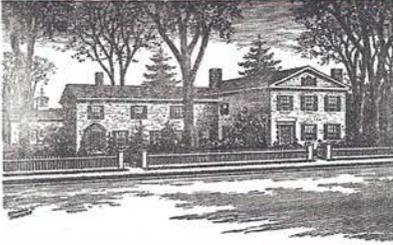


October 2016i

## NEWSLETTER



173 N. PROSPECT ST. BURLINGTON VERMONT 05401

# Burlington Friends Meeting

## How can we make the BFM Meeting House and property more sustainable?

ON OCTOBER 2nd, there will be a pot luck and community meeting to discuss what the Meeting has done and could do in the future to make the property more sustainable. Members of the Property Committee, the Finance Committee, Peace, Justice & Earthcare and Ministry & Council will be there and, hopefully, many others who attend Meeting. In order to enable the Finance Committee to meet at 1:30, we will have a simple potluck with food we can eat while we begin our meeting at 12:30. We will look at what the Property Committee has done so far and what they are thinking about for the future. Some of the things they have accomplished during the last several years of intense work are:

- Energy audits of the Meeting House and the Bassett House.
- Insulating the walls, attic, and basement of the Bassett house.
- Insulation the Meeting House.
- Electric hot water heater 1st floor of the Bassett House (17% savings first year)
- Electric hot water heater for 177 and 179 paid for by tenants
- Heat pump in the Bassett House basement.
- Storm windows installed seasonally.
- Efficient light bulbs and appliances.
- Meeting House heat on a schedule based on use.
- Repairing items instead of buying new ones.
- Management of trees, shrubs, gardens.
- Push lawn mower.
- Composting and recycling by everyone.
- Use of ceramic dishes, regular silverware, cloth napkins.

The Property Committee is exploring options for the future including solar and geothermal. Obviously, this all costs money, which is why members of the Finance Committee need to be at the meeting.

The Property Committee has worked very hard during the last several years and continues to do so. They could use help from the meeting and are greatly encouraged by the possibility of all of us working together. They need carpenters and could use help researching things. They also welcome new ideas. We are hoping this meeting will begin the process of collectively planning and working to implement these plans. We are looking forward to sharing simple food and discussing this critical issue together.

## Fall Work Day October 23rd

BURLINGTON FRIENDS MEETING is blessed with a beautiful property with gardens, home to wildlife and mature trees. On Sunday, October 23rd please join the Property Committee for a fall work party from 1 to 4 p.m. You can join for an hour or for the afternoon, and all skill levels are appreciated. We have tasks of all kinds including:

- Tree trimming.
- Removing unwanted grape vines and golden-rod from established gardens.
- Trimming berry bushes and hedges.
- Attending to rotting siding on garage and Meeting House.
- Raking leaves and moving to compost pile.



Property Committee will provide lunch. Please bring a pair of work gloves and tools if you have them. If you plan to attend, please e-mail me at <btruzansky@gmail.com> so we can plan for enough food.

Beth Truzansky  
BFM Property Committee

Visit us at <[www.burlingtonquakers.org](http://www.burlingtonquakers.org)>

# Quakerism 101—an aid to our spiritual growth?

IT'S SEPTEMBER 2016. Ruah Swennerfelt and I are among about 150 people who are attending a Quaker marriage ceremony at Rocky Point Conference Center about 25 miles north of New York City. The couple to be legally joined under the reformed laws of New York State are two men—Tom Goodridge, a longtime Friend from Morningside Friends Meeting in Manhattan, and Daniel Seeger, former director of American Friends Service Committee, currently living in Chester, Pa.

Because many of those in attendance are not from Quaker backgrounds, a member of wedding party starts things off with a preview of how this marriage “in the manner of Friends” will be solemnized: It will be part of an hour-long Meeting for Worship. At some point the couple will stand and exchange vows. At the close of worship their marriage certificate will be signed by the clerk of the Meeting, and all present will be invited to sign as witnesses.

This introduction is followed by a brief description of what the speaker understood to be teachings of the Religious Society of Friends as reflected in the wedding procedure and other Quaker practices:

—There is an inward “Light” (or “that of God”) in everyone, and this Light—discerned individually and corporately—is the source of all knowledge and power needed for right living.

—Since all people are equal under the Spirit, there is no need for professional intermediaries, such as priests, to sanctify marriages.

—Simplicity is the guiding principle in Quaker weddings and other matters, because elaborate dress, words, rituals, etc., tend to focus on human opinions and tastes rather than on the guidance of the inward Light.

These opening remarks are no doubt reassuring to the many guests who arrived uncertain and anxious about what is going to happen, or not happen.

(I notice that the speaker does not include the Quaker doctrine of “continuing revelation.” Isn't this a case in point, reflecting a gradual acceptance—within many Quaker circles and large segments of the larger society—of gays' and lesbians' access to the same legal rights and responsibilities that are afforded to heterosexual couples?)

I do have a private quibble with the speaker's implication that beliefs and practices based on experience of the inner Light are *the unique essence of Quakerism*. If we distill everything down to a simple “that of God in everyone,” aren't we offering an undemanding and far from distinctive pastime that stands for everything and nothing at the same time—a sort of meditation club for social do-gooders, if you will?

If this were a Quakers-only event I would also want the speaker to be more historically accurate in describing what separates Quakerism from other traditions. Quaker histories and journals of the founders of Quakerism I have read over the years suggest the ideal of the centrality and sufficiency of the inward Light actually goes back to the early faith communities founded by followers of Jesus of Nazareth. Over some 15 centuries various reformers, including early Friends, tried to strip away layers of complex and fanciful theology and liturgical practice that had been added by generations of church leaders, obscuring and even contradicting the original spiritual truths of the Jesus movement.

The main reason that these reforms are associated mainly with Quakers today is that early “Friends of Truth” were among the few dissenting groups from the English Reformation who *survived* the waves of persecution unleashed by an established and increasingly worldly church and other guardians of the status quo. Were it not for certain historical accidents and the courage of its founders, the Religious Society, might have gone extinct like the Ranters, Diggers, and other radical dissident groups.

As members of a religious society of Friends, it is important that we include in our spiritual journeys the study and contemplation of how prominent Friends throughout the centuries have articulated and acted out their spiritual journeys, even if we think differently today. The shelves of books in our Meeting library can be daunting, however, and the cost of attending intensive workshops and Quaker study centers may be prohibitive for many.

Another resource that is more accessible and affordable, however, is a short course in basic Quaker history and teachings that some call “Quakerism 101,” tailored to each Meeting's needs. I understand that BFM's Ministry & Counsel is planning to host such a course as a major focus for spiritual development in the coming year. If it's done well, the course can be enlightening in small enough bites for us to handle. It can also be challenging as we compare our current views and practices with those of early Friends—as well as the views and practices of many Friends today. It can lead us either to revise some of our habits and values while still embracing others as supposed “continuing revelation.”

In the end, it's not a human authority telling us what to think. It's an enticing peek into a storehouse of hard-won wisdom that has much to offer us as seekers of inward and outward transformation.

—Louis Cox

## September 11, 2016 Burlington Friends Monthly Meeting for Business

**Attending:** Christopher McCandless, Jean McCandless, Linda McKenna Jeanne Plo, Cheryl Flynn, Spencer Smith, Elinor Yahm, Sophie Quest, Jim Geier, Marcia Mason, Tom Sharpley, Jonathan McCandless, Martha Penzer, Stella Penzer, and Paul Hood.

**Presiding Clerk:** Jeanne Plo

**Recording Clerk:** Linda McKenna

**Clerk's Reading:** "Oh! Be faithful!...for ye have no time, but this present time! Therefore prize your time for your soul's sake." (George Fox 1652)

### **Welcome and Announcements:**

- September 25, First Day School Kickoff.
- September 7, 14, 21, 28, Sue Mehrstens of Jungian Center-Peace/Future.
- October 2, Meeting-wide discussion sustainability at rise of Meeting.
- October 9, Monthly Meeting for Business.
- October 15, Racism Workshop with Vanessa Julye and Lena Glickman.
- October 23, Meeting-wide work day at rise of Meeting.
- October 29, General Clerking Workshop with Jan Hoffman and Jackie Stillwell

### **Climate Change**

Preceding our MMB Climate Change discussion, the Clerk read reflections from the NEYM 2016 sessions on Climate Change:

"Friends...have heard a Divine call to the witness of addressing climate change. We affirm the overwhelming scientific consensus that greenhouse gases released by human activity are causing climate change, that these changes threaten life on our planet as we know it, and that we have a responsibility to address the very real threats that will impact both rich and poor. Those on Earth who have contributed least to this crisis are likely to suffer most from it..."

NEYM asks all Monthly Meetings to prayerfully consider how they might respond to the climate crisis and to share news with the Yearly Meeting office to enable better communication and support for our collective witness.

The Clerk also read Queries on Climate Change from Connecticut Valley Meeting:

- Am I committed to passing on a habitable planet to future generations?
- Do I acknowledge the scientific facts of global warming and that it is impacting everyone on this planet?
- Have I made changes in my lifestyle that are reducing greenhouse gases?
- Am I helping my Meeting reduce its carbon footprint?
- Am I united with who share my concern for stewardship?
- Have I divested from fossil fuel companies?
- Am I open to a voluntary Carbon Tax Witness?

—Am I open to other actions to move public opinion towards better stewardship?

### **Climate change discussion and sharing**

"At BFM, Peace, Justice and Earthcare Committee has initiated a conversation with the Property Committee about the ways in which we could conserve more energy on our Meeting property. We look forward to the outcome of their work. While we know that each of us tries our hardest to change our own lifestyle and demands on resources, it is important to remember the words of George Fox and his reminder to treasure each moment. A conflict within our community also centers around our desire to meet face to face both for worship and in committee meetings but many of our members and attenders live a distance from Burlington. That reality means that we use transportation energy to gather together as a gathered group. It is also true, that while there are technology aids which would allow us to meet remotely as a group through Skype or other platforms, many of us lack the information or equipment to make that happen. Some Friends felt overwhelmed by the scale of the problem and frustrated that our individual efforts will not make a big difference and that we need to act as a community to help people prepare for a drastic changes that are coming."

### **New England Yearly Mtg. 2016 Annual Sessions Report**

The Clerk read the NEYM Purpose as it was recently retrieved from the archives by the Ad Hoc Committee on Financial matters.

"New England Yearly Meeting of Friends connects the people of the Religious Society of Friends across the six New England states. New England Yearly Meeting supports and strengthens a vibrant and growing web of monthly meetings, quarterly meetings, and other Friends communities under our care, helping us do together what we cannot do alone. In all our work, we strive to obey the promptings of the Spirit to bring healing, wholeness, and transformation to ourselves and to the world."

NEYM has five key priorities:

- Spiritual development and religious education.
- Outreach, welcome, inclusion, and witness.
- Relationship and communication.
- Leadership and administration.
- Stewardship, integrity, and accountability.

Excerpts from the NEYM 2016 Epistle were read by Christopher McCandless. The Clerk asked that it be printed in full in the newsletter.

### **Membership request from Thomas Sharpley:**

Letter of Intent: I hope to become a member of Burl-

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ington Friends Meeting for three reasons which I label "Faith, Deeds, and Community."

1) Faith. I am attracted and welcomed by the Friends' lack of dogma and acceptance of varied beliefs and non-beliefs. I am agnostic, yet I have faith in my rational mind. An inner Light residing in each human is an idea which does not offend my rational mind. To spend an hour focusing this light and examining what it reveals, in the presence of others doing likewise, has proven rewarding and comforting to me.

2) Deeds. If each person harbors a divine light, then humanity is sacred. Thus it is a logical progression for Quakers to promote peace, non-violence, justice and equality. Friends let their lives speak, and their deeds make the world a better place. Friends have been on the right side of history for more than three centuries. It would be an honor to call myself Quaker. I hope I am worthy to do so.

3) Community. I know Friends will be sympathetic to my feelings about the political and social realities of our time. The members of this Meeting will be reliable, knowledgeable allies in any attempt to make my life speak to these realities. So, I hope to widen my circle of Friends and of Friends by joining this Meeting.

Respectfully submitted,  
Thomas Sharpley

The request for membership was approved and forwarded to Ministry & Counsel.

#### **Ministry & Counsel**--Linda McKenna

1. Background: There have been some members who have questioned the practice of bringing coffee and tea into Meeting for Worship. It is their impression and experience that it interferes with the solemn undertaking of silently waiting. We therefore, bring forth the following item for consideration by the gathered meeting.

Friends are invited to come 15 or so minutes early to Worship, where they are welcome to enjoy a cup of coffee or tea as they begin fellowship with each other. When Meeting for Worship commences, Friends are asked to leave all beverages except water in the fellowship space.

After discussion it was suggested that the Minute be returned to the Committee for further discernment.

#### **Gifts & Service:** Jean McCandless

Co-Presiding Clerk Position: We are recommending that Charles Simpson, a long time attender at Burlington Friends Meeting, be appointed to be our second co-clerk to fill out the remainder of David Millar's three-year term ending in June, 2018.

We have met in person with Charles for several hours

and are impressed with his thoughtfulness, careful consideration of issues, group leadership skills demonstrated in his community activities and teaching background, and willingness to learn more about the central role that this position plays in our Quaker community. Understanding that Presiding Clerks are usually members of the Religious Society of Friends, he has also agreed to consider applying for such membership as part of accepting responsibility for this co-clerk position.

In keeping with the April, 2016 Business Meeting decision that we would support David Millar attending the November 18 to 20, 2016, Pendle Hill workshop for Presiding Clerks, we are expecting that Charles would now be sent in David's place as the new co-clerk. In addition, we believed it was important for Charles to have an individual, small support committee as he starts this new position. I am pleased to report that Linda McKenna and Christopher McCandless have agreed to fill this role.

2. Hospitality Committee: We are bringing the names of three Friends forward to reinstate/serve on a formal Meeting Hospitality Committee: Cheryl Flynn, Jonathan McCandless, and David Hamblin. They will be primarily be responsible for organizing and overseeing weekly hospitality after Meeting, including ensuring that necessary coffee/tea and other food supplies are available through purchase and donation, and preparation and clean-up completed in a timely manner.

We are currently looking for one or two additional members to complete the committee.

#### **Library:** Jean McCandless

The Current Library Committee held its first formal meeting on August 21st. It will be meeting on the fourth Sunday of the month before Meeting for Worship. We will be working our way through the backlog of books to be processed. Making plans to have pamphlets and shorter handouts readily available to newcomers, student visitors and other groups as needed. Our Second-hand Book Sale will be held on November 12th. Friends are asked to donate books in good condition for the sale and plan to attend on the Sunday of the book sale. All unsold books will be given to Richard Kemp, who sends books to prison libraries in Africa and Maine.

#### **Clerk's Committee:** Christopher McCandless

The Clerk's Committee met on September 9th and affirmed its purpose as follows:

1. To assist in coordination and communication of committees and to hold the spiritual life of the Meeting in the Light.

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## The Great Transformation toward an eco-economy

MINISTRY & COUNSEL has invited David Millar to present a paper he has been writing for discussion at Burlington Friends Meeting on November 6th.

The aim of his paper, titled "The Great Transformation: Toward an eco-economy based on Quaker principles of right relationship," is to show how organizational work (which may range from writing to community-building, from lobbying to nonviolent protest) is inseparable from social justice and personal transformation.

In recent years, the Earthcare movement of people of faith has had three apparently contradictory foci: Education (of the people in the pews and the next generation) Agitation, and the construction of Arks (places of sanctuary and support for environmental refugees). Their inspiration, strategy, and tactics differ. But far from being contradictory, they are complementary; all are essential and interconnected. Friends have sometimes split off "contemplation" from "action" as if the two are opposed, as if quietism on one hand, or worldly poiticking on the other, were the only choices. But two millenia of Christian conscience and 350 years of Quaker testimony remind us that "faith and practice" are one. What canst thou say?

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2. To support the Co-Clerks and all Committee Clerks and their committees.

3. To plan and coordinate Meeting-wide activities.

Instead of meeting quarterly, the Clerks Committee will meet on November 10th and January 12th to provide support for the Co-Clerks.

The Clerk reported that David Millar, who now attends Montreal Friends Meeting, offered to lead a discussion at BFM on "The Great Transformation," a paper he is writing. Friends approved. He invites Friends who are interested in "singing as worship" to visit Montreal Friends Meeting.

The Clerk reported that Sas Carey of Middlebury Monthly Meeting, has received a Legacy Grant from NEYM. The grant will serve to facilitate a discussion on spiritual leadings by showing one of her movies. The name of her presentation is: "My 22 years in Mongolia: A Tale of Leadings." Her film *Migration* documents the migration of a family of reindeer herders from the spring camp to winter camp. Migration has earned awards from the International Film Awards in Berlin, Germany, Parnu International Film Festival in Estonia, and the Earth Day Film Festival in San Francisco. Friends were in agreement to invite Sas to show her film at some point in the future.

The Meeting ended with a moment of silence.

How can our lives speak?

David Millar, our former presiding co-clerk, who has returned to his Monthly Meeting in Montreal, Canada, reports hearing testimony there of "singing as worship"! He invites Burlington Friends who are so moved to organize a Vermont Musical Visitation to Montreal Meeting. Would Friends who are interested in sojourning to Montreal for such a visitation? If so, please contact Jeanne Plo at <[jeanne.plo@burlingtontelecom.net](mailto:jeanne.plo@burlingtontelecom.net)>.

### Clerking: It's More Than Just Meeting for Business

Burlington Friends Meeting will host a workshop on clerking with Jan Hoffman and Jackie Stillwell on Saturday, October 29, 2016 from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. There is no admission charge, and all are welcome.

- What part do clerks play in nurturing a faith community where worship feeds the work and work feeds the worship?
- How are the specific disciplines of meeting for business grounded in our faith?
- What disciplines of worship apply in meetings for business? What additional disciplines are needed?
- What joint responsibilities do we share in meeting for business?
- tWhat are the "nitty gritty" responsibilities of clerking before, during and after meeting for business?

In this participatory workshop Jan and Jackie hope to address these questions and any others you may bring. These can range from general questions like "What is 'unity' anyway?" to "How might one respond to a chronic objector?" to "What do I do when my faith in the process gets wobbly?"

This workshop is free and open to Northwest Quarter and anyone else who would like to come. It will be held in Burlington at the Meeting House, 173 N. Prospect St. Snacks, a light lunch, and tea / coffee will be provided but please bring a water bottle and other personal necessities with you.

Contact Abby Matchette at <[abby.matchette@gmail.com](mailto:abby.matchette@gmail.com)> to RSVP and with any questions.

**Burlington Friends Meeting**  
**173 N. Prospect St.**  
**Burlington, VT 05401**

**October 2016**



**Burlington Friends Meeting events—  
all at the Meeting House unless noted**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Contact/Committee</b>
Each Sunday	Meeting for Worship—11 a.m.	Ruah Swennerfelt, 425-3377
Each Wednesday	Midweek Worship—noon	John Sharpless, 871-5195
2nd & 4th Sundays	Children's program—10:45 a.m.	Abby Matchette, 765-618-8936
Each Sunday, on request	Childcare during worship and other Meeting events	Louis Cox, 425-3377
October 9, 2016	Meeting for Business—12:45 p.m.	Jeanne Plo, 233-6377
October 15, 2016	Workshop on Racism	Ruah Swennerfelt, 922-2259
October 23, 2016	Fall Work Day	Beth Truzansky <btruzansky@gmail.com>
October 29, 2016	Clerking Workshop	Abby Matchette, 765-618-8936
November 6, 2016	Great Transformation discussion with David Millar	
	Send newsletter submissions to Louis Cox <jlouiscox@gmail.com>	