Marnie Miller-Gutsell served as the clearness committee for Kathy Malin. For the committee, Rhoda reported that they have met with Kathy and recommend her for membership without reservation and that she is clear in her decision to become a formal member of our meeting. Friends approved.

2004-23 Statistical report for Smithfield Meeting The clerk read our Statistical Report for 2003 that will be passed on to New England Yearly Meeting, noting that we had 38 members and 19 active non-member attenders at the close of 2003. One of our members died in 2003 and no new members were added. We recognize that these statistics do not give an accurate description of the life of our meeting.

2004-24 Ruth Smith Memorial Minute Martha Smith, Wilma Smith, Eunice Strobel and Cindy Keene drafted a memorial minute for Ruth Smith. Eunice read the minute they composed. With some minor additions, the following minute was approved: *[see next page]*

2004-25 Determination of use of funds contributed in memory of Ruth Smith Cindy Keene reported that \$1745.00 has been collected in memory of Ruth Smith and that donations are still arriving. Friends discussed how we should use these funds and we feel that improving our hearing-assistance system would be an appropriate use and something that Ruth would have approved of. We will discuss this with Ruth's family before proceeding.

2004-26 Same Gender Relationships The clerk reported that Friends held a threshing session on the issue of same gender relationships, including marriage. We will continue to discuss this topic, but are not yet ready to bring it for formal discernment at meeting for worship with attention to business.

2004-27 Representatives to the next Quarterly Meeting Friends approved Richard Frechette and Marnie Miller-Gutsell as representatives to Quarterly Meeting, to be held at Worcester Pleasant Street meeting on April 18, 2004.

2004-26 Closing Minute No further business arising, Friends closed with a period of waiting worship, intending to meet again for business on May 2, 2004, God willing.

Respectfully Submitted,
Constance Bair-Thompson
Recording Clerk



Memorial Minute for Ruth Elizabeth Corbett Smith

Ruth Smith was born February 28th, 1910 in Pawtucket, RI. Her father died when she was three years old and Ruth often mentioned the loss of her father and how hard her mother had worked to support Ruth & her older sister.

In 1932, Ruth married Lauriston Smith and joined Smithfield Monthly Meeting of Friends. They had three children: Glenn, Carolyn, and Eleanor. The family were regular attenders at Meeting and Quarterly Meeting. Ruth attended Yearly Meeting Sessions for many years. She was active in the Ladies Aid Society, serving as their treasurer. Ruth also served in the Equalization Fund Committee of New England Meeting of Friends.

Ruth Smith was a homemaker. She was a great cook, and her oat cakes were always a big hit at bake sales and bazaars. Her independence was very important to her and staying in her own home until the day she died was one of her deepest wishes.

Ruth started driving at the age of 75, following the death of her husband, Lauriston. She drove for a while, but never enjoyed it. She accepted rides from friends, but always found a way to put money in the driver's hand.

At Meeting, Ruth would often share spiritual poems and daily devotionals with the community. She announced the arrival of spring each year by bringing pussywillows and forsythia to the Meetinghouse. In her later years, Ruth had difficulty hearing messages at meeting, but refused to let that separate her from the meeting. Instead, she often announced that she "couldn't hear a thing" and raised our consciousness about adapting to this need.

Ruth Smith was a quiet, gentle, and generous person. She was a devoted wife, mother, grandmother, and member of Smithfield Monthly Meeting of Friends.

Ruth Elizabeth Corbett Smith died January 19th, 2004 at the age of 93.

She will be missed by all.

Smithfield Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends State of Society Report 2003

Seekers, Quakers were often historically called. It is perhaps the most appropriate name that we could give our own faith community of Smithfield Meeting. We are such a diverse group of people. Some of us prefer programmed meeting for worship, others unprogrammed waiting worship; some are very Christ-centered, others lean toward Universalist and Buddhist sense of God and creation. But we all recognize each other as Seekers and all want to gain spiritual insights from each other's differentness. We are all here to experience the Spirit. Each of us has something different to bring to the table, and we all get to feast.

Our demographics are changing. Where once the meeting was made up largely of lifelong (or almost lifelong) Friends, the vast majority of our Meeting's current active members and attenders are relatively recent Friends of conviction. There is now only one resident active member under the age of 65 who is a lifelong Smithfield Friend. We sometimes worry that we will lose the sense of tradition and regard for Quaker process that long-seasoned Friends bring.

We have also decreased in numbers over the years. Smithfield Meeting was once considered to be a relatively large meeting. Clearly, we are now a smaller one. Smallness brings some difficulties. It is hard to have successful committees when individuals are called upon to serve on more than one.

We celebrate the services of our pastor. This released Friend benefits both our Meeting and the larger community in so many ways. Yet we are well aware of the financial burden that support of a pastor places on our small number. Our other major expenses is the maintenance of the wonderful but old meetinghouse. Paint is peeling, rugs are worn, windows do not function well. And fuel is increasingly expensive.

Still, we recognize some of the values of smallness. Everyone knows everyone. Newcomers continually tell us that we are a very welcoming community, and this is a blessing. And yet we fall short when it comes to providing the means for continued growth in community for those that have found us. At the least, it is time that we reinstitute "Quakerism 101" and other means of allowing Friends to explore the many facets of Quakerism.

The spiritual well being of our children remains a high concern, but one with no simple formulas for success. Attendance by children and youth at both worship and 1st day school is sporadic. Children seem to make the decision about going to meeting and not the parents. This is not meant to be a criticism of our Meeting's parents; rather it is a reflection of society at large. Constant doing has become far more important than simply being, and our Meeting's families spend much of their time rushing.

We continue to search for the way in which the Friends Meeting can become the center of community for our families. Our 1st day school committee is committed to creating meaningful tools for the children's growth in the Light. We have a monthly potluck, and we hope to establish more simple small gatherings in order to allow "Friends" to become more "friends" as well. For we believe that increased comfort with each other socially can lead to increased depth of worship.

We are blessed with a small but active group of Young Friends who are full participants in our Meeting community. They serve on our committee; they have initiated activities to raise funds to benefit both our Meeting and outside groups. They give us confidence in the future of the Meeting.

The question of politics and worship came before us on several occasions. It is hard to find a distinct line of separation, whether in a prepared sermon or in unprogrammed worship. Our Ministry and Counsel Committee has been unable to give clear direction in this matter. We continue to hold each other in the Light, praying that each of us can determine whether we are speaking truth to power or giving a piece of our mind.

We have seen a continuation of interest in the MOWA Choctaw Friends Academy & Center in Alabama. Through the initiative of our Young Friends, we collected both money and clothing to send to the Academy, and one of our families personally delivered a van-full of school materials and rummage materials. Another of our members is serving as a volunteer in the Academy this winter. There were other forms of outreach as well. This year, our Meeting became involved with the Rhode Island Peace Mission, and sent three delegates to Washington to speak to each of the congressional representatives as the war in Iraq was impending. We also met with the congressional reps' staff to address the problem of post-war profiteering. Such activities help us to look beyond ourselves while strengthening our community.

We continue to ask our creator to help us walk gently on the earth, speaking to that of God in everyone and everything.

Approved Fourth Month, Fourth Day, 2004

IN MEMORIAM

What is fiercely in dispute ...today is the quality and staying power of American civilization. Every other country scorns American materialism while striving in every big and little way to match it. Envy has something to do with it, but there is a true basis for this debate, and it is: whether America is in its ascendant or its decline?

I myself think I recognize here several of the symptoms that Edward Gibbon maintained were signs of the decline of Rome, and which arose not from external enemies but from inside the country itself. A mounting love of show and luxury. A widening gap between the very rich and the very poor. An obsession with sex. Freakishness in the arts--- masquerading as originality; and enthusiasm, pretending to creativeness....

In the past decade America has demonstrated the Roman folly of exercising military might in places remote from the centers of power, and of finding herself so frustrated by the stamina of primitive peoples on their own ground as to fall back on the Roman conclusion that "nothing could reconcile the minds of the barbarians to peace unless they experienced in their own country the calamities of war."

...And, most disturbing of all, a developing moral numbness to vulgarity, violence, and the assault on the simplest human decencies.

...As for the rage to believe that we have found the secret of liberty in general permissiveness, from the cradle on,--- this seems to me a disastrous sentimentality, which loosens the cement that alone can bind any society into a stable compound --- a code of obeyed taboos.

I can only recall the saying of a wise Frenchman that "liberty is the luxury of self-discipline."

Historically those peoples that did not discipline themselves had discipline thrust on them from the outside. That is why the normal cycle in the life and death of great nations has been first a powerful tyranny broken by revolt; the enjoyment of liberty; the abuse of liberty; --- and back to tyranny again.

As I see it, in this country... the race is on between its decadence and its vitality.

-Alistair Cooke (*America*)
submitted by Jeanne Kinney



Alistair Cooke
1908-2004

"...Sink down into the seed
which God sows in the heart,
and let that grow in thee,
and be in thee,
and breathe in thee,
and act in thee..."

-Isaac Penington (1616 - 1679)



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