JANUARY 2013

MONTHLY MEETING NEWSLETTER

A publication of the Brooklyn Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends
www.BrooklynMeeting.org

December Meeting for Business: New Members, Committee Service, Finances and an Historic Wedding

Four New Members Join Brooklyn Meeting

The Meeting welcomed Diane Barnes and her children, Matilda and Aloysius, into membership. Heloise Rathbone will plan a welcoming event for them. Callie Janoff also joined the Meeting and her welcoming committee will be led by Elizabeth Powers.

Brooklyn Friends Serve On Many Committees

The commitment of Brooklyn Friends was highlighted by the figures presented by the Nominating Committee: 114 positions filled in Brooklyn Meeting, 35 positions in New York Quarterly Meeting and 25 positions in New York Yearly Meeting. This service came from approximately 150 members in Brooklyn.

Finance Committee Reports

The meeting reminded the Finance Committee that it should give regular reports in October, February and May. Collections to date are over $26,000.

First Legal Quaker Same Sex Marriage Held and Recorded

The Ministry and Counsel Oversight Committee reported that Mary Pagurelias and Helen Mullin were married in the manner of Friends and according to the laws of the State of New York in Meeting for Worship on November 4, 2012. Their oversight committee was the same one that guided their previous service of consecration years ago. Friends expressed their support and good wishes.

Finance Committee Report: Extra Funds

Paul Flint, for the Finance Committee gathered from Meeting members a list of possible projects and their projected costs to be financed by the Leigh Trust and other funds totaling over $35, 000. This list is in a separate article in this issue.

The Meeting approved clerks for the coming year: The Assistant Clerk is Joan Malin, the Clerk is Jim Morgan.

—*Molly Rusnak*

The Committee Clerk as Servant Leader

One time I was talking with a seasoned Quaker about how you get people to attend committee meetings. "Look," he said, "they're adults who've accepted appointment to serve. It's up to them to show up, not me to make sure they appear."

I couldn't agree less. That's a formula for a weak and struggling committee. As someone who admires the principles of "servant leadership," a management philosophy created by Friend Robert K. Greenleaf, I believe the clerk has a responsibility to nurture her committee's culture. That means helping each member to appreciate his potential for contributing to the committee's productivity and spiritual life.

It is well understood among Quakers that a committee's clerk is not the chairperson, free to make decisions or propose actions that the rest of the members merely ratify. While the clerk may prepare a meeting's agenda, it's up to everyone else present to move it and to resolve its business. The clerk is there to perceive "the sense of the meeting" and to prepare minutes which the others may modify before they approve; it's by definition a subordinate role.

Greenleaf proposes that, in addition, the clerk makes sure members not only are encouraged to attend but made to believe each one's participation is essential to the committee's success. That means the clerk not only sends out a general notice of the next committee meeting with a draft agenda, but calls each person to urge their attendance.

So, yes, I believe it's the clerk's job to keep members interested and engaged even if you have to offer a personal invitation. Of course it may involve chatting about the member's perceptions of how things might go better and actually taking her comments seriously. In other words, the clerk's ego is best laid aside while he pursues maximizing the committee's morale. That's where the "servant" part of this approach becomes crucial.

The less aware the committee is that its clerk is leading by serving the better. For example, if the clerk has an idea she wants brought to the committee's attention, it's best done by subtly enlisting the interest of a sympathetic member and urging him to bring it forward; no one need know with whom the original concept originated. It's about planting seeds, not providing directions.

Practicing servant leadership is far from easy but if you want to have a vibrant and loyal committee, your task is to inspire them to organize themselves, to collaborate, to invent and instigate together, not just sit there waiting for someone to tell them what to do. When that's a committee's culture, you'll find it's not hard to get people to attend meetings.

— Submitted by Jim Morgan. 24 September 2012

NY Yearly Meeting Issues Press Release on Fracking

On November 29, 2012, New York Yearly Meeting issued a press release formerly opposing the practice of fracking (a process in which fluids are injected underground at high pressure in order to fracture the rock surrounding gas and oil wells). Below, please find the full text of New York Yearly Meeting's formal statement of conscience on fracking:

New York Yearly Meeting (NYYM) has considered the potential consequences of High Volume Hydraulic Fracturing (also known as HVHF, horizontal hydrofracking, or fracking) in New York State. We oppose hydrofracking i n New York State and beyond. We urge our political representatives to prohibit the practice of HVHF in New York State. As Quakers, we experience the Divine through loving and truthful relationships with all people and all creation. After extensive efforts to inform ourselves about fracking we have concluded that it is inconsistent with our faith and practices, which include a commitment to integrity, community, equality, and care of God's creation. We observe that the natural gas industry and government agencies have placed financial gain over the health of our communities and the environment. We see no legitimate reason to exempt hydrofracking from existing laws protecting water, air, land, and health, as is currently the case. In other states where horizontal hydrofracking has been performed, it has resulted in the loss of vast amounts of fresh water, the release of toxins into the environment, damage to communities, and cost to the taxpayers.

We support legislation and incentives that promote research, development, and use of renewable and sustainable energy; support local farms and farmers; protect the air and water; enforce accountability for industries that risk environmental harm; and create economic policies that promote work for New York State residents that they can do in good conscience. We urge all citizens to thoughtfully consider the long-term effects of hydrofracking on the water, land, local economy, infrastructure, services, and the community as a whole. We are encouraged by the many communities coming together to seek a way forward based on truth and respect. We are called to stand against fracking, and invite others to join us in opposition to this practice.

We, the task group of Witness Coordinating Committee charged with creating this minute, suggest the following actions:

- We ask that the NYYM clerk and general secretary disseminate this minute widely through press releases, letters to our elected officials, to other yearly meetings and other Quaker organizations.
- We charge our representatives to the New York and New Jersey Council of Churches to bring this concern to those bodies, and to advocate for those bodies getting under the weight of this concern.
- We urge Friends to examine our own lives to discern the seeds that might inadvertently support the practice of fracking, and, to the degree possible, do what we can to limit or eliminate those seeds.
- We ask Friends to prayerfully consider adding their names to the list of people, started in part by Friends, who have made a public commitment to join with others to engage in non-violent acts of protest, as their conscience leads them. The link to this list is as follows: www.dontfrackny.org/pledge/

Holiday Festival for All Ages

On Saturday evening, December 22, grandparents, parents, teens, children, babies, and loving Friends shared a potluck dinner. Guests gathered beneath a beautiful Christmas tree and played with a toy electric train, filling the Meeting Social room to capacity. After much delicious food and sociability, Santa Claus suddenly appeared--with baby Santa on his lap--bringing special gifts for all the children.

Following the unwrapping of presents, everyone trooped up to the Meeting room for a talent show that included two very young pianists, a stand-up comedian and several songs accompanied by guitar. All of these performances were warmly appreciated. The evening ended with traditional Christmas carols, chosen and sung by everyone.

—Molly Rusnak

Friends Suggest Special Projects for Extra Funds

Brooklyn Friends were asked by the Meeting Finance committee to suggest projects that the Meeting might undertake both within the Quaker and larger community. These projects will be supported by extra funds from a Trust and a financial surplus. The projects are to express Quaker beliefs and will be connected to Quaker organizations or service undertaken by individual Friends. At present the suggestions are as follows:

- a rice cooker for the Community Dinner Committee: $600
- a defibrillator for the Meetinghouse: $1,500
- a dishwasher for Powell House: $5,442
- Landing Strip [a re-entry program for former prisoners]: $3,000
- African Education Committee [Quaker schools in Africa]: $5,000
- Occupy Faith: $1,000
- Bayard Rustin Memorial, NYYM Black Concerns Committee: $1,000
- a proposed elevator design, Brooklyn Meetinghouse: ?
- movie lights, Brooklyn Meetinghouse: $3,000

Friends will be considering these suggestions at future Meetings for Business.

—Molly Rusnak

Regularly Scheduled Activities

Meetings for Worship
9:00–9:50 AM and
11:00 AM–Noon on Sundays,
in the meeting room
6:30 PM Tuesdays,
in the meeting room

Childcare
Sundays during 11:00 AM worship, for children of 3 months to 3 years, in the care of an early childhood teacher and dedicated volunteers

First Day School
10:45 AM – 11:45 AM, Sundays, September to June. Three classes, roughly related to age: Bodies (4-6), Minds (7-9) and Spirits (10-12).

Social Hour
12:00 PM Sundays,
Ground-level dining room

Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business
1:00 PM, first Sunday of every month, in the meeting room

Hymn Singing around the Piano
10:00 AM, first Sundays, in the meeting room

Worship Sharing
10:00 AM, first Sundays, on the third floor

Readings of Spiritual Texts
10:00 AM, second Sundays, in the meeting room

Quaker Studies for Newcomers and Members
1:00 PM – 3:00 PM, third Sundays, in the meeting room

Community Dinner
1:00 PM, last Sunday of every month, ground-level dining room; volunteers appreciated for this monthly dinner for anyone who wishes a free hot meal. Children encouraged to volunteer.
Contact: Andres Colapinto, acolabus@gmail.com

Upcoming Events

Ongoing additions to upcoming Meeting events are regularly added to the Meeting website at http://www.brooklynmeeting.org/calendar. Member Kate Rapoport also maintains an email event announcement list; send a request to brooklyn.kittens@gmail.com to join.

January 2013

Sunday, January 13:
Instead of our usual spiritual reading, a special guest, Kirsten Mandala, will visit to talk about the African Great Lakes Initiative in Rwanda, and about her recent work with the Quaker UN Office. Kirsten is leaving shortly for a year is Rwanda and has recently served as a program assistant at the Quaker UN Office.
10:00–11:00 AM, in the meeting room.

May 2013

Friday, May 17—Sunday, May 19:
2013 Powell House Retreat! Save the date. Contact: Ministry & Council, or DK Holland, dkholland1@me.com.

Send additions to Regularly Scheduled Activities or Upcoming Events to calendar@brooklynmeeting.org. Send inquiries or suggestions about the newsletter to newsletter@brooklynmeeting.org. The Monthly Meeting Newsletter is published by the Communications Committee of Brooklyn Monthly Meeting. Current members: Dan Bodah, Eli Gwynn, Ben Hill, Robert Matson (clerk), and Molly Rusnak