

# Smithfield



# Friends

**Newsletter October 2005**

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

Vol. 18

No. 172

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**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**

### Other Events

**Every Sunday**  
**Sat-Sun, Oct 15-16**

**9:45-10:20 (before worship): "Readings in the Spirit"**  
**RI/Smithfield Quarterly Meeting Retreat at Clara Barton Center**

**Monday, Oct. 24**

**6:30 PM: Potluck Dinner and Discussion on RI Campaign of Conscience and the Peace Tax Fund**

**Sat., Nov. 5**

**6:00 PM: Pot Luck dinner with NEYM traveling minister Debbie Humphries**

**Sunday, Nov. 6**

**Meeting for Business following worship**  
**NEWSLETTER DEADLINE**



### Clothes for MOWA Choctaw Friends Center:

Richard & Suzanne Frechette will be driving their van to the MOWA Choctaw Friends Center in Alabama, probably early in November, and invite Friends to contribute clothing that can be brought there to be sold as rummage at the Center – something that supports the center and provides good clothing for a low price for impoverished families. Please bring to the meetinghouse clothing that has been cleaned and is in good condition, preferably folded and organized by gender and size. The loft room in the meetinghouse will serve as a staging area, and we will have boxes there. Sheets and linens in good condition and NEW underwear are welcome as well.

## *Letter from Marnie*

Dear Friends,

Something interesting is happening among Friends--not only in New England, but around the country. I was reminded of it at Ron and Diane's marriage last month, as I explained the proceedings for the benefit of the guests. Quaker worship is different from what most people are used to. And sometimes in fact, we even need to remind ourselves of what it's all about-- which is why Ministry and Counsel proposed that we might do some "Worship on Worship" this fall. By the time you read this, we will have completed the series of reflections on Worship that began last month.

But the interesting thing is that we seem to be part of a ground swell of concern about worship which is rising all over the place. Will Tabor—a Friend from Fresh Pond Meeting who was enthusiastically received at Smithfield not long ago--attended a Friends General Conference Meeting last November in Pittsburgh. The Meeting was a Consultation on Travelling Ministries, and in his report, Will stated that all Yearly Meetings seem to be struggling with the question of how of to foster deeper worship and to encourage good vocal ministry and discourage inappropriate ministry. In my message last week, I mentioned how even regular attenders can forget about traditional practices, like leaving enough time for reflection after a message has been given, speaking only once, or saving debate for a class or discussion group. These traditional practices are more than good manners--they help us detach ourselves from our own personal concerns for a while, so we can stay focussed on listening for the Spirit of Christ—who may have something new and surprising to say to us during this time. Will reported that some even more interesting things



came out of a workshop he attended which was led by Linda Chidsey, a recorded minister from New York Yearly Meeting. Linda observed that worship is not about private devotions--it's about community--yet Will noted that in her workshop, it took a while to get started because people seemed to be looking for more direction than she was ready to give. Do we do that? Do we get in the habit of relying on somebody else to provide the spiritual food, as it were? Do we come into worship rather hoping it will just be there, without any preparation on our part? This may be a particular temptation in pastoral Meetings, but apparently unprogrammed Friends also struggle with the problem.

Someone in Linda's workshop made a very interesting observation--that we can't preach what we don't possess--and we won't possess anything unless we practice. What we must practice is preparing, centering and listening. The heart of Quaker worship--even in pastoral Meetings--is the direct and immediate encounter, the personal experience of the Inner Light. It may come partly through the words of someone else, but that is incomplete unless we also have our own direct experience of it--and that comes through just that practice of preparing, centering and listening.

I couldn't help but think about the concern that led Job Scott to go to England and Ireland--he feared that Friends were drifting away from seeking that crucial experience of the intimate union of the worshipper and the Spirit. Instead they were looking to something else to carry their faith—in his time (1793), they looked to travelling ministers and to their book of discipline. Where do we look? What are we in danger of substituting for the experience of communion with the Inward Christ? Might we reflect on the experience of Samuel in 1 Samuel 3:10? It took Samuel a little while to figure out that God was calling him, but when he finally did, his response was to say, "Speak, for your servant is listening!"

A hundred thousand blessings,  
-Marnie

## Peace Tax Fund:



Do you believe that you have an obligation to pay federal taxes, but are troubled that much of your tax payments are used to financially support war activities?

*The Peace and Social Concerns Committee Welcomes You to a Potluck to Learn about the RI Campaign for Conscience and the Religious Freedom Peace Tax Fund*

Monday October 24  
6:30 PM at the meetinghouse

The Religious Freedom Peace Tax Fund (RFPTF) Bill, H.R 2631, in the U.S. Congress would amend tax law to recognize the legal status of conscientious objection to payment of military taxes.

If enacted, the Bill would establish a Religious Freedom Peace Tax Fund in the Federal Treasury to receive the taxes of conscientious objectors. Money from this fund would be allocated annually to any non-military appropriation within the federal budget. None of the money could be used for any military expense.

Natalie Baker-Merrill, RI Coordinator for the National Peace Tax Fund, will present information on the national legislation, and explain what actions we as citizens of conscience can take.

### ***Anti-War March in DC***

Marcel, Ana and Nathan St. Germain, and Phil Mayer attended the September 24 anti-war march in Washington , DC. Ask them about their experience and their observations.

### ***New in the Library***

2005 Yearly Meeting Bible Half-Hour presentations by Max Carter. On 3 CDs. Friends who attended the 2005 sessions have given Max's presentations **rave reviews**. One CD also includes a presentation at the United Society of Friends Women (also occurred at NEYM sessions).

### ***Smithfield Meeting Retreat at Craigville***

Not to be confused with the Quarterly Meeting retreat, our 2<sup>nd</sup> retreat funded in part by the Lilly Foundation Grant will be held once again at the Craigville Conference Center on November 19-20. The Theme: "Praise and Thanksgiving: An Attitude of Gratitude" You should have already or will shortly receive a mailing on this retreat. If you do not, contact Suzanne Frechette, [Sfreche105@aol.com](mailto:Sfreche105@aol.com); 401-769-4433.

***"Reading in the Spirit"***: Each 1<sup>st</sup> Day at 9:45-10:20 (No preparation needed)

## **Quarterly Meeting Retreat:**

- *Dates:* Sat/Sun, October 15-16
- *Place:* Clara Barton Center, Oxford, MA
- *Theme:* Every Meeting a Peace Center
- *Speaker:* Mary Lord, Deputy General Secretary for Peace & Conflict Resolution for AFSC, will run a workshop on the process of spiritual discernment in peace work. In addition, she will talk with us about the spiritual foundations of peace work and bring us up to date on AFSC's efforts.
- *Also,* Noah Merrill, local AFSC staffer, will talk with Friends about local efforts. Karla Moran and Kara Price will share their experiences and observations from the World Gathering of Young Friends.
- *Schedule and registration forms* at the meetinghouse, or e-mail Richard. [Frechette@cox.net](mailto:Frechette@cox.net) to have info/forms sent to you.

## ***Visit From Debbie Humphries***

On November 5 & 6, our Meeting will receive a visit from Debbie Humphries of Hartford Meeting, who is traveling among Friends in New England under a leading. This from her meeting: "Her (Debbie's) concern is to deepen the spiritual life of the Religious Society of Friends, to reawaken us to experience the vitality and power of the Spirit, and to remind Friends of the truths of our tradition."

All are invited to join Debbie at a pot luck dinner on Saturday, November 5 at 6 PM, followed by worship. Debbie will also join us at our regular programmed meeting for worship on the next morning.

## ***NEYM looking for part-time accounts manager:***

New England Yearly Meeting is looking for a Part-time Bookkeeper/Accounts Manager. The full posting is on the meetinghouse bulletin board, or e-mail Richard Frechette for a copy.

## **Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business: October 2, 2005**

**2005-56 Opening Minute** Smithfield Monthly Meeting met for a regularly scheduled meeting for worship with attention to business at 12:00 Noon on October 2, 2005. Ten Friends were present; Richard Frechette served as clerk. We began with a period of waiting worship.

2005-57 **Our Meeting as a Peace Center** Providence Monthly Meeting, serving as hosts of the Quarterly Meeting retreat on October 24, asked each Meeting to consider what it would mean to be a peace center. Our Peace and Social Concerns Committee met to discern this question, and presented to us the following summary of their meeting:

- Friends will ask the Meeting for Business permission to install a "War is Not the Answer" lawn sign from FCNL in front of the Meetinghouse to identify the Meeting as a place of peace and "advertise" the Quaker peace testimony.

- Jeanne Kinney will inventory books about peace, conscientious objection, and non-violence that are housed in the Meetinghouse library and we will find ways to make these available to the larger Northern Rhode Island community.
- Marnie Miller-Gutsell suggested also making contact with other pastors in the Woonsocket area to create a coalition of faith communities in the area that are dedicated to ending the Iraq War. Aaron Frechette and Nathan St. Germain, co-clerks, will send a letter expressing our interest in collaboration.
- Marcel St. Germain said he would be willing to receive training as a conscientious objection counselor and to provide such expertise to members of the community who are considering conscientious objection.
- Our Meeting has already minuted its support to house conscientious objector letters in its files and to provide additional support for conscientious objectors.
- Friends also expressed an interest in “counter-recruitment” activities in local high schools and working with parents from the meeting and other area faith communities to pressure local school committees to provide an “opt-out” policy to prevent their children’s information from being provided to military recruiters, as required under the No Child Left Behind Act.
- Jeanne Kinney suggested approaching Carlos Moran about his willingness to work with Spanish-speaking young people, who are particularly targeted by military recruiters.

We endorsed the Committee’s recommendation relating to the counter-recruitment activities in local high schools and believe we should work through parents from our meeting and with other area faith communities to promote the little-known “opt-out” provision, allowing for parents to complete forms that would preclude their children from being approached by military recruiters. We will also make it known that we are a peace center that will provide conscientious objector counseling and support and will house conscientious objector letter.

We desire to be a peace center, as peacemaking is our call as Friends. We need to be continually seeking and embracing ways to commit ourselves to activities that contribute to peace on all planes.

Although we do not all feel that the FCNL’s “War Is Not The Answer” sign is an ideal expression of our peace testimony and would prefer a sign that emphasizes peacemaking, we nevertheless recognize that it is a statement of one of our peace concerns. Hence we approve its placement in front of the meetinghouse.

We look forward to gathering with Friends of the Quarter at the October retreat, where we can share insights and further develop our sense of our Meeting as a Peace Center.

**2205-58 Committee Structure** Ordinarily, at this time, the Clerk of the Meeting would present for our approval names of persons to serve on the Nominating Committee, which committee would then recruit and recommend persons for service on our committee. However, we realize that, for some areas of our Meeting’s life, the normal committee structure has not been as fruitful as we would wish.

We approve the suspension of the nominating committee process until further notice. We ask existing committees to continue their work to the extent possible. In the meantime, we will begin a process of discernment of the Meeting’s functional requirements. Each month, under the organizational leadership of the Meeting Clerk, we will examine a specific concern – such as the spiritual development of our children, outreach, peacework, etc. – and will discern how we can best fulfill our corporate calling to these areas. We wish to grow as individuals and as a community of faith working toward peace in our own lives and beyond. We plan to establish a system that encourages volunteerism and the recognition, cultivating and sharing of personal and corporate gifts.

**2005-59 Closing Minute** No further business arising, Friends closed with a period of waiting worship, intending to meet again for business on November 6, 2005, God willing.

Respectfully submitted,

Suzanne Frechette  
*Recording Clerk Pro Temp*

As many candles lighted and put in one place do greatly augment the light and make it more to shine forth, so when many people are gathered together into the same life there is more of the glory of God, and His power appears to the refreshment of each individual, for that he partakes not only of the light and life raised in himself but in all the rest.

-Robert Barclay, *Apology, prop II, sect 17*, 1908 ed.



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