



# BROOKLYN MEETING NEWS

*A publication of the Brooklyn Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends*

*brooklymeeting.org*

**December 2014**

## **November Meeting for Business: New Members and Committee Reports**

### **Three New Members Welcomed**

The Meeting welcomed Elijah [Eli] Gwynn, Emily Walsh and Beth Kelley into membership. Eli has served on several committees already. Beth is transferring from 57<sup>th</sup> Street Meeting in Chicago. A letter from Lakisha Grant requesting membership for her son, Jaden, was read for the first time.

### **Marriage Under the Care of the Meeting Planned**

The Committee on Ministry and Counsel forwarded the request of Eli Gwynn and Emily Walsh to be married under the care of the Meeting. This was approved and an oversight committee appointed. The wedding will take place on New Year's Day at Brooklyn Monthly Meeting.

### **Social Hour Committee Will Continue Its "Expanded Menu"**

The Social Hour Committee reported that they are still concerned about the way some members are treated while serving. They have decided to post their "Social Hour Etiquette" suggestions on the serving table. The Committee asked that the sanitizer/dishwasher be replaced, as it is wearing out and leaking. This was approved. A discussion was held about the current "expanded menu" which includes healthful dishes and the Meeting supported continuing it.

### **Care Committee for the Schools Reports on Mary McDowell Friends School**

The Care Committee shared many activities that they have participated in with Mary McDowell, the first Quaker school for Learning Disabled children. A highlight was the first graduation from the school, featuring 22 graduates. Twenty of these students are going on to college. The commencement speaker was Julian Bond. Other shared events included Upper School Meeting for Worship, an event at Plymouth Church to hear an original recording of an address by Martin Luther King that took place in that church and an open Meeting for Worship at the school.

### **Ministry and Counsel Committee Describes a Busy Year**

The Ministry and Counsel Committee



conducted seven meetings for clearness for membership applicants, 17 clearness committees for the needs of Friends, and is now holding six ongoing support groups with Meeting members and attenders. The committee also provided guidance for two weddings and clearness for one marriage, continued spiritual readings at 10 a.m. on the second First Day, sponsored a Pastoral Care Subcommittee, ARCH training for helping the elderly and provided \$2,140 in scholarships for Friends to attend New York Yearly Meeting Summer

Session and Brooklyn Meeting Retreat. The Ministry and Counsel Committee also sits on the Facing Bench for two Meetings for Worship each First Day. This past year the Meeting lost five Friends through death. The Committee held Memorial Meetings and composed Memorial Minutes for them. They were: Emily Ranseen (November 10, 2013); Robert McMillan (December 25, 2013); Llewellyn Boyce (December 26, 2013); Pauli Adams (January 2014); Tom Glynn (May 3, 2014).

Long after the Memorial services, we remember them.

*-- Molly Rusnak*

## **Annual Contra Dance Held**

On the afternoon of November 9, more than 40 Friends gathered for Brooklyn Meeting's Annual Contra Dance. Music was provided by the Honey Tones and Herb Lape from Westbury. Chart Guthrie was the caller. Participants danced energetically for three hours, learning various figures such as squares, circles and lines. A lively time was had by all ages.

*-- Molly Rusnak*

## **Meeting on Transgender Concerns**

On the afternoon of First Day, November 15, two members of the Transgender community shared their experiences and political agenda with Friends. Tanya Walker, a veteran of this issue, is currently working with the Audrey Lourde Project and is a former case manager with Housing Works. Arman Teighor is also at Housing Works as a community organizer and public advocate.

We heard about the personal experience of growing up confused about gender identity and the struggles of adults in confirming their real psychological selves and expressing it through their appearance and social interactions. Practical life problems, in addition to lack of social acceptance and understanding, are discrimination in housing, immigration, education and employment. While New York City prohibits such discrimination, New York State has been unable to pass GENDA (Gender Expression Non-Discrimination Act), an antidiscrimination law, because the State Senate refuses to vote on it. Brooklyn Meeting held a vigil on November 20 in front of the Supreme Court Building to express “solidarity with all persons who identify as transgender and to remember those who have died.”

-- Molly Rusnak

## Update on the “Apology to Afro-Descendents”

The Yearly Meeting has created a document titled [“An Apology to Afro-Descendents.”](#) The monthly meetings are now being asked to discuss it amongst themselves. That process will begin with a worship sharing session in mid-January, and there will be several articles about this in the January Newsletter.

-- Linda Clarke and Lucy Sikes

## Our 2014 Brooklyn Monthly Meeting Retreat at Powell House, October 17-19

First, the hard data: 53 Friends -- 39 adults and 14 children (ages 3-17) -- participated. The price was \$170 for adults and \$85 for children. However, many requested and received a stipend so that about 25% of the participant fees were covered by the Meeting. And thanks to a much-appreciated car-pool website, all 23 people who wanted a ride were able to find one. This

turned out to be a great way to meet and get to know other Friends. Fortunately, the weather played along with our plans. We could all enjoy the beautiful autumn leaves, the little walks, and the bonfire on Saturday night. Powell House did its best to accommodate the various needs and diets of our participants, and all Friends did what they could to make this a memorable experience.

This year’s retreat topic - “Practice” - seemed to have struck a nerve in our Meeting. Many Friends in our very urban and very busy Brooklyn Monthly Meeting feel that something is missing for them; namely, a sustained and practicable way of bringing the spiritual into their everyday lives, to actually practice living their beliefs.

So we decided to use our retreat this year to find out HOW we, as individuals, DO our practice, how we would LIKE to practice it, and how we could FIND SUPPORT for that practice within the Meeting.

After getting to know each other a little with introductory games on Friday night, we used Saturday morning to explore, first together and then in groups, our individual feelings and experiences surrounding spiritual practice. We followed this up in the afternoon with groups formed around specific practices (see below) that had emerged from these discussions as something Friends wished to pursue:

- 1) Meditation and Prayer - alone or with others on a regular basis

- 2) Sacred Texts – reading and discussing them, working them into our lives
- 3) Caring for the body – yoga, healthy activities, eating right, etc.
- 4) Mindfulness in daily life – how to be more aware and in the Light during our mundane activities
- 5) Spiritual buddies / spiritual friendships – finding someone in Meeting you can feel accountable to in your practice; someone who keeps you on track and whom you can trust
- 6) Being in Nature – caring for and enjoying our planet
- 7)
- 8) Creative expression - music, performance, arts, etc. (attending it and/or doing it)
- 9) Service in our Community - serving on standing or ad hoc committees, clerking, visiting the aging and sick, etc.

Also mentioned were:

Individuals giving workshops for anyone in the Meeting  
Performances by the artists and musicians in our midst  
Fun activities to do with fellow Friends: kayaking, eating, sailing, hiking, singing, going with other Friends to a museum/performance, or other events as may be suggested

At the end of the retreat, some Friends already signed up for some of these

activities in the hope that others from the larger Meeting would join in and that shared experiences would ensue. This would occur either through setting up regular groups or pairings, or through various events or programs (or both). **We all know how difficult it usually is to coordinate shared activities in our Meeting, given**



the hectic schedules most of us have to follow. To make it somewhat easier, we have put up sign-up sheets on the bulletin board (east wall in the Social Hour Room, to the left of the board with "practice" leaves) so that people can find each other and actually get something going. Anyone seriously wanting to meet with other signers could either contact them or write on the sheet his/her email, so others may get in contact.

In addition, we are thinking about a Saturday follow-up retreat in the Meetinghouse, sometime in 2015, since the next Powell House retreat will take not take place until 2016. This will also enable Friends who were not able to participate in 2014 to explore the question of Practice for themselves.

Most of all, we would like to invite our fellow Friends to ask questions and come forward if Spiritual Practice is something they feel they need in their lives and could use some help with. Please get in touch with someone from Ministry and Counsel or from the retreat committee: Sarah Way, Andres Colapinto, Beth Kelly, Mahayana Landowne, Mauricio Alexander Tscherney and Inga Schwarzkopf.

Lastly, for this participant at least, it was a special experience to work in a team with such highly inspired and talented Friends. I learned a lot from them!

-- Inga Schwarzkopf

## **ARCH Visitor Training II: A Weekend at Powell House**

On November 21-23, six of our Brooklyn F/friends who have completed training as ARCH visitors travelled to Powell House for a refresher course. They were joined by twenty-five other ARCH visitors from other parts of New York Yearly Meeting.

We had a very inspiring weekend during which we became acquainted with one

another; discussed how to work within our individual Meetings; learned about plans for administrative changes within ARCH; listened to outside speakers on "Dementia and Pastoral Care" and "Hearing Loss"; and, most exciting of all, learned to design and facilitate our own workshops.

ARCH stands for "Aging, Resources, Consultation, Help." It is a program of New York Yearly Meeting funded by Friends Foundation for Aging and supported by the Committee on Aging Concerns. The mission of ARCH is to support aging F/friends and F/friends with disabilities in a way that is consistent with Quaker faith and practice.

ARCH first became known at Brooklyn Meeting in 2009, when the program was invited to conduct a workshop on "Preparing for the End of Life as an Act of Love." Brooklyn members and attenders were subsequently encouraged to complete their health proxies and advance directives, something all adults over the age of 18 should do. ARCH visitors at Brooklyn have organized care teams and provided transportation and/or companions to medical appointments. Most members of the Pastoral Care Subcommittee of Ministry and Counsel have been trained as ARCH visitors. If you are interested in attending the next ARCH training, to be held in March 2015 in Syracuse, NY, speak to Callie Janoff (347-249-8470) or [callieoff@gmail.com](mailto:callieoff@gmail.com).

-- Nancy Black

## **First Day School Underway**

Three ages of children have been participating in First Day School this year. The two younger groups meet in classrooms on the basement floor and the older students sit in a circle in the third floor space. All groups have silent worship during their session. During one class the youngest children talked about the feelings and thoughts they had during the silence. They then drew pictures to illustrate their feelings. The older children have been working on collages based on cut-outs from

Picasso's *La Guernica* and other pictures as part of a meditation on conflict and peace. The teens have been focusing on considered listening and moral choices, among other topics. A joint session and celebration involved baking and decorating cookies. The First Day School is looking for volunteers; guitar players are especially welcome.

-- Molly Rusnak

## **QUAKER PROCEDURE: ASKING FOR RELEASE FROM COMMITTEES**

Last month I decided that I needed to get off of a committee on which I had been serving for several years. I spotted a member of Nominations Committee during social hour and told her I wanted to be released and thought that would be enough. Not so!

The proper procedure is to confer with the clerk of the committee and then send a letter (or email) requesting release to the clerk of the Meeting. At the next Meeting for Business it will be read to Friends, the request accepted and the matter agreed upon. Only then can one be released from the committee.

I visited [brooklynmeeting.org](http://brooklynmeeting.org) and found the Blue Book of Brooklyn Meeting Committee Responsibilities. In it are answers to some of these questions about Quaker procedure. There is a good description about how to get on committees, but not about how to get off of them.

I have been at Brooklyn Meeting for over 30 years. One would think that I would know all these matters of procedure.

-- Lucy Sikes

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## Submission Guidelines

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The Communications Committee welcomes Brooklyn Meeting News contributions from all Meeting members and attenders. Our newsletter includes a variety of content which may be of interest to our community, including but not limited to:

- Recaps of recent Meeting events
- Previews of upcoming events
- Issues pertaining to our Quaker faith and history

The newsletter is published on the first Sunday of each month, and we request that submissions for the next issue be submitted by **December 22nd**.

General Guidelines:

- Please send an email to [newsletter@brooklynmeeting.org](mailto:newsletter@brooklynmeeting.org) so that we may briefly discuss your contribution, as regards its timeliness, appropriateness, and length.
- Contributions should

- generally be brief, between 150-450 words in length.
- Please send your newsletter submission as an attached Word document.
- Keep in mind that contributions will be copy edited, and may not appear in the newsletter in exactly the same form as how they were submitted.

Thank you for your interest - we look forward to your input!

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## Regularly Scheduled Activities

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### 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 Sundays, in the meeting  
room

### Hymn Singing around the Piano

10:00 AM, first Sundays, in the meeting  
room

### Readings of Spiritual Texts

10:00 AM, second Sundays, in the meeting  
room

### Worship Sharing

10:00 AM, third Sundays, on the third  
floor

### Community Dinner

1:00 PM-3:00 PM SET-UP  
3:00 PM-4:00 PM MEAL/SERVING  
4:00 PM- 5:00 PM CLEAN-UP, COME FOR  
SOME OR ALL!  
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

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## Upcoming Events

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*Ongoing additions to upcoming Meeting events are regularly added to the Meeting website at <http://www.brooklynmeeting.org/calendar>.*

*To submit an event, email [calendar@brooklynmeeting.org](mailto:calendar@brooklynmeeting.org).*

*Member Kate Rapoport also maintains an*

*email event announcement list; send a request to [brooklyn.kittens@gmail.com](mailto:brooklyn.kittens@gmail.com) to join.*

### December 2014

*Saturday, December 13 5pm-8pm:*  
Brooklyn Meeting's Annual Winter  
Celebration. Cookie decorating, Tree  
trimming, A visit from Santa with gifts for  
all the children, Potluck Feast, Talent Show!  
Brooklyn Meeting House.

*Tuesday, December 30- Thursday, January*

*1:*  
PoHo's Annual New Year's Celebration  
This multigenerational conference is one of  
our most popular. We can only house 90  
people so register early! at this annual event  
we have activities for all ages including  
making snow people, ice-skating, yoga,  
Pilates, cookie making, origami, sharing,  
and storytelling. Did we mention dancing in  
the kitchen while washing pots & pans? This  
year we'll do more of the same.  
Register at [Powellhouse.org](http://Powellhouse.org)

### January 2015

*Thursday, January 1 2pm:*  
Elijah Gwynn and Emily Walsh are pleased  
to invite all members and attenders to their  
wedding. There will be a brief reception  
downstairs with wedding cake and other  
refreshments.  
Brooklyn Meeting House.

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*Send additions to Regularly Scheduled Activities or Upcoming Events to [calendar@brooklynmeeting.org](mailto:calendar@brooklynmeeting.org).*

*Send inquiries or suggestions about the newsletter to [newsletter@brooklynmeeting.org](mailto:newsletter@brooklynmeeting.org).*

*The Monthly Meeting Newsletter is published by the Communications Committee of Brooklyn Monthly Meeting.*

*Current members: Eli Gwynn (clerk), Ben Hill, Molly Rusnak, Lucy Sikes, and Anna White.*

*Photo and drawing by Lucy Sikes*

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