



Brooklyn Meeting News

Brooklyn Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends • brooklynmeeting.org

November 2018



Fellowship and Food

On Thursday, September 27,, a group of Quakers gathered at the Meetinghouse for a potluck supper. Not surprisingly, there was a wide variety of food, appealing to vegans, garden-variety vegetarians, meat eaters, and omnivores. There were salads, breads, stews, and I won't even begin to describe the desserts! No, this brief missive will instead focus on the fellowship.

Organizers thoughtfully prepared activities to encourage people who may (or may not) have only seen each other at Meeting to get to know each other. We were divided into groups and given topics that could be used as conversation starters, or we were free to go in our own direction, the only "rule" being for each individual to have an opportunity to speak.

It was fun, although the little grouping I found myself in

coincidentally had a few people with similar answers to the questions: What is your birth order – oldest, youngest, in the middle? Where were you born – city, rural, suburb? We became a wee bit perturbed with the next question – How long have you been a Quaker? – only because we took the point of the questions to be a means of randomly meeting people, so this particular question rather stacked the odds against meeting new people. Again, it was fun.

Hopefully, Friends will be interested in doing this again, or trying it if they missed it. The Welcoming Committee is hosting a similar event on Saturday, February 2 from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

—Leslie McCarthy

Quaker Life in the 19th Century

Aron Wright was born into a Quaker family in Menallen, PA, in 1810. His

family moved to Springboro, OH, when Aron was four years old; as he grew up, he participated in the family farm and flour mill. The farm was one of the "stations" on the Underground Railroad. Aron initially studied law and was involved in the campaign of Andrew Jackson for president. His father discouraged his political activities, and in 1833 Aron left the "West" and went to Yale Medical School, graduating in 1836. He married Mary Willets in 1840 and they settled on Henry Street in New York City. They were active in the Religious Society of Friends, and he was one of the Quakers who signed the deed to purchase farmland in Brooklyn, establishing the Quaker Cemetery in 1849. Aron and Mary Wright sent their children to Friends Institute, on Elizabeth Street, the school which preceded Friends Seminary. Dr. Wright practiced medicine in New York City from 1840 to 1855. During the cholera epidemic in the mid-1850s, he sent his children away to his parents' farm in Ohio.

The family moved to Springboro, OH, in 1857, after the death of Aron's father, Jonathan Wright. They took over the operations of the farm and mill, and Dr. Wright continued to practice medicine. Aron and Mary were very interested in the Society of Friends, and gave land for a Quaker Meetinghouse in Springboro. (The Meeting was attached to Indiana Yearly Meeting.) They sent their daughter, Mariana, to Antioch College, whose president was Horace Mann. They also founded a higher education co-educational institution, Miami Valley College, which required the students to work daily on nearby farms and mills.

In 1880, the Wrights moved back to New York City and built a house at 73 Remsen Street. Their daughter, Mariana Wright Chapman, had moved

to 160 Hicks Street with her husband Noah and their five children. Four of the children went to Brooklyn Friends School. Mariana was appointed Trustee of the Schools (Friends Seminary and Brooklyn Friends), and was involved in the First Day School at Brooklyn Meeting. Mariana became active in the women's suffragette movement; she was President of the New York State Suffrage Association, working closely with Susan B. Anthony and Carrie Chapman Catt.

Dr. Aron Wright died in 1885. His wife, Mary Willets Wright, lived until 1904. They are buried in Westbury Quaker Cemetery. Mary Willets' parents were born in Westbury and many family members are buried in the cemetery adjacent to the Westbury Meetinghouse.

This account was written by Mary Booth Doty, member of Brooklyn Meeting, and great-great-granddaughter of Aron and Mary Wright. The content is based on information in the book, Aron and Mary Wright, written by their grandson (and Mary Doty's grandfather) Aron Wright Chapman, who was a member of New York Monthly Meeting and served on the School Board, as Treasurer, for 35 years.

—*Mary Doty*

Good News from a Friend's Garden of Eden

What if the Garden of Eden popped up in the middle of a mental institution, or if a mental hospital took root in the middle of the Garden?

In the first place you've got Urban Oasis, the horticulture therapy program run by my wife and Friend, Susan, behind the walls of Kingsboro Psychiatric Center in Brooklyn.

In the second, you've got safe havens created by English Friends around 1800 with work and worship, education and recreation for people considered insane. They were like country inns compared to the dungeons in which the poor souls were usually kept.

"Asylums" were initially hospitable places for healing. They became state-run warehouses for the troubled and

troubling. Kingboro was one.

You might say the mentally ill were kicked out of Eden for eating apples only God could see. Is it Susan's fault that there's no way out unless a judge determines you're "physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight"?

So much for history. Here's a typical day at Kingsboro: Labor Day, in fact, when everyone else is playing hooky. "No vacations for vegetables. Time to pick the okra and tomatoes," Susan repeats like a mantra.

What I see are not the cornfields of Kansas in neat rows but a tangle of bushes, vines, and stalks. How an exacting commercial artist could become the maker of this "crazy" quilt is beyond me.

"Companion planting," Susan explains. "See the Malibar spinach climbing the sunflowers' stalks. Over there, Genovese basil around the Juliette tomatoes improves flavor and wards off bugs. Now, let's get down to business."

I make the rounds squatting and standing, squatting and standing, as if picking vegetables were an exercise routine. After two hours I'm about to faint from the heat. Lesson learned: I have no idea what it's like for farm workers who do this day in and out.

I realize that in deed Susan was a Quaker long before she became a member of Brooklyn Meeting. Whereas I'm as clumsy as a nursing student handing out meds, she has a sure and caring touch with people as well as plants.

We Quakers don't believe in saints, but Susan's leading takes her way down her garden's path. If Eden is now guarded behind the forbidding walls of a decrepit hospital, she's eager to share the secret with all who will listen.

—*Carl Blumenthal*

Join George Lakey for a Book Reading

George Lakey will discuss his new book, *How We Win: A Guide to Nonviolent Direct Action Campaigning* (Melville House) on Wednesday, November 14, at 7 p.m.

at Powerhouse Arena bookstore, 28 Adams St., in DUMBO.

George, a member of Central Philadelphia Monthly Meeting, was first arrested in a civil rights sit-in, and has for half a century given leadership to prophetic projects: A Quaker Action Group, Movement for a New Society, Men Against Patriarchy, Jobs with Peace, and Earth Quaker Action Team (EQAT). He recently retired from Swarthmore College, where he worked with students to build the online Global Nonviolent Action Database of more than a thousand nonviolent campaigns in nearly 200 countries. This, his 10th book, harvests a life of learning how to, as Martin Buber put it, "drive the plowshare of normative principle into the hard soil of political reality."

The event will include Q&A, as well as opportunities for the book to be purchased and autographed.

Rev. Dr. Bernice A. King, CEO of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change: "George Lakey's Manual for Direct Action was literally a life-saver for many during the height of the struggle for Black freedom and dignity in the 1960s. *How We Win* has arrived to us at another key moment in our human journey. It is a guide for our collective liberation, informed by decades of Professor Lakey's ongoing research and teaching since the '60s. Following these steps will indeed help us achieve a more just and humane society."

—*Andy von Salis*

Contribute to Brooklyn Monthly Meeting in 2018

As of October 15, members and attenders have contributed 59 percent of our fundraising goal for 2018. The Finance and Collections Committee is using the tried-and-true fundraising thermometer to keep the Meeting up to date about contributions thus far, and what we still need. As a Meeting, we have contributed \$50,014, and our target "temperature" is \$89,481. Look for our thermometer during announcements, on the welcome table, or in the social hour room!

Because contributions from

members and attenders are the Meeting's primary source of income, our Meeting determines the giving target when we approve the annual budget. For 2018, the Meeting approved \$37,950 to fund Brooklyn Monthly Meetings' committees, \$13,370 for donations to socially responsible organizations and activities, \$2,000 for Powell House, and \$44,411 for New York Yearly Meeting. The budget reflects our commitment to our community in Brooklyn, to regional activities and fellowship within the Yearly Meeting, and to global Quaker service.

The annual budget is one statement of our Meeting's priorities. Contributing money to the Meeting—in addition to serving on committees—is a primary way that we, as members and attenders, support the priorities we share.

Make a financial contribution to Brooklyn Monthly Meeting by mailing a check; handing cash or a check, in one of the envelopes on the welcome table, to a member of the Finance and Collections Committee (Paul Flint, Jonathan Fluck, Emily Sandusky, and Inga Schwarzkopf); or setting up an automatic monthly payment from your bank. Setting up a single or periodic auto-payment is easy using the online bill-pay feature of your checking account. Payment should be made to: Brooklyn Monthly Meeting, PO Box 026123, Brooklyn, NY 11202-6123. When asked for an "account number," feel free to use your initials, to be more creative, or to leave it blank.

—Emily Sandusky, for the Finance and Collections Committee

Worship for a Dummy

After 20 years of speaking in Meeting for Worship, I realized in 2012 that my messages were coming from the bottoms of my feet, not the depths of my soul. That's when I took a vow of silence. I'll take my blessings off air, as callers do on talk radio—the ones who listen rather than sermonize.

This hasn't helped me center down any better. I look around at Friends meditating without distractions, wishing I could do the same. If I were a pearl diver searching for divine treasure, I would come up empty-handed every time.

What to do? I stay in the kitchen preparing for social hour. Sometimes cooking is a form of worship; sometimes I get a message from the Big Chef in the sky: "Turn down the heat on the lentil soup." (Jesus multiplied the loaves and fishes twice. I try to perform culinary miracles every First Day.)

Brooklyn's Meetinghouse is a classic of Quaker simplicity: large room; high ceilings; tall, slim windows; wooden pews in rows with facing benches; light that seems to skip over skyscrapers. Messages drown in the silence. "God, did you get that on tape?"

They say writers don't find their hometown voice until they leave home. Now I attend the Meeting for Worship in New Haven, CT while

caring for my sick brother.

The Meetinghouse there is 20 years old. It looks like a suburban split level: compact room; low ceilings; wide, low-set windows with a view of the surrounding woods; comfy chairs arranged in semi-circles; no facing benches. The light tilts forward. A microphone clears the air of confusion.

I find it more conducive for worship, more conducive to clearing my mental deck of petty thoughts. Maybe the need for finding a center is greater a hundred miles from home. Maybe it's easier when I'm not in the kitchen.

The query on a recent First Day: What doth love require of us? Only one Friend spoke and that was enough: "To love ourselves as much as we love others." I'll drink holy water to that...and chamomile tea when I come down to earth.

—Carl Blumenthal

Seeking Play Yard Suggestions

The Property Committee would like to replace the existing play structure in the Meetinghouse yard as soon as possible.

Please e-mail any suggestions (including links, if possible, to sites that sell what you're suggesting) to BMMpropertycommittee@googlegroups.com, or speak to a member of the committee: Michael Hanson, Elizabeth Gilmore, Mike Phillips, Eric Cavanaugh, DK Holland, Bill Parrot, and Willie Mae Watkins.

Submission Guidelines

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. We ask that submissions for the upcoming issue be submitted by the 15th of the month before to allow time for the Communications Committee to prepare the newsletter.

Please send your article, artwork, letter, essay, poem, photograph or other item in an email to newsletter@brooklynmeeting.org.

Contributions should generally be brief — aim for between 150-450

words in length. Please send your newsletter submission as an attached Word document or high-resolution image file.

Keep in mind that all contributions are copy edited and subject to editing for length. Your item thus may appear in the newsletter in slightly modified form.

We look forward to your input in creating a newsletter we all wish to read!

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

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

Social Hour

12:00 PM on 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

Worship Sharing

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

Prayer Healing Meeting

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

Community Dinner

1:00–3:00 PM (set-up)
3:00–4:00 PM (meal/serving)
4:00–5:00 PM (clean up)
Last Sunday, in the ground-level
dining room
Come for some or all!
Volunteers ARE appreciated for
this monthly dinner for anyone
who wishes a free hot meal.
Children encouraged to
volunteer.

Upcoming Events

Ongoing additions to the Meeting calendar can be seen at <http://www.brooklynmeeting.org/calendar>

Traces of the Trade film showing

Thursday, November 8 at 15th Street Meeting House Meeting Room, 6:00 pm - 9:00 pm. Free. The film is about the DeWolf family's participation in the slave trade. Descendants of the family came together to reconstruct the trip.

New York Yearly Meeting Fall Sessions 2018

Friday, November 9 – Sunday, November 11, hosted by Farmington-Scipio Regional Meeting (FSRM). All invited. Program centering especially around the Commemoration of the 224th Anniversary of the Canandaigua Treaty on November 11th. For more information, visit <https://nyym.org/session/fall-sessions-2018>

George Lakey book talk for *How We Win: A Guide to Nonviolent Direct Action Campaigning*

Wednesday, November 14 at Powerhouse Arena Bookstore, 28 Adams Street, Brooklyn, 7:00 pm – 8:00 pm. Lakey, a member of Central Philadelphia Monthly Meeting, discusses his new book from Melville House.

Memorial Service for Naomi Paz Greenberg

Saturday, November 17, 2:00 pm - 4:00 pm, at 15th Street Meeting House. Naomi Paz Greenberg, a member of Flushing Meeting who was active in recent years at Morningside Meeting, passed away August 7, 2018. Light refreshments following the service. Online obituary: <https://www.dignitymemorial.com/obituaries/forest-hills-ny/naomi-greenberg-7955923>

To submit an event or a change to the list of regularly scheduled activities, email events@brooklynmeeting.org.

Inquiries and suggestions about the newsletter can be sent to newsletter@brooklynmeeting.org.

The Brooklyn Meeting Newsletter is published by the Communications Committee of Brooklyn Monthly Meeting. Current members: Dan Bodah, Melissa Cavanaugh, Ben Frisch (clerk), Heather Loza, Leslie McCarthy, and Adam Seigel-Isaacson.