

(Continued from page 15)

Young, Janice Domanik's mother, and Tom Underhill, husband of Janet Means Underhill.

Members continue to cook and serve meals to those in need through PADS (Public Action to Deliver Shelter). Friends serve on numerous committees and attend workshops and retreats—local, statewide, and national—and work hard to learn and spread ideas of simplicity and nonviolence.

Our Meeting is blessed with an active, committed, and a creative group of First Day School teachers. In addition to hearing from each of the First Day School classes at the rise of each meeting, we are often treated with songs, written work, and presentations by individual classes or the First Day School as a whole. Most recently we were treated to a pageant that retold the story of how God created the earth and all living things in seven days. Using simple yet incredibly imaginative props, children pantomimed the events, for example, the division of land and water (pulling two brightly colored shawls apart) and the creation of animals (a wonderful parade of children dressed as all manner of critters, including butterflies and beetles).

Adults (who hardly ever dress up as bugs in their classes) continue to have lively book discussions at their pre-Meeting class. This year we have discussed *Listening Spirituality, Volume II*, by Patricia Loring and *Unconquerable World* by Jonathan Schell. The book chosen for fall reading is *Plain Living: A Quaker Path to Simplicity* by Catherine Whitmore. We have had a wide range of forums as well. Forums, which are sometimes held after Meeting for Worship or on other days of the week and are always accompanied by great potluck meals, have included discussions on focusing and listening, a Quaker perspective on mental illness, and a presentation by the Midwest Workers Association (MWA) of their efforts to support the working poor of Chicago. Peace and love to you all.

Northside Friends Meeting

A Retreat

Morning light pours in the windows, spilling over carpet, illuminating the shoes across from me, gray shoes. The shoes, the carpet pattern, all hazy, viewed through my lash's curtain, through lidded eyes: I'm in Meeting for Worship. The air pulses with energy, energy amplified through the eldery gifts of Kenneth Sutton and the deep centering gifts of Marlou Carlson. We Gather.

As elongated windowpane shadows drift across the floor of the Meeting Room at 57th Street Meeting House, Kenneth leads 40 Northside Friends on a journey, relating Quaker history to concepts and to queries, fulfilling the purpose of our Sabbath Year: "...to deepen our spiritual life, ground ourselves in Faith and Practice, to seek a deeper fellowship and to encourage holy encounters among NFM Friends." So, over time, we become able to answer, "What does it mean to be a Friend at NFM?"

Inquisitively, I watch the gray shoes moving in and out, keeping time – sometimes carefully stepping down to the kitchen for coffee and fellowship – sometimes tapping anxiously against the soft blue of the heavily patterned parlor sofa. Moving. Resting. Marking the absorbing pace of the day.

Every so often I catch sight of the gray shoes, and hear snippets:

- "These are the gifts I see in you..." is lovingly whispered, during a small group activity.
- "To me, holding you in the Light means..." is drifting down the hallway, tailing an impromptu discussion.
- "I'm not sure that I believe God's responsible for all that exists..." is stridently offered, during Friendly Bible study.

Too early, stark white dust motes are revealed in the long light of day's end, heralding the

close of our Retreat. The beginning of my renewal.

I'm wiped. I'm energized.

What's Important

So, what is it that we at Northside Friends Meeting want to tell our IYM f/Friends about this Retreat? Each Friend at Northside has a reality to share, so I can't say for sure; but, here's a guess!

Many Northsiders might want you to know that today's been a day of listening to hearts behind words, diverse opinions spoken in a safe space. That we are beginning to see one another's gifts. That we continue to remain unclear on important issues, feel disunity. That we wonder if we can be in love with those in our Meeting - for Kenneth reminded us, "...to love one another you will be my friends."

What do I want you to know?

I want you to know how thankful I am for God's gifts as evidenced by folks from Oak Park helping with children's programming and childcare. And that 57th Street opened its doors to shelter our bodies, our souls. And that the Sabbath Year committee members look exhausted. And that some of us ask, "What can I do for my Meeting? And that others of us ask, "What can my Meeting do for me?" And that some of us are fearful and some of us are waiting; some are present and some are absent; many seem hopeful and many seem healed, as the weight of our Meeting comes to rest on our shoulders.

What remarkable blessings.

And I think you might want to know that 20 people attended newly launched Friendly 8's. That book discussion groups are in the making.

That Quakerism 101 is kicking off with 8 participants. That twice monthly Query Talks are now held upon rise of meeting for worship. Each a time to come together to worship, honor and better know one another – according to his or her measure, according to his or her life's schedule.

I wonder, "By the end of twelve months will we be done?" "What does done look like?"

Hmmm. I don't know.

I do know I can make personal decisions, discern: "How close do I want to get to the flame of my Meeting?"; "Am I defining my personal Sabbath Year so I get what I need?"; "Can I arrive more prepared?"; "What does it mean to be a Friend at NFM?"

I do know I will continue to show up, for the best is yet to come!

If you are led to join us, through reading more details of our Sabbath Year journey, you are invited to contact our Sabbath Year Committee

Clerk Tom Dix and he'll send you our Sabbath Year Information Packet (847.328.3610).

God, how I love being a Quaker!

Rock Valley Friends

By Brent Eckert

Rock Valley Friends are continuing to deal with the loss of long-time member Bob Bell. In a meeting as small as Rock Valley the loss of one Friend makes a great difference. Brent Eckert has taken over the duties of treasurer which Bob had performed previously. Over the summer several Friends helped clean up tree and brush debris on Bob's property, caused by a violent storm that hit Rockford on July 5. We are in contact with Dane, Bob's son, and Dianna,

"...many seem hopeful and many seem healed, as the weight of our Meeting comes to rest on our shoulders." — Northside

Bob's companion, as they are dealing with the disposition of the property.

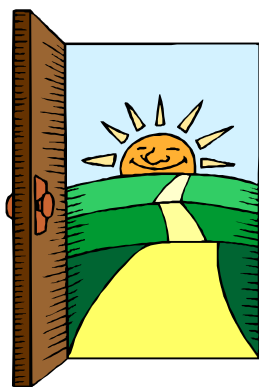
The Meeting has renewed its focus on supporting Friends House Neighborhood Center, the organization that Friends and other like-minded friends formed nine years ago to take over the ownership of the property on Avon St. and to carry on the mission of running programs for neighborhood youth. Three Rock Valley Friends are on the board of directors now and several of us volunteer time on maintenance of the property and helping out with the after-school program. Ann Eckert has taken on a major role in teaching arts and crafts and helping the Center function in general.

Rock Valley member Adah Manby will be traveling to Hebron (on the West Bank) as a participant in a Christian Peacemaker Teams delegation Nov. 20 through Dec. 2. At 82 years old she is very healthy and active and looks forward to "carrying her weight" as a member of the delegation. We pray that her journey be safe and her witness be true!

Brent Eckert participated in the Rockford CROP Hunger Walk again this fall as a representative of the Meeting.

St. Louis Monthly Meeting

By Sheila Ruth



There are many new faces in our Meeting. While we have lost some long-time Friends to death and to people leaving the area, we have had an increasing number of requests for membership. Several new babies and children liven the atmosphere and help focus us on the future. Our First

Day school has been active in developing new programs and arrangements to meet the needs of different age groups, particularly infants.

We still struggle with our finances. The ongoing expenses of our new meeting house are a challenge, as are the costs of necessary tuck pointing and acoustical work, but we manage with the aid of various programs — sale for service, after meeting lunches, and so on — and the support of Friends. We hope also to alleviate some of the burden of our mortgage through refinancing and reducing various expenditures.

In the community our members have been active. Concerns for violence in the middle east, Africa, and at home continue to draw many of us to international, national, and local peace and justice movements. Friends have participated in various peace groups, conscientious objector counseling, a local drive for better relations between the police and the community, and in activities for justice among diverse minority groups, to name a few.

We continue to maintain a presence among the Lakota in Pine Ridge, South Dakota, and in La Mesa de Abajo in Mexico. For the past year we have been actively supporting Quaker schools in Burundi, Africa. After a trip to Burundi, some of our members sought and received permission from the Meeting to raise funds for the schools, which is accomplished through a variety of means, including donations, food sales, and "Burundi Sundays" once a month. A narrated video of Burundi and the schools was created for the African Great Lakes Initiative. It has been shown around the world and can be obtained from David Zarembka of the AGLI through our Meeting.

The issues of sexual diversity and race relations have been a prominent focus among us. We seek ways to attract a more diverse community to our Meeting and ways to be more visible in our support of various groups. Several of us marched in the Martin Luther King Day Parade, and we have had worship sharing sessions around our understanding of difference and our attitudes toward race. We participated in the St. Louis Gay Pride Day activities, and programs

have been planned by our Lesbian and Gay Concerns Committee to educate the Meeting on transgendered and bisexual men and women.

Our representative to the St. Louis Interfaith Partnership this year worked with the group to try to block passage of legislation to permit the carrying of concealed weapons in Missouri. Having not been successful, the group is considering serving as plaintiff in a legal challenge of the new law. The Partnership also sought to bring greater attention to health care issues, particularly the plight of the uninsured and the underinsured. To build bridges across religious divides in the metropolitan area, four interfaith dialogue groups are sponsored, each of which meets monthly. This past summer a second Friend became involved with the Partnership by being appointed to its Public Issues Committee.

Within the Meeting efforts are ongoing to deepen our spiritual lives and to strengthen us as a community. We strive to keep alive our “Friendly Dozens” and “Spiritual Directions” programs, which are fewer in number this year. Several events throughout the year have attracted lively attendance — the New Year’s Eve Watch, Easter breakfast, Attenders Dinner, and this year we had two special celebrations, one to honor our dear Eldora Spiegelberg on her birthday, and one to rejoice in our young attenders, the new babies and children.

To deepen our understanding of Quaker process, our Ministry and Caring Committee sponsored a workshop on clerking and Friends’ manner of decision making, facilitated by David Finke of Columbia Meeting. The Meeting also revived the use of Queries in monthly meetings for business.

In early October, John Calvi once again returned to St. Louis to lead another workshop,

“Schlepping the Light: Becoming an Old Quaker Smoothie,” which was very well received.

Old voices and new blend in the vocal ministry in our meetings for worship. There is a balance of inward and outward concerns as we seek guidance and wait upon the Light.

Urbana-Champaign Meeting

By Mariellen Gilpin

The new meeting house is proceeding in an exciting way — the walls are closed in and the roof is on now. The windows have to be specially made, and they haven’t arrived yet, so it’s still a bit drafty for the workmen on these cool fall days. The company that was going to supply the siding and trim will not be able to fill

our order after all, so the meeting gathered after worship October 5 to pick new earth-tone colors from a different manufacturer. The contractor says there are too many ifs for him to give us a date for completion of the meeting house, but things are looking promising.

“The new meeting house is proceeding in an exciting way — the walls are closed in and the roof is on now.” — UC Meeting

Lidia Geiser told us in Switzerland it is the custom for the owner of a house under construction to prepare a lunch for the carpenters. We thought it was such a good idea that several Friends donated money and food for a nice meal in the worship space on a lovely September day. Merlin Taber and Lidia Geiser masterminded the party, and several Friends turned out as well as the crew of carpenters. Everyone enjoyed the meal of roast chicken, Swiss potato salad, sliced fresh tomatoes, vegetarian baked beans, ice cream bars and cherry pie.

Our Peace Bazaar will be held on December 6. Annually co-sponsored by Friends, Community United Church of Christ, and Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, the Peace

Bazaar sells UNICEF cards and gift-quality castoffs. We raise about \$3000 and distribute the money to eight different peace and justice organizations. This year the recipient organizations will be four international organizations: Doctors Without Borders, Heifer Project International, Ploughshares, and NISGUA, the Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala. Four local organizations include: BOAST Academy after-school program, El Centro por los Trabajadores, Independent Media Center (public information and radio work), and St. Jude Catholic Worker House. Joan Nelshopp is our fearless leader for this 33rd annual Peace Bazaar.

The annual Christmas party will be in December. The last couple of years we've arranged to use a lounge in Wesley Foundation for this party. Maybe this year we can hold the party in the new meeting house. Stay tuned!

Blue River Quarterly Meeting:

Peace Statement Adopted by Blue River Quarterly 4/12/2003

Blue River Quarter of Illinois Yearly Meeting, Religious Society of Friends, believes that every person is a child of God. Therefore, we affirm the worth and dignity of every human being. For 350 years the Religious Society of Friends has rejected war as a means of promoting security and advancing the cause of the good. We devote our energies to working for peace and justice among persons and nations.

Highlights of Fall Blue River Quarterly Meeting

By Scott Searles

About 30 adults and 3 children had a delightful weekend with great fellowship, good meals, delightful weather, and a well-attended business meeting at Camp DuBois for the fall 2003 Blue River Quarterly Meeting (BRQ) on September 26-28, 2003. Plans were set up for a summer float trip in central Missouri this summer, coordinated by David Wixom and Mark Amos. We had a report of an on-site visit last summer of Project Lakota by Bobbi Trist and Ellen Baranowski, showing continued need to support that project. A proposal to arrange for some of the Lakota to visit IYM this summer was made and will be taken up at Spring BRQ. David Zarembka showed an extremely interesting video showing the dancing therapy and other activities and conditions involving AGLI (African Great Lakes Initiative which is a major program of Friends Peace Teams) in Rwanda, the video having been made last summer by Julie Paxson.

Other reports:

What Next for Peace? FWCC Midwest Regional Gathering

By Dawn Amos



Imagine a meetinghouse quite similar to our McNabb building, only fifty years older and replete with a balcony to hold hundreds of attenders during the 19th century. The Miami Meetinghouse in Waynesville, Ohio is the oldest one in continuous use this side of the Alleghenies, and its pendulum clock seems as loud as a snare drum during worship!

The Midwest Region of the Friends World Committee for Consultation, Section of the Americas, held a workshop on September 20, 2003 at this meetinghouse northeast of Cincin-