

Smithfield



Friends

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

Vol.16 _____ No.160

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 June/July/August

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

July 3-10	FGC Annual Gathering, UMass, Amherst, MA
Sunday, July 18	Quarterly Meeting--Providence MM will host
August 7-12	Yearly Meeting Sessions at Bryant College
Sunday, August 29	Smithfield Friends Annual Family Picnic



Smithfield Friends Annual
Family Picnic

Sunday, August 29

Everyone welcome!

Details will be announced

Letter from Marnie

I have no explanation for the following experience. I simply describe what happened. Last summer, for some reason, there were an unusually large number of dragonflies on Long Island. If we sat outside in the evening, we could see them whizzing around like fleets of tiny demented helicopters. But we also saw them during the day, when they look like flying jewels. They come in a great variety of sizes and colors, and are one of my favorite insects.

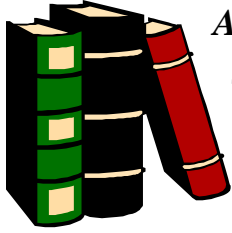
Most of the ones we saw were fairly large, with bodies of a delicate powder blue, and transparent wings with dark spots on them. I often tried to get close enough to inspect one carefully, but in typical dragonfly fashion, as soon as I got near, it would zip away. But one afternoon, as I was sitting on a landing part way up the stairs from the beach, a dragonfly lit about eight feet away, on the railing at the far end of the bench where I sat. It occurred to me that it might sit still if I "asked" it to. So I concentrated on it, mentally assuring it that I meant it no harm, and gradually edged down the bench until I was about two feet away. It continued to sit there, inspecting me with its great compound eyes. I realized that if I leaned forward, I could actually touch it--if it would let me. I "asked" it if it would mind. Sensing no objection, I leaned over and stroked the front edge of its delicate, transparent wing. I sat back, and we inspected each other for a few seconds more. Then it zipped off about its business.

I was elated as I went back to my aunt's cottage. I had been allowed into an alien world for a friendly encounter. Or a lovely and exotic alien had come into mine. But even as I thought those words, I realized that the real holiness of that instant lay in the recognition that though we might seem alien to each other, we were in fact in the same world, one where the dragonfly had its part to play and I had mine. And the parts were connected--but seldom in communion with each other. How seldom we even sought to be in communion. Yet how different the history of the world might have been if humans, with our vast and increasing brain power (which we are now extending electronically) had operated on a model of communion and partnership instead of the model of domination and greed which so many of our societies seem to follow. The farmer-poet Wendell Berry has observed that we act as if there is nothing wrong with basing our prosperity on the ruination of somewhere else. Even as we come to the verge of exhausting our own resources (such as cod fish) or continue pell-mell down the road to exhausting other peoples' (such as oil), we still tell ourselves that we can raise everybody else up to the American standard of living. But our actions speak louder, saying that as long as we get what we want for ourselves, we have no need to genuinely care for the welfare of other peoples, or of the natural world.

But I have hope. Things have changed in my life time, as if we were slowly taking Paul's words about the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:14-27) and extending them beyond the church to the rest of humanity, and beyond humanity to the whole creation: "The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you.'" Can we come to see the whole world as the body of God? You, me, French, Germans, Israelis, Palestinians, squirrels, cod fish, trees, oceans? Can we do this? I hope so--because we do have need of all the parts--but you could check it out with the next dragonfly you see.

Love and blessings for summer,
Marnie





Attention All Smithfield Friends!

The Library Committee is currently attempting to catalog our library holdings. **Please return all items.** You can re-borrow again once we complete our book survey. Thank you in advance for your cooperation!

-J. Kinney, Cathy Sleeth, Karin Sprague, Debbie Chick

Quarterly Meeting at Providence, July 18

Providence Friends will host the next Quarterly Meeting, coming on **July 18**. Friends from around the Quarter will worship together, and then we will all gather for potluck, program, and Meeting for Business.

Yearly Meeting Sessions--New Location (Again!)

It's time to make plans for Yearly Meeting sessions which begin Saturday, **August 7 and run through lunch on Thursday August 12**. We've moved again, this time back to Bryant College, in North Smithfield. (No excuses this year, Friends! It's only 15 minutes from our Meeting House.) Wonderful programs are planned, (including Bible Half Hours done by the New England Pastors!)

Camping is available. Friends may also commute, or come part-time, with or without meals. Details and registration forms are in the latest New England Friend. If you don't get a copy in the mail, extras can be found on the table in the foyer. There's a discount for registration sent in before June 30, and financial assistance will be available through the Equalization Fund (you may receive up to 70% of the cost if you apply before June 30, reduced to 50% after that if funds are still available.) As usual, fantastic programs will be available for young people, with child care for toddlers. There will be music, singing, dancing, old and new Friends to meet--and business sessions (even they can be exciting!). This is the best summer bargain going Friends!



Family Adventures in Washington DC July 18-24

Want a week at bargain prices at a Quaker Center in our nation's capitol? William Penn House invites you to a fun-filled, educational, and inexpensive vacation. Stay in comfortable dormitory style accommodations that are within walking distance of the Capitol, the Smithsonian Museums, and the monuments on the Mall.

See the flier on the bulletin board, phone 202.543.5560, or e-mail <info @ Wm PennHouse.org>

Uniting Against Torture

An organization called FaithfulAmerica is sponsoring a television ad from religious leaders in America condemning the Iraqi prisoner torture and hope to send the ad to Arab television stations. The text of the ad follows: "A Salaam A'alaykum ["Peace be with you" in Arabic]. As Americans of faith, we express our deep sorrow at abuses committed in Iraqi prisons. We stand in solidarity with all those in Iraq and everywhere who demand justice and human dignity. We condemn the sinful and systemic abuses committed in our name, and pledge to work to right these wrongs." "This message was endorsed and paid for by thousands of Americans. www.fithfulamerica.org" [Appears on screen at end of ad]. Speakers - Rev. Dr. Don Shriver, Imam Feisal Abdur Rauf, Sister Betty Obal and Rabbi Arthur Waskow." The ad can be viewed at: <http://www.fithfulamerica.org/adclip.htm>

Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business: June 6, 2004

2004-37 Opening Minute

Smithfield Monthly Meeting met for a regularly scheduled meeting for worship with attention to business at 12 Noon on June 6, 2004. Richard Frechette served as clerk, Connie Bair-Thompson as recording clerk, and there were six other Friends present. We began with a period of waiting worship.

2004-38 Report from Building and Grounds Committee

For Building and Grounds Committee, Suzanne Frechette said that eight contracting companies had been contacted regarding the painting of the meetinghouse and only two responses had been received. One quotation was on the high side (\$13,000) but included doing some work on the windows in the parsonage. Another company quoted \$8,500 for just the meetinghouse (including working on the windows). Suzanne suggested the meeting consider re-doing the parsonage trim in something that would not require painting. Suzanne asked the meeting to authorize Building and Grounds committee to obtain a third estimate and then select the best one.

Concern was expressed about the toxicity of the paint that will be used. Building and Grounds committee agreed to investigate using the least toxic paint possible.

Friends agreed to authorize Building and Grounds committee to choose a painting contractor.

2004-39 Representatives to Yearly Meeting Sessions

The clerk said that New England Yearly Meeting asks us each year to provide names of representatives from our meeting to sessions this August. He reminded us that the responsibilities of delegates include bringing our concerns to sessions as well as to bring back information from sessions to our meeting. As a delegate to yearly meeting, the cost of attending sessions is tax deductible.

Suzanne Frechette, Richard Frechette, Diane Gauthier and Marnie Miller-Gutsell will serve as representatives to yearly meeting sessions. Pending his approval, Nathan St. Germain will also serve as a representative. We ask all of our representatives to plan how they will report back to us on yearly meeting sessions.

2004-40 Meeting Picnic

Friends agreed to hold our annual meeting picnic on Sunday, August 29, with location to be announced.

2004-41 Next Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business

Our next scheduled meeting for worship with attention to business will be September 12, 2004. During the months of July and August, we will meet at the call of the clerk, if necessary.

2004-42 Closing Minute

No further business arising, Friends closed with a period of waiting worship, intending to meet again for business on September 12, 2004, God willing.

Respectfully Submitted,

Constance Bair-Thompson
Recording Clerk

A STATEMENT OF CONSCIENCE

"We, the undersigned, wish to express our deep grief, shock, and pain at the abuse of inmates committed by United States soldiers at Abu Ghraib military prison in Iraq as well as the decapitation of a United States civilian in an act of vengeance. The daily unfolding horror of these actions, and the violent cycle of which they are part, call for a clear, united response that draws upon our shared values and faith.

We recognize that we stand at a crossroads. One path returns to the values and principles that have served us so well in the past, the other embraces the ethic that the end justifies any means. As a nation, we are responsible for making this choice wisely. The choice we make now will define our future as a nation. The vision of our country now displayed before the world is not the vision that reflects our highest aspirations. This is not what we want to be.

We believe strongly that the violation of human rights at Abu Ghraib Prison do not represent the beliefs and values of all who serve our nation in the armed forces, just as we know that the violent actions of some do not reflect the deeply held beliefs of many Iraqis. We are aware that revenge is tempting for all sides. However, violence, regardless of circumstances, is tragic and deplorable.

We affirm that we are complicit in what has been done in our name. The human rights abuses committed in Abu Ghraib prison are a stain upon our souls that must be cleansed. As a nation under God, we must atone for our actions. We call for an immediate return to our shared values of justice and respect for all people of the world. We urge our leaders to be transparent and exert moral leadership at home and abroad.

In the light of recent developments, and in view of the continuing deterioration of the situation in Iraq, we affirm that we are morally called to seek the aid of the international community in bringing the conflict in Iraq to a just and expedient conclusion. Shrinking from this course only deepens the crisis of faith in US policy in Iraq.

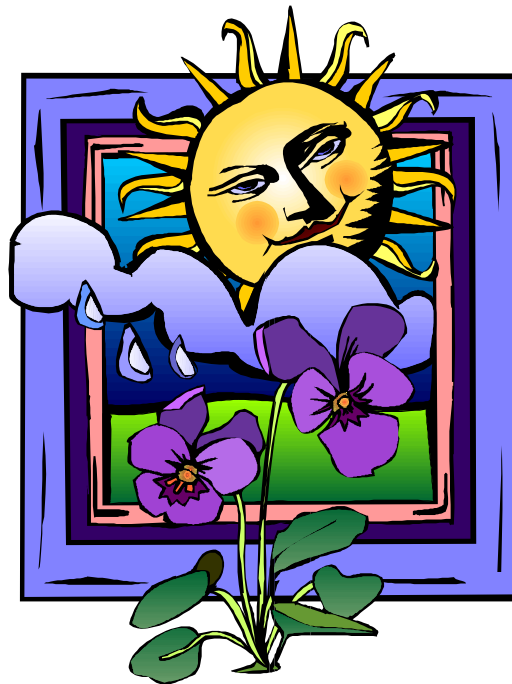
We further call on our elected representatives to demand clear, honest accountability at every level for these violations. Apologies by our elected leaders are proper, but do not speak fully to the gravity of this situation. By requiring accountability we reaffirm our commitment to the values which we seek to live in the world as people of faith. Let us repent and do justice, as faith communities, and as a nation."

This statement is sponsored by the RI State Council of Churches and the American Friends Service Committee in Southeastern New England

For more information, please call the AFSC SENE office at 521-3584.

“Those who move, either immediately or less rapidly, to the claim that in a given situation of injustice there are no nonviolent options available, generally do so in a way that avoids responsibility for an intensive search for other options...the military option for which they reach so soon...could not “work” if we did not invest billions of dollars in equipping it and in preparing for its effective use. Why should it be fair to measure the moral claims of an alternative moral strategy by setting up the debate in such a way that that other strategy must produce comparable results at incomparably less cost?”

-John Howard Yoder, When War is Unjust



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