

Smithfield



Friends

Newsletter September 2004
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: 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 (1st & 3rd Sunday) -resumes September 20

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

- **First Day School: Sept 12 and Sept 26**, regular scheduled for 2nd and last Sundays of the Month.
- **Meeting for Business** this month will be on **Sept. 19**. It will resume its normal 1st Sunday berth beginning in October.
- **Quarterly Meeting Retreat** will be on Saturday and Sunday, **Oct. 30 and 31**. It will be held at the Clara Barton Camp in Oxford, Mass, just west of Worcester. Detailed information will be provided in the October newsletter.



Young Friends Yard Sale!

September 18, 9am -2pm.

Help is needed for Friday evening & Saturday--all day. There will be a sign-up sheet in the vestibule this Sunday. Yard sale items are welcome and may be stored ahead of time upstairs in the first room. *This is our largest fundraiser of the year--please volunteer your time.*

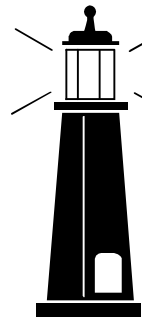
The poster features a green border and a central illustration of a house with a red roof, a white picket fence, a bicycle, a stroller, and a box. The text is in various fonts and colors, with 'Sale!' in large, bold, dark letters.

Letter from Marnie

Dear Friends,

A few days ago, I was still on Long Island, in the place where I've spent a part of all my summers since I was one year old. It's in a settlement called Oak Hills, which was once a summer colony with a few year round residents. Now it's mostly year round, with only a few summer places left.

One afternoon, I was standing on what everybody calls the "Landing," although properly speaking, it isn't a landing in any sense--it's an overlook, built on the top of a hundred-foot sand bluff. People go there to watch the sunset, or check out the tide, or see if any fish are jumping. There is a beautiful panoramic view all the way from one rocky point--about a half mile to the left--to miles of sandy beaches stretching off to another distant point on the right. There's a lighthouse there that flashes green, warning mariners off the great rocks. In fact, the whole north coast of the island is sprinkled with rocks of various sizes, many of them huge--all part of the great mound of debris that was dropped here at the end of the last ice age, to form this beautiful island. In fact, the numerosness of the rocks make this a very dangerous coast for shipping.



Wrapped in the peace of sun and wind and water, I was remembering how we always named the most important rocks. Actually, it seemed as if they had had those names forever--and perhaps they did, because I know we didn't make them up. Just at the bottom of the stairs is Big Rock-- the largest rock on our part of the beach. It's for sunbathing and for small children testing their climbing skills. A way off to the right, resting on a sandbar well out in the water, is Diving Rock. It's underwater until about mid-tide, although skilled navigators can find it before it emerges. It has a little platform on the shore side, perfect for diving; however, the barnacle encrusted sides are a severe test of one's tolerance for pain. Off to the left and far out from shore is Flat Rock, which is covered by water most of the time. It's reachable only at low tide, and then only by boat or by very hardy long distance swimmers. It's a favorite perch for gulls and cormorants and occasionally a hopeful fisherman. But generally the fisherfolk prefer Split Rock, just off the point. It's really two rocks that were obviously one in some prehistoric time. One can wade there at low tide, and scramble to the top, which is about fifteen feet high and wide enough to accommodate 2 or 3 people with rods,

bait buckets, lunch boxes, and other miscellaneous paraphernalia.

Why do these rocks have names? Obviously because we need to identify them. They have a place in our lives. They mean something to us. And somehow, names have a mystery and power that go beyond just being a label. ("Rock" is a label--"Split Rock" is a name.) Names create relationships--which is why people often try to take away the names of those they think of as "Other" and replace them with labels and epithets.

But God has called everything by name (see Genesis 1)--creating the potential for relationship. Shouldn't we try to listen, and answer, and live up to the name God gives us? I have called you by name-- You are mine! (Isaiah 43:1)

Blessings,
Marnie



Opportunities awaiting volunteers this fall:

The meetinghouse has been painted. The parsonage fence and bulkhead has been repaired, but several other task await helpful hands..

- The meetinghouse windows are in desperate need of cleaning, especially after the painting. Will require use of ladders (available); probably best done by pair(s);
- The parsonage front porch needs a finish coat of white paint. Paint and related supplies can be provided.
- It will take a while before we complete the task of taking out the benches, thoroughly prepping and painting them. In the meantime, several of the benches need to be spot painted in the meetinghouse, using low VOC paint. Paint and related supplies can be provided.
- The cold water supply to the meetinghouse kitchen needs repair. Will require combination of carpentry and plumbing.

Contact Richard Frechette (401) 769-4433 for more information.

2004 YEARLY MEETING EXPERIENCE

Even though I did not officially attend sessions this year, I personally experienced one of the best yearly meetings ever. How could this be?

On Sunday morning I attended the open morning service outside under the tent. On Monday morning I participated in a Jr. High Yearly Meeting panel of 5 persons describing their personal witness to Quaker testimonies and then in the afternoon a meeting of Mosher Book & Tract with a quick stop in the bookstore.

After the service Sunday I ran into Susan Kay and sat with her over lunch while she described her spiritual journey that has led her to become a novice in the order of Ecumenical Franciscans.

She told of her formation activities and her experience of spiritual direction and her attendance at their type of yearly meeting that annually connects the 50 or so participants scattered across the country. She also recommended the book, *Leadings* by Irene Lape (a Catholic's journey though Quakerism) --- which I am thoroughly enjoying.

The Junior High panel inspired me greatly. John Humphries told about his world travels; Minga Claggett Borne described working with abused women and the men who abused them; Paul Hood talked about his work with the homeless and feeding people in soup kitchens; and Barbara Sullivan from Worcester, who is a nurse practitioner, spoke about working in inner-city health clinics. I related my experience at MCI Framingham.

On the way to the parking lot, I ran into Marion Baker who brought me up to date on her life as a missionary to African women and Jamaicans. She works half time for the rural postal service until retirement. This gives her half a year to travel.

Late Monday afternoon after the MB&T meeting, in my pass through the bookstore, I encountered old friend Ralph Greene (Bob Philbrook used to refer to him as "St. Ralph".)

He told me this year he was offering a workshop about Native Americans. I immediately told him of my new-found interest in this topic and he said: "Stay right here. I'll get you a copy of my handout."

He then proceeded back to his dorm room and reappeared 10 minutes later with the 25 page document entitled: Early Friends and Aboriginal Peoples in America (A Journey through Journals). This is a packet of primary sources of early Quaker

reminiscences of encounters with the First Americans. Very interesting and a copy is now available in SFM library.

I forgot to tell about Kara Price who was assisting the Jr. High young friends. She was leaving that day for a job interview in CT but after hearing my prison memories, she asked me if I had heard of the new group that were teaching prisoners by mail. I said "No" and she said she has the information at home. Now here's something any ex-teacher could do.

Even though, I didn't officially attend, I felt richly blessed. What amazed me the most was how the Lord connected me lovingly in that short time to certain close friends from whom I traditionally draw strength from at our annual meeting.

-Jeanne Kinney



Epistle of New England Yearly Meeting 2004

To All Friends Everywhere,

Friends of the New England Yearly Meeting (NEYM) of the Religious Society of Friends send our loving greetings from the campus of Bryant College, Smithfield, Rhode Island, where we gathered in our 344th Sessions from August 7 to 12, 2004. Our theme, *And Who Is My Neighbor?* comes from the parable of the Good Samaritan. Our opening speakers, Vanessa Julye of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting and Donna McDaniel of NEYM, ministered to us from their leading to research the relationship of Quakers of European descent and African-American Quakers and non-Quakers. Their address dispelled the myth of widespread Quaker commitment to racial equality. We have too often been led by only a courageous few who were willing to answer God's call to justice despite the disapproval and censure of the broader Quaker community. Many New England Friends benefited directly from slavery; commercial and other relationships blinded Friends' eyes and hardened their hearts to its human horror. Friends of African descent were denied membership in meetings and relegated to benches at the back of our meetinghouses. In recent years, we seem unable to sustain an active and vibrant corporate commitment to racial equality.

Pastors of six New England meetings led our morning Bible Half-Hours. Drawing upon the parable of the Good Samaritan, they invited us to "walk into it, and let it wash over us and see ourselves in it." We could easily identify with those who passed by without stopping, but Jesus focused on the one who acted as a

neighbor—the one who showed mercy. The Samaritan's response evokes the traditional Quaker concept of concern.

A concern is more than feeling strongly about something; it is a passionate summons from God that cannot be denied, asking us to be God's instruments in this world.

We were also invited to enter this parable by way of the wounded man in the ditch, recognizing our own brokenness. The ditch is not a comfortable place to be, but there is a power that comes from standing still in our brokenness. For it is there that we are able to hear the summons from God, calling us to know our neighbors as fellow children of the Divine.

In meeting for business, we heard the ministry of a lesbian Friend who asked us, "Am I your neighbor?" She spoke of her anguish over Friends United Meeting's (FUM) excluding from leadership positions people who have sexual relationships outside of heterosexual marriage. We seek to open a caring dialogue on this issue within our Yearly Meeting and within FUM, of which NEYM is a member.

The difficulties of our neighbors beyond this Yearly Meeting remind us of our position of privilege, particularly in this time of war. Although we were graced with the presence of Enelia Escalona from Cuba Yearly Meeting, the U.S. government denied visas to two other representatives of Cuba Yearly Meeting. Diana Abdel Nour, the Principal of the Lower School of Ramallah Friends School, Palestine, shared with us stories of trying to teach tolerance and preserve hope while living in the midst of violence. We were moved by her example of love and forgiveness. We are grateful for her work and that of many other visitors including: Mary Juma of Kenya who spoke of her work among AIDS orphans; and Rick McDowell and Mary Trotochaud of the American Friends Service Committee who are based in war-torn Iraq. With great joy, we endorsed a travel minute for Eden and James Grace and their sons Isaiah and Jesse, who go to Kenya this year to serve as staff for FUM.

We are dealing with a number of transitions in our Yearly Meeting. This year two of our dedicated youth staff members resigned: Susan Morris after 23 years as Director of Friends Camp, and Christel Jorgenson, after 17 years as Youth & Education Secretary. We are indebted to both women for the dynamic growth of these programs.

We have embarked on a new *Faith and Practice*, a review of our corporate structure, and an appraisal of our committees procedures, and youth staffing. We trust that this marks a period of transformation in service to the Spirit.



Meetinghouse Fund:

The painting of the meetinghouse has been completed, and the old building looks mighty fine. But our coffers do not look quite so fine. You may recall that we received a grant of \$5,000 from the Obediah Brown Fund for this endeavor. Unfortunately, the painting cost \$8,500. And there is additional repair work that will need to be done this fall at the parsonage. So Friends you are urged to consider your ability to contribute money specifically towards the building fund. As always, the contributions can be dropped off at the meetinghouse, or sent to the Treasurer, Cindy Keene (payable to Smithfield Friends Meeting) at 1141 Woonsocket Hill Rd. North Smithfield, RI 02896.

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