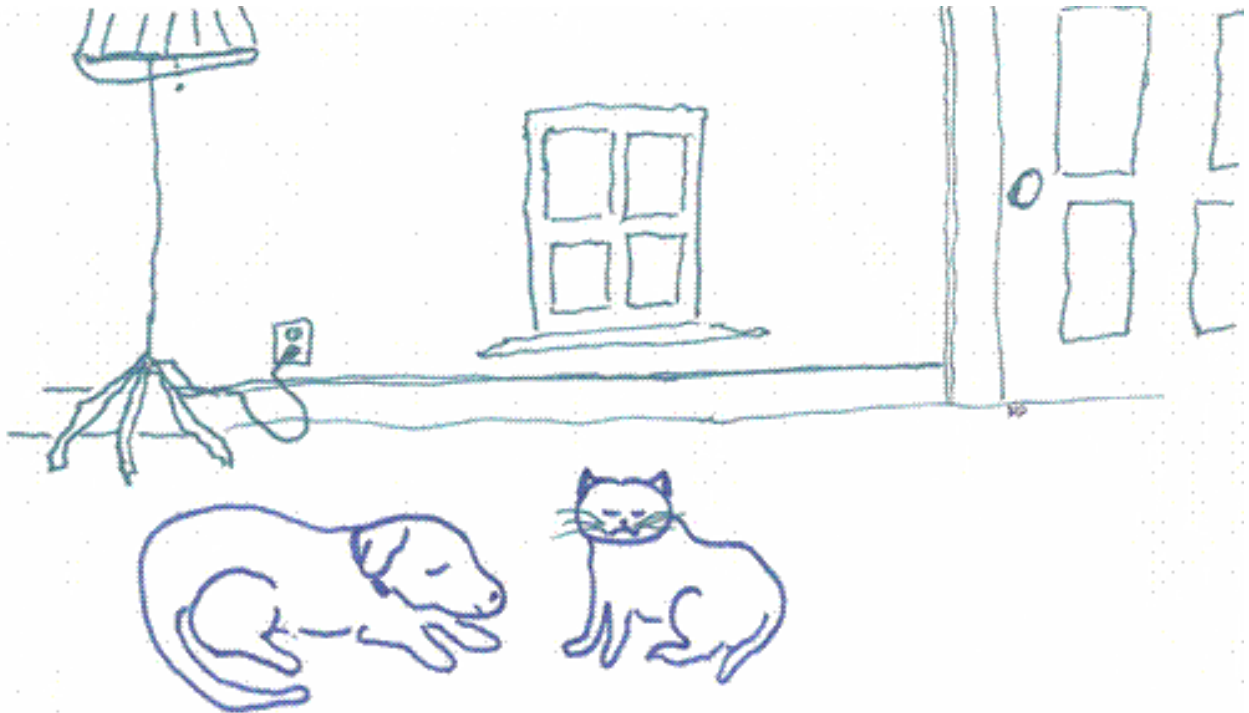


Among Friends

Summer 2007



Do not fight with your neighbor
when he has done you
no harm.
— Proverbs 3:30

Among Friends provides a forum about activities within the various meetings and worship groups which make up Illinois Yearly Meeting. It also provides pertinent information provided by Quaker organizations and by interested readers of our publication. Readers are reminded that signed articles and letters express the views of the writers, and not official positions of Illinois Yearly Meeting.

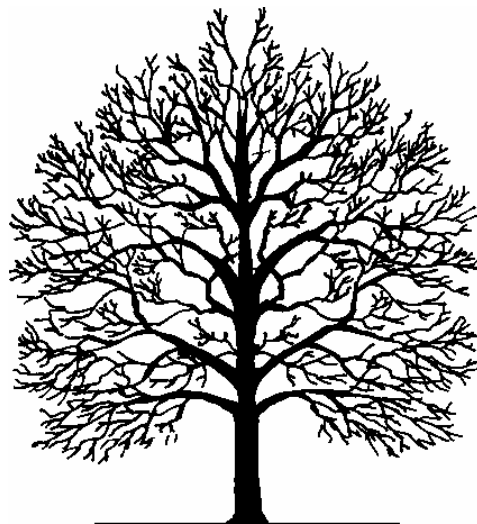
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Please read: All submissions for the Winter Issue 2007-2008 need to be in the hands of the editor NO LATER THAN October 20, 2007. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated!

Informal articles about your meeting or worship group (NOT States of Society Reports), plus poetry, black ink artwork, and photos are encouraged and received with appreciation.

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Illinois Yearly Meeting - July 25-29, 2007

Theme: *Answering That of God*

Workshops at IYM 2007

By Beth Schobernd

“*Answering that of God*,” the theme for IYM 2007, has inspired a wide range of workshops. As of mid-April, the full list of workshops is not yet complete, but here are some of the options that will be available.

Mike Conover, **Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Healing**

Worship for Healing is a tradition within Friends General Conference, including workshops at Gatherings. Names of those to be held in the Light will be solicited prior to settling into silence.

Nancy Halliday, **Canoe and Kayak Trip**

Under the sponsorship of the Environmental Concerns Committee, interested persons with either a canoe or kayak will travel onto Hennepin and Hopper Lakes. Please see the Environmental Concerns article on page six for full details.

Brenda Koenig and Maurine Pyle, **Story, Song and Symbol Outreach**

In story, song and symbol, participants will create new and more accurate images of who Quakers are today. These will be used to increase visibility of Quaker meetings, welcome newcomers, and attract new members.

Carolyn Treadway, **Reversing the Climate Crisis**

This workshop, which includes slides from Al Gore’s Oscar-winning film *An Inconvenient Truth*, will examine the global, regional, and local aspects of the climate crisis.

Roy Treadway and Steve Walsh, **Building Sustainability at Illinois Yearly Meeting**

Also under the sponsorship of the Environmental Concerns Committee, this workshop will

explore the spiritual value and practical considerations for constructing the new buildings on the Illinois Yearly Meeting site in a sustainable or “green” way.

Other workshop still under development:

William Alsup, **Bible Study**

Finance Committee, **Interpreting Financial Statements**

Ruth Raffensperger, **Nurturing Activists and Following Leadings/Callings**

Workshops by various Quaker organization representatives

IYM Speakers

By Beth Schobernd

Wednesday night speaker: Lucy Duncan will tell stories of her own experiences of hearing the voice of God and working to respond faithfully in her daily life. She has been a platform storyteller since 1993. Lucy serves Friends General Conference as Associate Secretary for Programs and the Bookstore; many folks may know her from her e-mail newsletter *Book Musings*. She is a member of Goshen Friends Meeting of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting.

Saturday night speaker: Jim Fletcher will share his spiritual journey as it has been influenced by his experiences in the United States, South Africa, and the American Friends Service Committee. Currently the Treasurer of the AFSC Board and Corporation, Jim has also been active in FCNL, FWCC, Quaker UN and several other Friends organizations. He is the author of *A Quaker Speaks from the Black Experience: The Life and Collected Writings of Barrington Dunbar*, and co-author of *Friends Face the World*. Jim is Vice Chancellor at Texas A & M. He attends College Station (TX) Worship Group which is under the care of Live Oak Monthly Meeting, Houston.

WEDNESDAY:

Noon – 6:00 Registration
 2:00-3:30 Opening Session: Worship & Business Meeting
 3:30-6:00 Free time/committee meetings
 5:30-6:00 Singing on front porch/Early supper for children, kitchen volunteers
 6:00-7:00 Dinner
 7:30-9:00 Movie Night for Kids
 7:30-8:45 Address by Lucy Duncan (FGC)
 9:00 New Attenders Meeting (Registration table)
 9:00-9:45 Snacks

THURSDAY, FRIDAY, SATURDAY:

6:30 - 7 am Early Meeting for Worship
 6:45 - 7:45 Breakfast
 7:30 New Attenders Meeting on Saturday (Registration table)
 8:00 – 9:00 Meeting for Worship (Memorials are read at Saturday Meeting for Worship)
 9:00 - 12:00 Meeting for Business / FUN Program for children
 12:00 - 1:00 Lunch
 1:00 - 3:45 Craft Tent/Recreation for children
 1:30 – 2:15 Worship Sharing
 2:30 – 3:45 Workshops
 3:45 - 6:00 Free time/committee meetings
 5:30 - 6:00 Singing on front porch/Early supper for children, kitchen volunteers
 6:00 - 7:00 Dinner

THURSDAY AFTERNOON AND EVENING:

7:30 - 8:45 Panel of Friends speaking about how Spirit has led them to Answer That of God through their service activities
 7:30 - 9:00 Campfire/Hayrack ride
 9:00 - 9:45 Snacks

FRIDAY AFTERNOON AND EVENING:

1:00 Environmental Concerns Canoe Trip
 3:45 Women's Theology Group Meeting for worship, business and discussion
 7:30 - 10 Dancing on front lawn
 9:00 - 9:45 Watermelon served outside during dancing

SATURDAY AFTERNOON AND EVENING:

4:00 Area Planning Groups meet
 4:30 - 5:30 Variety Show
 7:30 - 9:00 Children's Program (Service Project)
 7:30 - 8:45 Address by Jim Fletcher (AFSC Treasurer)
 9:00 - 9:45 Snacks

SUNDAY

6:30 - 7:30 Early Meeting for Worship
 7:30 - 8:30 Breakfast
 10:00 - 11:00 Plummer Lecture by Margaret Katranides
 11:30 - 12:30 Meeting for Worship
 12:30 - 1:30 Lunch
 1:30 Cleanup and Farewells

Environmental Concerns Committee Canoe Trip

Friday, July 27, 2007
1:00-5:00 P.M.

This canoe trip will take paddlers out into Hennepin and Hopper Lakes, just east of the Illinois River and two miles south of the town of Hennepin. This area is being restored to its wealth of 16 different plant communities that were present before drainage converted this region to agricultural land in the early 1900s. Many species of waterfowl, wading birds, frogs, rare mussels and native water plants are returning to their former abundance under careful management by The Wetlands Initiative.

Rick Siebert, site manager, will accompany us and explain the goals and methods of the project and point to examples of how natural communities have responded.

Canoes will be available for rent from Canoe the Vermilion for a fee of \$40.00 per canoe. Paddles and the required flotation devices will be provided, and the outfitter will give a brief demonstration on controlling a canoe before we start. Those who bring their own canoes are welcome as well. All participants must carry adequate water and are urged to wear wide-rimmed hats and full-coverage lightweight clothing to avoid sunburn. Gardening gloves are recommended for paddlers whose hands blister easily. Polarized sunglasses help avoid water glare. Participants are encouraged to bring binoculars and cameras (don't forget snacks, too).

Very small children, especially those who are unaccustomed to riding in a canoe, should not participate. Older children can ride safely in the centers of canoes but must be able to sit fairly still for several hours.

Participants will experience the exhilaration that comes from physical exertion, but they will also find hope and spiritual refreshment in the potency of nature to respond to well-planned human restorative stewardship.

For those who desire them, small folding canoe chairs for center-riding passengers are available in stores that sell outdoor recreation merchandise.

When registering for Yearly Meeting, on the registration form please let us know the number of adults and children planning to go on the canoe trip, the number of canoes you plan to rent, and the number of canoes or kayaks you plan to bring.

Help Toward the Next Steps of Our Dream

By Cathy Garra

The generosity of IYM Friends has provided the hands-on and financial resources to complete the restoration of our historic meetinghouse and recycle two side buildings into new sleeping options for IYM families and teens. The



IYM committee and volunteers listen to fundraising strategies.



Participants role-play asking a Friend to support the future of IYM.

In mid-April, Site Envisioning and Planning and Development Friends, and additional volunteers, met with Henry Freeman to learn more about effective, ethical fundraising among Friends, to continue the work of realizing our dream of the things that can happen for IYM in new buildings. Henry Freeman is a noted fund raising consultant, and has worked with over 30 Quaker groups.

He was a practical teacher for the work to be done within our family of Friends. Successful fundraising for us involves bringing the community together to come out stronger and having fun along the way, rather than being a power, guilt or status exercise.

combined gifts from eight monthly meetings and 56 IYM families have provided over \$350,000 to the property improvement fund to make this all happen. **Look for a special celebration of the conclusion of this work at our 2007 Session (see back cover)!**

We heard stories of inspiration and stories that point out that fund raising is far from a somber topic. Finally, we started to practice how one can approach a Friend for the support of IYM. Much planning and work lies ahead. We hope you can join us.



An Invitation to Use McNabb

Dear Friends,

The Site Envisioning and Building Committee and the Development Committee invite Friends in Illinois Yearly Meeting and monthly meetings to come to McNabb for your retreats or workshop.

We invite Friends to use the IYM facilities more fully during the year. Our joint committees are excited by this prospect. We, as a committee, are interested in supporting and helping any yearly meeting committee, monthly meeting, or group within Illinois Yearly Meeting if you would like to move forward with this idea.

Our new cabins and renovated Junior Yearly Meetinghouse provide many housing options for Friends during six months of the year — May through October.

We are happy to have these wonderful resources available to Friends in IYM and hope that the buildings will be more fully used more months of the year. The peace and quiet of our Illinois Yearly Meeting site provides a warm atmosphere for Friends gathering.

Holding you in the Light.

Giving to IYM Using U.S. Mail or New Electronic Options

By Dawn Amos

There are now three ways that you may get your IYM contributions to the IYM treasurer.



1. **Electronic Giving:**

For those Friends or monthly meetings who would like to budget their IYM contribution monthly, and save postage and time, we are pleased to offer automated bank drafts. You would fill out a form just one time, and send it to the IYM treasurer. This form would authorize IYM's bank to receive funds from your checking or savings account each month. You would receive an acknowledgment after the first transfer, and then at the end of each calendar year, IYM would send you a receipt and thank-you for your total annual contribution. For now, it is limited to monthly transfers.

This form of electronic giving carries no service charge for IYM, and in our experience there is also no charge to the donor. This has a clear advantage over other forms of electronic payments (such as credit cards) where a percentage of the donation amount is charged for the service. This way, 100% of your contribution goes to work for IYM. You may change or cancel the arrangement at any time, with 30 days' notice.

To get a copy of the form, download it from the IYM web site at <http://iym.quaker.org/ach.pdf> and return the completed form to Dawn Amos at the address in the next paragraph. To receive the form in the mail, call Dawn toll free at 866-262-1625.

2. **U.S. Mail:** Friends may always contribute

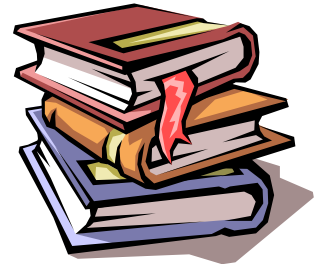
to IYM by sending a check, made out to Illinois Yearly Meeting, to co-treasurer Dawn Amos, 310 Union Grove Rd., IL 62903-7685.

- 3. Bill-Pay:** If Friends have a Bill-Pay service with their checking account, they may use this service. In the Bill-Pay service, you have more instant control over the scheduling of the contribution, and more scheduling options. Bill-Pay service results in a paper check being generated and sent to IYM, whereas the Electronic Giving is a direct bank-to-bank transfer, without a paper check. When using Bill-Pay, you are always asked for an account number. In that box, type IYM donation.

Thank you warmly for your faithful support of Illinois Yearly Meeting!

IYM Religious Education Committee

By Kate Gunnell



IYM Religious Education Committee met for our spring session at Columbia Meeting in Missouri. As we considered our mission to IYM, we reviewed and adapted the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting statement for Religious Ed to our purposes. We include that statement here for your consideration. Further information will be added as we develop these resources.

IYM Religious Education Committee is called to nurture and strengthen the corporate teaching, learning and experience of Friends in Monthly, Quarterly and Yearly meetings. Tasks include:

- Providing resources for curricula and other materials

- Facilitating connections between meetings and resources (people, curricula — Q101, etc.)
- Promoting learning about experiences of Friends — our history, spirituality, testimonies, meetings for worship, meetings for worship with attention to business, community of Friends and organization
- Assisting monthly and quarterly meetings in facilitating Adult and Children's Religious Education programs
- Supporting the ministry of individuals and groups engaged in Religious Education
- Advocating that all Friends engage in lifelong Religious Education

Resources include:

- Book recommendations
- Link to bookstores: <http://www.quakerbooks.org/>
- Repository of contact list (for Q101, Bible Study, Testimonies, Prayer)



The IYM Minute Book

By Chris Jocius

The IYM Religious Education Committee would like to remind people that IYM publishes a Minute Book of the annual session, in both print format as well as online at the IYM website (<http://iym.quaker.org/pubs.html>). The 2006 edition has 100 pages in the print edition.

Besides the minutes of the business sessions, the publication includes epistles written at the meeting, IYM committee reports, each meeting's State of Society report, a record of expenses for the year, and memorials for Friends who have died during the previous year.

Please consider consulting this valuable resource to learn about the wider picture of Illinois Yearly Meeting session and activities on behalf of meetings, members, and attenders.

IYM Back Issues Going Online

By Dawn Amos

The IYM Publications committee, along with additional volunteers, have been publishing older Plummer Lectures and Minute Books on our web site, www.ilym.org. If you have a copy of any such documents on your computer, or if you are proficient with scanning documents into OCR, you too can participate in this work of love.

Contact Dawn Amos at dawn@amoses.net if you can help. And be sure to visit the publications link on the web site frequently, to see what documents are newly published!

**Guide to Terms for Illinois Yearly Meeting Property and Tax Status
To Assist in Consideration of Incorporation and Property Issues
March, 2007 (See 2006 Minute Book, pp. 29-35)**

Trust and Corporation

Original Corporation—Illinois Yearly Meeting was established as a religious corporation, for “religious and school purposes,” in 1875; filed in 1876 in Putnam County, under 1872 enabling legislation. The modern corporation succeeded this in 2004.

Corporation—As directed by a minute of the 2003 business session, IYM incorporated in 4/04 as Illinois Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, under the General Not For Profit Corporation Act of 1986, with the Illinois Secretary of State.

Those signing the original Articles of Incorporation (Minute 42, 8/03) were directed to be: the Clerk, the Assistant Clerk, and the two youngest trustees residing in the State of Illinois. The Treasurer was directed to serve as the Registered Agent.

Registered Agent—IYM correspondent with the Illinois Secretary of State’s office for the annual report of incorporation and a nominal annual payment. The renewal report form, known as the Not-for Profit Corporation Annual Report, is also updated with our current list of officers of the corporation.

Officers—Friends approved by the business session to be listed as the officers of the corporation. The most recent list is to be found in Minute 37, 2006.

Statement of Purpose—An attachment to the Articles of Incorporation explaining Illinois Yearly Meeting to the State of Illinois, with limited Quaker jargon. See p. 32 of 2004 Minute Book.

Bylaws—Method of orderly operations for a corporation, to be filed with the State of Illinois. State statute provides a model for start-up operations. IYM has been governed according to the principles and practice of the Religious Society of Friends. The proposed bylaws reflect this, based on our continuous business sessions and minutes since 1875, supplemented by associated use of Faith and Practice and Handbook documents. Our current draft bylaws are modeled after those of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, with some Illinois-specific requirements added.

Trust—A trust is a device for holding property. IYM established a trust in 1875 for the original meetinghouse land parcel. Later, the campground and the west acre were added to the trust. A trust is laid down when all of its assets are transferred to others. (Note: a totally separate, earlier trust was established and is ongoing for the Clear Creek Cemetery).

Trustees—Those authorized to buy, hold and sell property for the IYM trust. These Friends have been appointed by the business session. The three currently serving are Richard Ashdown, Carol Bartles and Jerry Nurenberg. Helen Jean Nelson was serving as a fourth trustee at the time of her death in 2006. In addition to their legal duties, IYM trustees have provided substantial service in the upkeep of the property. Several trustees have also been asked to serve as officers of the corporation.

Ad Hoc Committee on Transition Issues—established at the 2006 session to examine various issues in the transition from a trustee structure to a corporation structure; currently convened by Tom Paxson.

IYM Structure and Authority

Annual Business Session—Discernment of Divine guidance by the body of Friends present in worship, to serve as the foundation of our Quaker business practice and authority of our organization. Decisions are recorded in

minutes published in our annual Minute Book. The annual business session also serves as the annual meeting of the officers of the corporation.

Faith and Practice (Philadelphia Yearly Meeting 2002); IYM Handbook—Documents distilling our operations and practice as a Yearly Meeting.

Bylaws—Document to be filed with the State of Illinois to guide our orderly process as a corporation, see above section. It does not establish a parallel organization or separate annual meeting outside of our business session, but reflects IYM Quaker practice.

Officers—Nominated by Nominating Committee and approved by the business session. See the IYM Handbook for our current practice. Certain officers are authorized by the business session to serve on the annual list of officers of the corporation.

Monthly and Quarterly Meetings—are separate legal and financial entities from Illinois Yearly Meeting. They hold their own property.

Membership—Monthly meetings are accepted into IYM membership. Friends are members of the Religious Society of Friends and of IYM by being a member of a monthly meeting that is part of IYM. The proposed bylaws use the term “Participating Members” to describe those Friends present in a Quaker business or committee meeting doing the work of IYM.

Authority to Sign Contracts—those positions or named Friends so designated by a minute of the business session, IYM’s choice.

Illinois Governmental Relationships

Illinois Secretary of State—Records our corporation and annual report updates.

Illinois Attorney General—Under State law, registers IYM as a Charitable Organization, since we ask for money. IYM has not yet filed for registration and is overdue (3/07) due to being both a trust and a corporation.

Putnam County—IYM property is located in Putnam County. Property deeds and trust records are on file at the Putnam County Courthouse in Hennepin.

IYM Charitable and Tax Status

Note: Our tax status does not relate to being a trust or a corporation. It relates to being a church.

Church or Religious Organization—In IRS terminology, IYM is a *church*, rather than a religious organization.

Tax Exempt—churches are *automatically considered to be tax exempt*, if they meet the requirements of Section 501.c.3 of the Internal Revenue Code. Much practical advice for churches/meetings can be found in IRS Publication 1828.

Section 501.c.3—the section of the Internal Revenue Code pertaining to tax exempt organization status. A separate “letter ruling” may be applied for at any time. There are pros and cons to this formalization and at present (3/07) we are not pursuing this course of action.

The principles of 501.c.3 requirements are congruent with the purpose and operations of Illinois Yearly Meeting:

- Organized and operated exclusively for religious, educational, scientific or other charitable purposes;
- Net earnings may not inure to the benefit of any private individual or shareholder;
- No substantial part of its activity may be attempting to influence legislation;
- Organization may not intervene in political campaigns;

The organization’s purposes and activities may not be illegal or violate fundamental public policy.

What is a Field Secretary?

By Maurine Pyle

When I tell people that I am the Field Secretary, I can see a glaze come over their eyes and a question arising... "Just what is that anyway?" Here are a few examples of the kind of activity that your Field Secretary performs.

- Custom designing retreats which meet a specific need of a particular meeting. Some samples of past programs are: vocal ministry, prayer, meeting for reconciliation, spiritual journeys, mutual spiritual direction, and visioning the future.
- Providing conflict resolution services to mediate a problem or crisis when the meeting's elders feel stymied.
- Visiting monthly meetings and individual members on an informal basis to see what is happening in their lives. Some might call this pastoral care.
- Attending special events, like the Clear Creek Homecoming and 57th Street Meeting 75th Anniversary, as a friendly connection between IYM and monthly meetings.
- Honoring the passing of our elders by attending their memorial services, when possible.
- Attending Blue River Quarterly or Metropolitan Chicago General Meeting.
- Serving as a listener for elders and clerks around the yearly meeting who want to process a confidential matter.

This is offered as a taste of the Field Secretary's role.

As winter begins to lighten up a bit, give me a call as you plan your activities. I am here to help you. Maurine Pyle, Field Secretary: 847-367-5449

An IYM Family's Service Trip to Kenya

By Dawn Amos

Mark and Dawn Amos of Southern Illinois Monthly Meeting, along with their three daughters (Miranda, 19, Delia, 11 and Marlena, 8) have been accepted to participate on an African Great Lakes Initiative work camp this summer! We are excited and humbled by this opportunity for profound spiritual growth.

What is the African Great Lakes Initiative?

The African Great Lakes Initiative (AGLI) is a program created by the Friends Peace Teams, an organization that supports the traditional emphasis of Quakers in promoting a more peaceful world. AGLI endeavors to break cycles of violence in the Great Lakes region by working at the grassroots level to teach people to resolve their conflicts without violence and to



Work campers will continue building the Peace Center in Lubao, Kenya.

heal the trauma from the years of conflict both on the personal and societal level. AGLI is active in Rwanda, Burundi, Kenya, Uganda and the Congo.

What will the Kenya work camp do? In 2007, work campers will continue building the AVP Peace Center in Lubao. The objectives of the center are to facilitate free dialogue for peace building between local citizens through conferences, debates, meetings, workshops and seminars, and to organize evening and summer courses on peace theology, trauma healing and conflict management and transformation.

What does my contribution support? Your gift allows AGLI to provide the Lubao community and the host, Friends for Peace and Community Development, with: Volunteers who work full-time to help build the Peace Center (including living and transportation costs) -- Building materials -- Volunteer orientation -- and more!

AGLI team members will spend 34 days in Lubao, Kenya during the summer of 2007. It costs \$100 to support a full day of a work camper's service, including building supplies, living expenses, etc. Every \$10 you give allows a work camper to spend another hour serving the Lubao community.

How to Give — Your Contribution is Tax Deductible

Please make checks out to *Friends Peace Teams / AGLI*. Write AMOS/Kenya in the memo line. Checks should be mailed to: African Great Lakes Initiative, Friends Peace Teams, 1001 Park Ave, St. Louis, MO 63104. Gifts up to \$100 may also be donated online via www.aglionline.org, specifying "AGLI/Amos/Kenya" in the "Designate my donation" box.

Thank you for your support and prayers. Mark, Dawn, Miranda, Delia & Marlana

Opportunities:

Young Quakes Conference October 5-8, 2007

High school age Friends from across the United States and Canada are invited to this dynamic conference sponsored by FGC's Religious Education Committee and hosted by New York Yearly Meeting. Young Friends will explore the questions, joys and challenges of living revolutionary faith. Spread the word! Flyers, with further information, are now available at <http://www.quakeryouth.org/calendar/living-a-revolutionary-faith.php>

Quaker Youth Pilgrimage Great Britain and Ireland July 18 - August 15, 2008

The 2008 Quaker Youth Pilgrimage is to take place in Great Britain and Ireland. It will start in Glasgow and will explore Quaker themes in Scotland, England and Ireland between July 18 - August 15, 2008.

The pilgrimage takes place every two years and is organized jointly by the Europe & Middle East Section and the Section of the Americas of FWCC, the world body of Friends. It is an opportunity to promote loving understanding of our diversities within the worldwide Quaker family.

The Pilgrimage will bring together 14 Young Friends (aged 16-18) from the Americas and 14 from Europe with two adult facilitators from each section on a four week journey of exploration. They will come from different cultural, language and theological traditions. During their time together they will experience traveling and learning together and seek to nurture their spiritual lives.

For more information contact Dorothy Day, FWCC Section of the Americas, 1506 Race Street, Philadelphia PA 19102, (215) 241 7250, email qyp@fwccamericas.org.

Volunteer Opportunity in England

By Frank and Julie Young

If you are looking for a volunteer opportunity that involves travel and work with Friends consider the possibility of serving as a “Friend in Residence” (FiR) at Woodbrooke.

Woodbrooke is the Quaker Study Centre in the United Kingdom. It is located near Birmingham in the former family home of the chocolate maker, George Cadbury. Friends in Residence are responsible for worship and welcome at Woodbrooke. They are a resource for Woodbrooke’s visitors, helping to make visits to Woodbrooke enjoyable and productive. For additional information see www.woodbrooke.org.uk.

We were Friends in Residence at Woodbrooke last year for three months. We are returning this year for two months. Being a FiR is real work, but there are many opportunities to interact with visiting Friends. The library at Woodbrooke is an excellent resource for Quaker writings and peace literature. We enjoyed our stay very much. That’s why we are going back this year.

We can be contacted by email at young@cs.rose-hulman.edu. We are still members of Peoria-Galesburg Meeting although we have lived in Terre Haute, IN for the past 20 years. We are still very much involved with Friends. Frank served on various FGC committees for more than 15 years, Julie was on FWCC Section of the Americas back in the 1970s. We worship with Big Island Friends (Hawaii) when we are in Hawaii during the winter months.



Reversing The Climate Crisis: Free Presentations Available

By Carolyn (Wilbur) Treadway

The recently released reports from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, plus Al Gore’s Oscar winning movie, *An Inconvenient Truth*, have awakened many people to the realities of Earth’s current climate crisis and the need for immediate action to reverse it. Seeing this movie last summer left me wanting to act.

From the movie’s action website, www.climatecrisis.org, I learned that Al Gore had committed to training 1,000 “Messengers” to take his climate crisis message across the land at the grassroots level. I applied for this training offered through The Climate Project, www.theclimateproject.org, and to my astonishment and delight was accepted to become one of the 1,000.

Our training by Al Gore, with top climate scientists and environmental educators contributing, was extraordinary. I learned more than I ever wanted to know about the ways climate change is already affecting our planet and will continue to do so. I also learned that we already have the knowledge and technology needed to reverse this climate crisis, if we act now.

As a “Messenger”, I have Al Gore’s slideshow as shown in the movie, plus much more, on my

own computer! As a Climate Project volunteer, I am now available and eager to give free presentations about reversing the climate crisis, and to facilitate discussions afterward. I am interested in presenting to meetings and their communities. Even people who have already seen the movie may want to see its information again, and to discuss it with others.

These presentations are audiovisual. I am the “audio”; the “visual” part is Al Gore’s slides. The short term goal of The Climate Project is to personally deliver this presentation to 1,000,000 people in 2007. Toward this goal, I am dedicated to giving as many presentations as I can.

Might your meeting, or any group you know, be interested in a presentation about our globally, regionally, and locally changing climate? I would very much appreciate your help in referrals to groups and persons who might be interested.

The Environmental Concerns Committee of Illinois Yearly Meeting supports these climate crisis presentations as part of its environmental outreach to all meetings within IYM.

For more information, contact me at 309-454-1328, or email me at my climate-work email address: Carolyn@PlanetCare.us

I will reply to you as promptly as I can. I have chosen this domain name to remind us that care of our planet, our Earth home, our matrix of life, is up to us.

Thank you, hopefully, for your support, invitations, and referrals.

Other reports and book reviews:

Convergent Friends: Reclaiming the Power of Primitive Quakerism in a Postmodern World

By Dawn Amos

This year’s annual meeting of Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC), Section of the Americas, was held in March in Providence, Rhode Island. *Providence* itself was the theme, derived from *2 Corinthians 9:6-15*, which includes the promise “And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.” In daily worship and in small worship sharing groups, this theme engendered a deep, even profound, sense of blessings.

Before saying more about Convergent Friends, I must share another important message from FWCC. The world gathering FWCC Triennial will occur in Dublin this August, and Friends from the global North are asked to share their bounty with international Friends of less means, by contributing to the travel fund so that the Triennial will have the fullest possible global representation of Friends. You may donate online or by mail; the instructions are at www.fwccamericas.org. Be sure to mark your donation for the “Triennial Travel Fund.”

For the sewing, weaving, and knitting Friends reading this, you will be interested in *Peace Through Pieces: Trauma Healing Through Quilt Making*, a ministry undertaken in part by FWCC Friend Patty Federighi and the North Seattle Friends Church, in cooperation with Trauma Healing and Reconciliation Services of Burundi. “Quilters know the silent but powerful statement of concern that the gift of

a quilt can make. It is a very effective way to reach out to someone who is in a stressful situation.” *Peace Through Pieces* offers quilt making as one means of trauma healing for central African women’s support groups, which comprise women who have been raped or otherwise traumatized by the recent genocide wars within central Africa. To learn more about this loving ministry, visit www.peacethroughpieces.org.

So what about Convergent Friends? Convergent Friends are seeking a deeper understanding of our Quaker heritage and a more authentic life in the kingdom of God on Earth, radically inclusive of all who seek to live this life. It is a coming together of many strands of Quakerism, including, among others, Friends from the politically liberal end of the evangelical branch, the Christian end of the unprogrammed branch, and the more outgoing end of the conservative branch.

I attended a workshop on Convergent Friends, where Friends from all four branches participated in a conversation about our common ground. The energy was electric partly because of the excitement of the topic, but also because of the obvious anxiety that comes with venturing across our apparent theological divides. I witnessed Friends getting “prickly” as terms like “new agey” and “fundamentalist” were tossed into the mix. But I also witnessed a real fascination and hope around the concept that we all might in fact find our common ground. In the mathematical sense, “convergence” does not imply unity, but it does mean that several separate strands can come closer and closer together until they are moving virtually in parallel. I encourage you to visit www.quakerquaker.org and click the topic Convergent Quakers to learn more about this exciting development in Quaker spirituality.

FWCC Annual Meeting

By Nancy Wallace

Being one of your IYM representatives to FWCC for the last six years has deepened my spiritual life and my understanding of God. I hope my reports have also helped you, in my yearly meeting, to also understand the significance and meaningfulness of participating in FWCC.

The theme of the 2007 Annual Meeting of the Section of the Americas was from 2 *Corinthians*: “God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance so that by always having enough of everything you may share abundantly...” It was a good theme for a meeting set in Providence, RI. The queries for the worship groups were a bit on the ‘up’ side, assuming that we are all living in abundance. Some of the queries might have addressed those times when we know God is in our lives, guiding us, when we don’t feel like we are living in abundance. We, in my worship group, spontaneously generated our own queries, looking at how God has sustained us during the hard times when we didn’t feel any abundance.

The worship groups and workshops are what I enjoy the most about the Annual Meeting (and meeting with Friends over meals). We do need to handle the business of FWCC as well, and IYM’s own Elizabeth Mertic, is a more than able clerk. She gets the business completed, within time limits and without feeling rushed. Her clerking has been a blessing to FWCC for many years.

The workshop I attended was on Convergent Friends (CF). This is a new idea coming from the blog rooms of young friends and it is spreading. CF seems similar to the work FWCC has done for years but with the technology of the next generation adding a new dimension. CF attempts to bring Friends together to see what we have in common. CF is speaking to young Friends across the traditions,

as many in each of the traditions are seeking the power that the early Friends had that is lacking in all of the traditions due to each taking only a piece of the original. Using the example of parallel lines, they only appear to merge, getting closer and closer, but always maintaining their distinct nature. This points to diversity and connection.

The term Convergent Friends was coined by Robin Mohr, Pacific Yearly Meeting (unprogrammed). She and Wess Daniels (Evangelical Friends Eastern Region), another major contributor to this movement, were presenters at a workshop. If you “Google” the term “Convergent Friends” you will find both of these young friends. These and other similar young friends met at the World Gathering of Young Friends in Lancaster, England two years ago. That gathering has energized a whole generation of Young Friends. Their ways of communicating are far more hi-tech than many of us are accustomed to, hence the blog room for finding one’s spiritual partners. They are seeing what we have in common and it is deepening their spiritual lives. Their goal is not to convert but to get closer to God. Convergence is desired not only from between the different branches of Friends, but also between the generations.

Our keynote speaker was Dr. Bernard Lafayette, Director of Peace and Nonviolence Studies at the University of Rhode Island. After a long day of travel through a snowstorm to New York for a meeting at the UN, he arrived back in Providence to speak on the theme. While he isn’t a Friend, he has been involved with Friends for many years, including working for the AFSC in Chicago. He spoke of being in Selma for that historic event. He spoke of the woman who had come from Detroit, leaving her children, to drive folks to Selma since they couldn’t get there directly. She had driven him to Selma. Later that day the Klu Klux Klan shot her as she drove someone else to the rally. Her blood, flowing over his head, which had landed

in her lap after the car crashed, led the klansmen to think that he also was dead, thus saving his life. Her sacrifice of her life, made generously, continued after her death. We are asked to give generously for God loves a cheerful giver. And when we give generously, God gives to us abundantly.

Olney School

By Grayce Mesner

The Olney school year is coming to an end, and they are looking forward to their commencement weekend, June 1-3, 2007. An interesting offer: they are in the process of ordering new furniture for both dormitories and want people to take home with them a piece or two of Olney history! Free of charge. Any furniture (made on campus by Howard Rockwell Sr., ‘46 back in 1964) people take home will help to save Olney the expense of moving it out of the dorm and disposing of it in some way.

Olney Friends School was the recipient of a \$700,000 bequest in Virginia Metzger’s name. Virginia came to Olney Friends School from Cleveland with her long-time companion, Priscilla Leeds ‘36, who served as Business Manager at Olney Friends School from 1975 until her death in a fatal car accident in 1979. Both women had enjoyed careers in the banking industry in Cleveland before moving to Barnesville. Virginia served as the school’s hostess and manager of the school store during her long tenure at Olney. Although not herself an Olney alumnae, Virginia obviously had a deep love for the school that was her home for many years after Priscilla’s death. This gift is the largest single gift to Olney Friends School since the school’s reorganization in 1999. Some of the funds from this gift will be used to seed the school’s upcoming capital campaign. Some portion of the gift will be used to purchase the new dorm furnishings in both dorms. “We

think that Virginia would be happy to know that her money was going to be spent on making the dorms more attractive and comfortable living spaces,” says Rich Sidwell, Head of School.

Two of the students, new to Olney, have an interesting story. They are both from Ethiopia and are the adopted sons of Dr. Richard Hodes, a U.S. citizen who lives in Addis Ababa. Dr. Hodes is the medical director for the New York-based American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, a relief and rescue operation. At any given time he has a dozen or more Ethiopian children and young adults living with him.

For more information about Olney, visit their website, www.olneyfriends.org, call 740-425-3655, email to mainoffice@olneyfriends.org or write to 61830 Sandy Ridge Rd., Barnesville, OH 43713.

Who Was Jonathan Wright Plummer?

By Maurine Pyle

I have posed that question to many weighty Friends outside of Illinois Yearly Meeting and so far no one has been able to answer. We know about Jonathan Plummer because of the blurb on the back of each Plummer Lecture, the spiritual journey story told by a selected IYM Friend each year. Elizabeth Warren, a member of Lake Forest Meeting, has recently published his biography in her book titled *Jonathan Wright Plummer: Quaker Philanthropy*.

Jonathan Plummer was praised as one of the pioneers of the renaissance of the Society of Friends at the end of the 19th Century. He thought people should act on their faith, a venerated Quaker principle. He brought together seven yearly meetings from Illinois to Philadelphia and New York to devise ways to carry out Quaker testimonies, as they are called. These included urging peaceful relations among

men, giving aid and comfort to the poor and those in prison, helping working women, children, and those needing education. The Quaker opposition to the death penalty for convicted criminals was also on the agenda of the organization he founded, the Friends' Union for Philanthropic Labor. The Union evolved into the Friends General Conference whose work continues today.

Who was Jonathan Plummer? He helped found Illinois Yearly Meeting, founded Friends General Conference and co-founded the World Parliament of Religions. He is someone you should know. To purchase a copy of Betsy's book, contact her at e.c.warren@comcast.net.

New Book from EarthLight for Friends

By Bob Wixom

There are many facets to the environmental concerns that are expressed in magazines, newspapers and books. However, there is a new book, *EarthLight: Spiritual Wisdom for an Ecological Age*, edited by Cindy Spring and Anthony Manousos, 343 pages, published in 2007 by the *Friends Bulletin* (the publication of three western Friends yearly meetings), and *EarthLight* (the magazine of Friends in Unity with Nature Committee, renamed Quaker Earthcare Witness). The editors have selected the key articles of *EarthLight* over its existence (1991-2005).

Should Illinois Friends be interested in “Spiritual Ecology”? Some quotes: “*EarthLight* was founded from a connection within the Friends community that the environmental challenges facing the Earth community are spiritual at their roots. This reality needed to be explored, discussed and more importantly deeply felt, for long lasting

cultural transformation to take place... More than just a theory, spiritual ecology describes a way of being in the world. It is ancient in that peoples have lived it in many times and places. It is contemporary in that it integrates the discoveries of science and a new sense of our evolutionary story. It draws both from knowledge of the ecology of the planet and from deeper sensitivities to the spiritual dimension of the Earth..."

The reader will quickly note the editors' challenge to bring coherence to some 64 earlier articles by distributing them within the book and based on the EarthLight principles — Conscious evolution, Sacred relationship, Collective wisdom, Mutual learning, Conscious choice, Inclusivity and Celebration. Each chapter (or principle) begins with a beautiful, black and white drawing or print, several pithy sentences, several pertinent queries and several concise quotes. Such an introduction inevitably draws the reader into reading the following specific articles.

Many of the authors are familiar to Friends; their text "speaks to our spiritual condition." The well-known authors included are: Thomas Berry, Briane Swinne, Anthony Manousos, Ruah Swennerfelt, Louis Cox, K. Lauren de Boer, Terry Tempest Williams, Thich Nhat Hahn, Keith Helmuth and many others.

The writer, being in academics, enjoyed the above clarity and sensitivity within this book, but also saw the needed appendices: the 1972 UN's Earth Charter and Principles and brief biographies of each author plus their published books. To summarize, this book is highly recommended and should be in meeting libraries. Copies of the book will be at Illinois Yearly Meeting, July 25-29, 2007, for inspection and purchase.

Meeting Reports:

Downer's Grove

By Sue Styer

*Let us build a house where love can dwell and
all can safely live,
A place where saints and children tell how
hearts learn to forgive.
Built of hopes and dreams and visions,
Rock of faith and vault of grace:
Here the love of God shall end divisions:
All are welcome, all are welcome, all are
welcome in this place.*
(Hymn by Mary Haugen, adapted by Diana
Conrad Malon)

Last fall, our architect presented an estimate for the new meetinghouse that was nearly twice as high as our budget. We would need a new set of plans for the cost to meet our budget. Additionally, the change in plans would need to be presented to the DuPage County planning board by March in order not to lose the variance the county granted us. After much consideration, we decided to release our architect and hire the architects who designed the Urbana-Champaign meetinghouse.

This has resulted in a frenzy of meetings to decide on the building plans. These meetings are called "charettes" and are like threshing sessions. The architects listen to our concerns and ideas, and then come back the next time with several renditions for us to consider. Then we take aspects from the various plans and see if we can come up with one idea that we all like.

As of this writing, we are considering a simple L-shaped building in which there is a change of direction when entering the meeting room. We are still considering two roof lines — one is a more traditional gabled roof while the other is a butterfly roof. We need to consider practical matters such as maintenance, light, and snow-load as well as aesthetics. One Friend

commented that as we wait patiently for divine guidance, our experience is that the right way will open and we shall be led into unity.

Lake Forest

By Pam Kuhn

It has been a quiet winter at Lake Forest Friends Meeting. We've been burning the buckthorn we cut last summer to keep warm at heart and are very glad now to see signs of spring.

We did have a wonderful dramatization of the life of Elizabeth Fry with many Friends of all ages involved. We learned how Elizabeth Fry was a good manager and how even rats can be charming when represented by some of our First Day School participants. We have had other theatrical events here and are looking forward to more next year.

Our Peace and Social Concerns Committee showed the movie, *Inconvenient Truth*, in the fall and the movie, *Ground Truth*, in the spring. I guess we are searching for Truth.

In January, our adult discussion group had a lively discussion using Terry Wallace's article in *Friends Journal* about misconceptions of Quaker faith. We didn't always agree with Terry Wallace's answers but had an interesting time considering our own.

We continue to have our spiritual formation groups, a group to nurture leadership, and our monthly potlucks. We've been blessed with wonderfully centered meetings for worship.

Many of us are happily serving on IYM committees and we look forward to being together with all of you this summer.

Oshkosh

Elder's Report 2/07

We have made strides in social activities this year, despite being very busy and spread out

geographically. We been able to do more inter-visitation and have enjoyed more contact with Friends outside of our Meeting. Our members have been able to help more people, both personally and as a meeting. We hope to get more people to conferences and regional meetings that are closer to us geographically this year. We have had a continuing presence at peace activities. We have also kept up with legislative matters and are active in encouraging our legislators to move in directions that are more in keeping with Friendly practices.

We are a small meeting, so we have few committees. This works well as to time spent in conferences and meetings. However this often results in one or two members doing all the work involved in any given activity. This has its benefits and drawbacks and we are handling those relatively well. We draw together whenever possible for major activities, but try to be understanding when personal issues or our very busy lives keep that from happening. We are handling the social side of meeting better than we have in the past.

Spiritually, our meeting had some ups and downs this year. Having a mix of very new members and very old members is a difficult transition in a small meeting. We have had unexpected reactions to some things. While we have had classes and have attempted to educate new members in what it means to be a "Quaker" we continue to work on the process.

All involved need to practice the re-evaluation of both our practices and our faith that have always been characteristic of Friends on both a personal and meeting level. This continual re-examination of both ourselves and our motives and our meetings and their practices is one of the things that makes the Society of Friends different from other churches and business groups and ensures our integrity and growth of the Spirit.

There are major spiritual reasons for the Quaker historical practices that take the time for letting even the smallest decisions be illuminated by the Light. Sometimes we do not do that; we just make decisions like any other church or business meeting would. There is a tendency to

assume that because we are Friends and trying to do good our decisions are of the Light. The Light is not a hall light that gets turned on once and continues to burn without being tended all week. It doesn't shine on our activities unless we seek and make room for it at all times. We need to practice taking matters to the Light more, both individually and "corporately." We are sure to get this practice over time but we need to actively look for and find ways that decrease reaction but improve our application of the Light. We tend to find ourselves in limited-time situations and we need to be ready and willing to let the Light determine appropriate actions, not human urgency, deadlines, or emotions. Traditionally for Friends, this starts with self-examination by the individual member of his or her own actions, reactions and assumptions. Once these are in the Light, decisions and our care for our fellow members is more appropriate. It is important to remember that conflict makes for perceptions that another person is "difficult," or argumentative, which usually means that our own Light needs tending. We need to center our lives around the Light more, even though we are all busy people and our lives are often crowded — to not do things as others do them without thinking about it because it saves time or effort, or "has always been our practice." The Light must be the center — not a pleasant side affect of our human desires or actions. While remaining open to innovation, we need to review our principle of simplicity and to remember to practice it, both within and out of the meeting itself. Our practice and beliefs must merge more.

We are in a continuing period of change and have dealt with much of it in a very human fashion. While this is not bad and has served to accomplish much, we do need to renew our faith and practices that encourage the growth of the Light, and to move them to our everyday lives. This involves nurturing each other and being very careful to encourage the Light and examine all of our actions for its presence. Our meetings and associations are all based on the individuals working together and we need to be balanced in the Light or that does not happen in an enduring way, no matter how much good might be intended by or be result of our actions. To be a Friend we need to remember to seek

and follow the Light, wherever it leads rather than practice being a Friend and hoping that the Light will follow.

Peoria-Galesburg

By Elke Narkiewicz

We have moved our meeting place from Galesburg to Monmouth, as most of our members live in Monmouth now. In the fall we had a very helpful visit from our Field Secretary Maureen Pyle to help us explore how to grow both inwardly and outwardly in our meeting. We have since put our names in six area newspapers. This has generated interest from a few people, and our clerk has been approached by people in town, curious about us. As a result of being in the paper we were also invited by the Knox County Peace and Justice Coalition in Galesburg to speak to them about the Quaker response to war. Carol Bartles of Clear Creek Meeting graciously agreed to speak on our behalf, as a long-time Friend and member of the AFSC board. Carol introduced the group—largely unfamiliar with Quakers — with Friends' values and practices, then discussed Quaker service, the importance of discernment of leadings, and how Quakers approach these decisions individually, not corporately. She gave a history of AFSC's work over the past 90 years, which was quite compelling. The presentation was well-received, appreciated, and enjoyed.

We have business meeting the second First day of each month, followed by a warm meal together, and plan to start a discussion group each fourth First day. We will select a discussion packet from Friends General Conference to help us learn more about each others' spiritual journey. We hope to put an invitation in area papers for seekers to join us. Nora Vera-Godwin from Keokuk, IA, has been joining us for worship monthly and we have enjoyed her presence greatly.

We have two children in our meeting (ages 2

and 4 ½) and take turns during meeting to give each other a chance for worship. Our children love this special time with people from our meeting and they are getting to know each other well. First Day school with our 4 ½ year-old is catch-as-catch-can, but plans are in the works to have a more organized curriculum. In our newspaper ads, we are welcoming children, so we want to be prepared if children should come to meeting.

South Bend

By Denise Thompson-Slaughter

South Bend Meeting was fortunate to have another reason for rejoicing this spring, as John Kindley and Julie Ferrar married on April 1st in our meeting space at the Charles Martin Center. We can report also that Kally Thierry, the refugee from Chad who was being housed by Monica Tetzlaff and Brad Laird, has found a job and his own living space. Thanks to all who contributed to Thierry's initial support and held him, Brad, and Monica in the Light during this transition.

We are sorry to lose Martha Turner to the big city of Chicago; however, we certainly understand the attraction of the move for her. Before she moved, she had already accepted the clerkship of the Metropolitan Chicago General Meeting of Friends, gathering Quakers from all monthly meetings in the Chicago region for worship, spiritual nurture, fellowship, and service. (You can subscribe to their list-serve by e-mailing mcbgmquakers-subscribe@yahoo.groups.com.)

The meeting is also sad to lose Cheryl and Matt Hutchinson, who will be moving out of state with daughters Corinne and Claire, also for employment reasons. Best of luck, guys! We have also been missing Dan Hungerman and Laura Batt, who have been temporarily in Massachusetts for a semester, but we look forward to their imminent return.

The meeting is preparing for our second retreat, which will be held at Friedenswald in Michigan on the first weekend in May. The theme for this retreat will be Quaker service in healing the world. In March, many of us enjoyed a trip to the movies after meeting to see the film *Amazing Grace*. Afterwards, however, en route to a local coffee shop with a few other members, long-time Friend Marty (Verna) Neidigh slipped on the sidewalk and broke her shoulder. She is on the mend, but shoulder injuries are slow, and I know she will appreciate all who hold her in the Light.

Urbana-Champaign

By Mariellen Gilpin

Urbana-Champaign Meeting is in a state of relative good health and spiritual vigor. Maurine Pyle, IYM Field Secretary, and Martha Turner, IYM representative from Ministry and Advancement committee, presented a workshop on vocal ministry in the fall. Friends shared their hesitations about delivering vocal ministry, and participated in an extended period of worship. A number of ministries came forth in that time, and since the workshop there has been more ministry in our midst. Maurine expects to return March 10 to present a workshop on outreach, and another on prayer and discernment April 29. We look forward to her return.

We have had a number of reasons to ask for prayers: Eli Nathaniel Hannah, Chris Baker, Terri Mittenthal, Don Chenoweth, Reuben Golden-Trist, and Merlin Taber had health challenges this winter. We first instituted a prayer circle when Eli Hannah was born, and Sarah Jacobs, an inquirer, came to prayer circles. Prayer circles became times for sharing of soup and conversation as well as concerns. At our silent retreat in January, we took turns holding sick Friends in the Light throughout the retreat.

We successfully completed a mortgage

challenge, leaving us only \$4,000 left to pay on our mortgage. The Spirit moved at our “Meeting for Brainstorming,” held to decide our spending priorities, and we later approved a mission statement for meeting. One Friend was so inspired at the “Meeting for Brainstorming” she went home and wrote a letter requesting membership. Deborah Jadhav, Kim Thoren, Barbara Kessel, and Charlotte Green have all become members. We have two new birthright Friends, Eli Nathaniel Hannah and Evan Carter Ching, and a number of new young attenders. One of our disaffected Friends has returned, and we continue to hope the others will return eventually.

We approved a brochure welcoming lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Friends, and approved the word *marriage* for both same sex and different sex ceremonies of commitment. Business meetings have been reflective, mutually supportive, even (dare we say it?) efficient: on three memorable occasions, business meeting concluded in 40 minutes.

Religious Education has childcare on 2nd and 4th Sundays, and Quaker programming on other Sundays. Our Tween Friends had a party, just hanging out and getting to know each other better. We had a game night and pizza party, and we also decorated the Christmas tree and had a potluck, for which the Tweens made soup. We had a Christmas Eve carol sing and candlelight worship. RE arranged a friendly dance March 9. These occasions for intergenerational fun mean all ages know each other better now. New life, new faces, and new efforts for the betterment of our society proceed in Urbana-Champaign Meeting.

Thoughtful Reflections:

Simplicity’s Complexity

By Maurine Pyle

The simple life is not so simple. The simple life

is a life examined. The first step of the journey into simplicity’s complexity is to awaken.

Begin by asking questions about your life. Who am I now? What is the hallmark of my present life? Is this how I would like to be remembered? Is this the life God intended for me?

Most of us are living unconsciously. Rarely asking why. Making decisions on the basis of what is safe, what makes the most sense at the moment? But surely God breathes spirit into us for greater purpose than our own security. To seek simplicity is to begin asking searching questions at every turn in the road.

Many people remember Quakers only for their simple clothing and simplified speech of “thee” and “thou.” Although we no longer live apart from the world or “behind the hedge,” as they used to say, most of us are beset with the same complications of lifestyle so common in the 21st century.

I believe that telling stories of our Quaker forebears can help us to unravel the conundrum of how to live simply today. As we hear how they coped with the complexities of their lives, we can be aided in finding a simpler way in our own.

Let us consider the life of one 18th century Friend, John Woolman, who was born in 1720 in New Jersey. He was a steady sort of man who earned his living as a clerk and a tailor. Since he was a careful scribe, he was often hired to draw up important documents such as wills and bills of sale. Soon he found that his conscience would not allow him to include slaves among the property to be conveyed or bequeathed. John Woolman believed that people should not own other people.

He refused to wear clothing dyed with indigo because slave labor was used to produce it. Eventually he was called upon by God to labor with slave-owning Quakers, to minister to them

that slave ownership was out of God's order. He traveled extensively on horseback to Friends meetings, once making a single journey of 1,500 miles in only three months.

His actions resulted in the voluntary manumission of slaves by American Quakers without violent conflict and nearly 80 years before the Emancipation Proclamation.

Woolman's words remind us – "May we look upon our treasures, the furniture of our houses and our garments and try whether the seeds of war have their nourishment in these our possessions." When he refers to the "seeds of war," he means seeds of strife, of conflict, of jealousy, and self-centeredness. By first examining his own actions and possessions, by looking for the seeds of war in his own life, John Woolman came into a new awareness of the world he lived in and acted upon it.

By searching his own heart and gently asking other Quakers to do the same, he taught that owning slaves was an unmitigated evil. Listen to his voice once more: "That we turn all the treasures we possess into the channel of universal love becomes the business of our lives."

Gazing upon the lives of great men and women provides us with much needed role models, yet we often feel overwhelmed by their accomplishments. Secretly we counter in our own minds with an inner dialog – "But they did not have families to care for...those were simpler times...my life is simpler than my neighbors." We begin the clever game of talking ourselves out of examining our lives.

Elaine Prevalet, a Catholic author, says that we will have difficulty viewing simplicity directly. She suggests a metaphor. When we look up into the night sky to try and see the constellation called the Pleiades, seven stars in a circle, we will have a fuzzy view unless we catch it from the corner of our eye. She suggests that likewise

we will do better looking at simplicity with a sideways glance.

In our humanness we may be tempted to address the issue of simplicity by focusing only on our possessions, but we will find ourselves no nearer the center by starting there. Look inside of yourself first and pose this question – "What is the boundary of enough?"

What is driving my choices? Is it anxiety? — "I may not have enough to feel safe." Or is it desire? — "There can never be enough." These are strategies designed to fend off death. Isn't it really fear of one kind or another that pushes us into patterns of consumption?

One of the most ignored messages of Jesus is: "Do not worry about the food and drink you will need in order to stay alive or about the clothes for your body. After all, isn't life about more than food and isn't the body worth more than clothes?" Jesus is asking us to release our worries. He knows that we need certain things. He also knew that if we become overly concerned with winning and getting that there would be very little time spent tending to the spiritual life.

Jesus and all of the wisdom teachers knew how human we truly are. We seek security and continuity in all that we do. Jesus asks us instead to turn our hearts to the kingdom and not turn back. As followers of the Light, are we prepared to follow him wholeheartedly?

A few years ago, I asked myself a question: "How would my life be different if I began to live in harmony with God's purpose?" Opening my heart to God's greater purpose has caused a wave of change in my life. Waiting and listening have replaced deciding and acting. I am astonished at the new ways in which I live my daily life.

Let me give you a concrete example. Many years ago, as part of a divorce settlement I was

forced to relinquish my car. The thought of trying to live in a suburb without a private car made me feel ill at first. I felt impoverished, worrying about how I would accomplish even the simplest tasks. One Saturday morning during a snowstorm I sat pondering how I would even manage to get some groceries. Walking was impossible in such weather. At that very moment the doorbell rang. On the doorstep appeared my neighbor Carmen and her daughter Bianca. She said the most amazing thing to me — “Remember, Maurine, if you ever need a ride to the grocery, you only have to ask.”

Thank you, God, for reminding me that all I have to do is ask. Humility leads to simplicity. Mutual need leads to community.

I have always said that my life’s work is building community. Now I build community by depending upon the kindness of others. God knew best how to draw out my gift by asking me to be in need of community. I have experienced the loving arms of God undergirding my life in so many ways. For me, simplicity has been grounded in faith in God and in community.

There was once another famous community of simple-livers called the Shakers. Let us close by singing their hymn, *Simple Gifts*.

*Tis the gift to be simple, tis the gift to be free,
Tis the gift to come round where we ought to be
And when we find ourselves in the place just
right,
We will be in the valley of love and delight.*

*When true simplicity is gained,
To bow and to bend we shall not be ashamed.*

*To turn, to turn will be our delight,
Till by turning, turning, we come round right.*

Blue River Quarterly, Illinois Yearly Meeting
2007

Probing the Nature of Faithfulness

By Bob Wixom

Faithfulness, according to Webster’s Dictionary, is, “the quality or state of being faithful.” Faithful has five descriptions in Webster, but being in a religious group, faithful has limits to “a belief in the message and promise of God,” or “a true and constant affection or allegiance.”

Faithfulness leads to worship and then to prayer. George Fox described an aspect of prayer that relates to being faithful, “Be still and cool in thy own mind and spirit from thy own thoughts, and then thou will feel the principle of God, to turn thy mind to the Lord, from whom strength comes, whereby thou mayest receive his strength and power to allay all blistering, storms, and tempests. That is it which works into patience, into innocence, into soberness, into quietness up to God with his power. . .”

Another aspect of belief is that when practiced over a long period of time, faithfulness leads to convictions and then to commitments. George Fox was close to expressing this. Howard Thurman’s thoughts are also related. “The meaning of commitment as a discipline of the body is not far to seek. The theme is ancient, as old as self-consciousness in the life of man. It is part of the wisdom of the body. At the core of life, it is a determination to live. Life poses the conditions, the discipline essential to survival. We are alive and sustained by the characteristic vitality, the life, of all living things...”

Faithfulness grows with patience and devotion to God. William Penn (1688), from imprisonment in the Tower of London, wrote, “The great business of man’s life is to glorify

God and save his own soul. This is the decree of heaven, as old as the world. But man pays least attention to what is most important... He chooses instead to dedicate his days to gratify the pride, greed, and luxury his heart... If this is thy condition, my counsel to thee, is to retire into thyself and take a view of the condition of thy soul. Christ has given thee light with which to do it. Search carefully and thoroughly. Thy soul is at stake.”

Faithfulness may have a coherent, inner consistency of direction, or for some individuals be a rambling, surprise event(s). What is paramount is the nature of one’s response. Augustine Baker, the 17th century Benedictine monk in his classic, *Holy Wisdom*, captured the concise thought, saying, “Mind your call, that’s all in all.” Douglas V. Steere enlarges on this thought, saying, “To understand the Christian religion with all of its widely varying forms of worship and expression — its mystical, its propheting, its mutual caring, its outreach to the world’s needs one must return to the Divine Love at the heart of things that undergirds us all, and, above all, one must realize that we are not in this alone. The Christian saints and apostles would reject artificial distinctions and maintain that, “knowledge had a place, but that in the religious realm, it could never precede commitment. They have been realists in the inward realm...and recognize... the part in our lives played by the senses, the imagination, the habit mechanisms, as well as the emotional and volitional apparatus.”

Faithfulness is answering the message of God. Whoa, that is an overstatement! Faithfulness is seeking, hearing, and answering God’s messages. Seeking and hearing includes quiet prayer, shared silent worship and verbal insights

of others. Answering may be responding constructively to a deep social problem, following a persistent call of conscience, or living a life pattern of devotion, reconciliation and love for your fellow human beings. Yes, faithfulness may be both direct for some, and complex for others.

Faithfulness may be a wonderful expression of confidence, of inner joy and a sense of direction, but sometimes the costs of discipleship are heavy. Elton Trueblood writes that, “Christianity gives much to its adherents, but it is always perverted when presented as a success story. The gospel may do a great many things for us, but it is deeply misunderstood if interpreted as a psychological instrument. Instead, it is a relationship which begins with a dangerous and uncalculating commitment.” Such a background has led many Christians to prison for their beliefs and some have been sacrificed as martyrs.

Faithfulness, when pursued at length in search of God, has a reciprocal quality. To my mind, no one has expressed this aspect clearer than Francis Thompson in *The Hound of Heaven*:

I fled Him down the nights and down the days;
I fled Him down the arches of the years;
I fled Him down the labyrinthine ways;
Of my own mind, and in the midst of tears...
Rise, clasp My hand, and come!
Ah, fondest, blindest, weakest,
I am He Whom thou seekest!
Thou drawest love from thee,
Who drawest Me.

Thus in leaving the dictionary, the expressions of Friends on the meaning of and search for faithfulness includes: deep worship with commitments and eternal values, a careful continuing search for lasting truth(s), and to “mind your call.

Kenya/Can you/Will we?

By Brad Ogilvie

Beautiful Country

Hard Country

Dead dog on the roadside, killed by a car

Dead Child on the roadside, killed by a car

People Standing

People Staring, No sign of an ambulance

Witnessing doesn't change the truth

It changes your truth

About the world as it is

So, as we return

To our world of healthclubs

of coffee shops

of playdates,

of resorts, vacations, and therapy

and massages and healing arts

How do we never forget

That we are one world

That Kenya exists everyday

But not only in Kenya,

at home as well.

People die from AIDS at home

People acquire HIV at home

And we say "but it's Africa that matters"

We now are the Kenyans of America

Waiting, watching

For the ambulance that doesn't come.

How do we become that ambulance

That responds to that child of humanity that we
all see

That is lying at our feet.

But instead, we look away

we analyze and study

We gaze overseas or deep within

Never realizing we see the same thing

Never making the connection

that when we start from afar

or deep within, and don't look between

we must sidestep the child

That is lying at our feet.

How did that child get there?

Who is this child?

Was he a boy, or was she a girl?

Was he gay or was she straight?

Would she have been a doctor

or would he have been a drug addict?

If I could have prevented this,

would it matter?

Should it matter, if

I can stop another child from lying dead at my
feet?

To look in horror,

To look away,

To shake our heads,

To say "That's another world" or "That's not
my concern"

Will not do.

We cannot save this dead child at our feet.

It is the next one, and the next one

That matter now, in Kenya, in Chicago, in Salt

Lake, in Wheaton

So that we no longer stand and stare at the dead
child

That is lying at our feet.

This was written on Wednesday, January 24,
2007 in Kericho, Kenya on the return trip from
Buchifi to Nairobi. The first six lines are actual
scenes, not metaphors.

To learn more about our work in Kenya and in
the United States, please visit our website at
www.mosaicinitiative.org.

