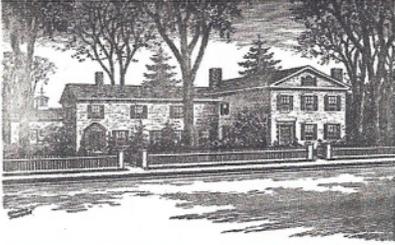


May 2017

NEWSLETTER



173 N. PROSPECT ST. BURLINGTON VERMONT 05401

Burlington Friends Meeting

Stories carry peace message to the heart

by Catherine Bock

This is the letter I hand-wrote to Leahy, Sanders and Welch as part of our fcnl advocacy work. We were told that facts have very little credibility in Washington these days, but stories still can get attention by appealing to the hearts of all people. I introduced this letter by thanking each of them for the great work they are doing.

Decrease Pentagon funding 4/26/2017

ONE DAY MY FOUR-YEAR-OLD SON came rushing into the house sobbing. He collapsed on the floor shaking, panting and crying. I held him closely for a long time before he calmed down enough to be able to speak.

“What happened?” I asked

“The kids were shooting me with real guns. They tried to kill me,” was all he could say before he started sobbing again.

Having grown up without a TV and sheltered from everything related to war and violence, there was no way he could know that the kids had only harmless cap guns. In seeing my own son so overwhelmed with fear I felt horrified imagining the lives of all the children who grow up surrounded by war, seeing their friends and relatives killed and often being injured or killed themselves.

How can we continue to fund the production of weapons of war and sell them to both sides of global conflicts? I have never understood the argument that we need a strong military to protect our country from danger. It is known that you are more likely to be killed by air pollution, falling down the stairs in your house, toddlers who find guns, unsafe work places, and fast-food meals than by ISIS or Al Qaeda.

The best way to be safe is to make friends with your enemies, but what is the U.S. doing? During the week after the chemical weapons were used in Syria (April 4, 2017) U.S.-led strikes killed more than 296 civilians. The actual total is thought to be somewhere between 1,500 and 6,000, according to journalist Nick Davies. He points out that the killing of civilians is typical of the last 2½ years, even before the new administration. Will this make the U.S. safer, or antagonize other countries so that they may be more likely to consider attacking us?

Another question is whether people want to increase military funding. According to David Swanson, who was the keynote speaker at the World Beyond War conference in Burlington on April 22, polls show that the U.S. public wants an average of \$41 billion cut from the military budget and no cuts in environmental protection funding. If our tax dollars increased jobs by supporting humane, peaceful, and environmentally sound projects the world could move towards survival and away from war.

Then there is the question of the jobs created by the military. I don't understand why we hear in Vermont that we need the F-35 to create jobs. I have read that contrary to the assertions of the arms industry military spending is the least effective way to create jobs. Spending on clean energy production creates



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>> **Stories**, from page 1

1½ times more jobs and spending on education creates 2½ times more jobs (Political Economy Research Institute at the University of Massachusetts, 12/2011). Personally I'd never want to be employed by an industry that profits from killing people.

What about our young people in the military—does it improve their lives? Yes, I agree it can give opportunities to poor youth, but reducing poverty would give everyone equal opportunity.

I'd like to end with a little story:

On a hot day last summer while waiting in front of the Boston train station I saw a shirtless young man holding a sign that read "Homeless veteran. Please help." All his tattoos kind of scared me, but I decided to give him \$5 anyway. "Thank you so much." He said, "Are you a veteran?"

"No," I answered, "I would never join the military. I don't believe war is a way to solve conflicts. Imagine if everyone refused the military."

He interrupted me saying, "Then the presidents could fight it out themselves." What followed was his heart-breaking description of all the children he had killed in Iraq and his inability to sleep or work because of PTSD since he had come home. As he talked, tears rolled down his cheeks and soon I was in tears as well. When he finished I thought for a moment and then asked if he would like to help poor local children. His eyes lit up and he asked, "Do you think I can?" "Of course you can," I told him. "You could help kids learn to read in after-school programs or volunteer at a food bank. It would help others and help you feel better."

He reached down and picked up the \$5 bill I had given him. "Thank you so much. I should pay you," he said as he handed it to me with a gentle smile. I smiled back and said, "No, you keep it. I gotta catch my train. Good luck." In that moment I felt like I had changed the world a tiny bit.

Imagine if we could put all the money that goes to the military into programs that help people and the planet, respecting life and teaching people to resolve conflicts without violence.

As your constituent I appreciate all the great work you do fighting for progressive causes in Washington, D.C., and I want to encourage you to speak out vigorously against increased military spending.

—Thank you
Catherine Bock

Gifts & Service 2017 report

Presented at April 9, 2017 Meeting for Business for seasoning until May 14, 2017 Meeting for Business.

1. Clerks Committee

Background: This committee, begun by Anne Liske during the time she was Presiding Clerk, was eliminated when the new model of presiding co-clerks was originally set up in 2012. It was re-established in the autumn of 2015 to both support the presiding co-clerks and strengthen the internal coordination and communication between BFM committee clerks. Its current members include the two presiding co-clerks, all committee clerks, and the treasurer. Committee members rotate through serving as clerk and recorder for the group's bi-monthly meetings.

2. Presiding Co-clerks—Charles Simpson, 2019, 1st term; Holly Gorton, 2020, 1st term

3. Treasurer—Christopher McCandless, 2020, 3rd term

4. Assistant Treasurer—Bill Williams, 2019, 1st term

5. Recorder—Peggy Powell, 2018, 4th term

6. Mail Steward—Jonathan McCandless, 2018, 6th term

7. Committees

Ministry & Counsel—Linda McKenna, co-clerk (2018) 2020, 2nd term; Ruah Swennerfelt, co-clerk (2018) 2020, 2nd term

Louis Cox, 2020, 1st term

Jean Hopkins, 2019, 2nd term

Robin Lloyd, 2018, 2nd term

Charles Gurney, 2020, 1st term

John Sharpless, 2018, 1st term (care of Mid-week Worship)

Children's Religious Education—Abby Matchette, clerk, 2018, 2nd term

Cara Montague, 2019, 1st term

Lynne Silva, 2020, 2nd term

Pat Wisse, 2019, 2nd term

Communications—Louis Cox, Newsletter Editor and Listserv Manager, 2019, 2nd term

Bill Williams, Web Manager, 2019 1st term

Finance—No clerk has been named.

Stuart Wisse, 2020, 2nd term

Jim Geier, 2018, 2nd term

Christopher McCandless, ex-officio as Meeting Treasurer

Bill Williams, ex-officio as Assistant Treasurer

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April 9, 2017 Burlington Friends Monthly Meeting for Business

Attending: Chris McCandless, Abby Matchette, Bill Williams, Holly Gorton, Anita Rapone, Linda McKenna, Diana Linda, Tom Sharpley, Susan Larkin, Charles Gurney, Jim Geier, Sophie Quest, Jan Van Lindingham, Robin Lloyd, Spencer Smith, Elinor Yam, Jeanne Plo, and Charles Simpson.

Presiding Co- Clerk: Jeanne Plo

Presiding Co- Clerk/ Recording Clerk: Charles Simpson

Reading: Co-Clerk Charles Simpson

Inward Seeking, Outward Acts

THE CORE OF THE QUAKER TRADITION is a way of inward seeking which leads to outward acts of integrity and service. Friends are most in the Spirit when they stand at the crossing point of the inward and the outward life. And that is the intersection at which we find community. Community is a place where the connections felt in the heart make themselves known in bonds between people and where the tuggings and pullings of those bonds keep opening up our hearts.

The Society of Friends can make its greatest contribution to community by continuing to be a religious society—I mean, by centering on the practice of corporate worship which opens itself to continuing revelation.

—Parker J. Palmer, *Pendle Hill Pamphlet*, No 212, 1971

Climate Change Discussion

Christopher McCandless gave an update on green energy conservation discussions between Peace, Justice & Earthcare and the Property Committee. An ad-hoc committee has been established by both Committees to research green energy solutions to be installed on our property and to pursue funding from the NEYM Legacy Fund and other sources. This committee consists of Christopher, Will Peery, and Catherine Bock. It will bring in consultants from Efficiency Vermont to evaluate our opportunities for solar energy, letting the Meeting know of their conclusions. All are welcome to contact this ad hoc committee to provide input. Discussion: Can we install an electric charging station? Greenhouse gases are continuing to rise globally, driven in part by population growth. Some members have installed solar panels and heat pumps. Could we have a heat pump here? Chris replied that we are including heat pumps among the alternatives. An charging station on our property for electric vehicles would be useful. Green Mountain Transit will be bringing in an electric bus for demonstration purposes which will be free to riders.

Clerk: Membership Transfer for Susan Larkin and Charles Gurney of Easton Monthly Meeting in New York. Letters of membership transfer were read, signed by the

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>> **Gifts & Service**, from page 2

Hospitality—Cheryl Flynn, clerk, 2019, 1st term

Sophie Quest, 2019, 1st term

Jonathan McCandless 2019, 1st term

Library—Jean McCandless, clerk, 2018, 2nd term

Cheryl Flynn, 2018, 1st term

Anita Rapone, 2019, 1st term

Peace, Justice & Earthcare—Elinor Yahm, co-clerk, 2018, 2nd Term; Sophie Quest, co-clerk, 2018, 2nd term

Catherine Bock, 2018, 1st term

Jean Hopkins, 2018, 1st term

Joan Knight, 2020, 1st term

Will Peery, 2018, 2nd term

Anita Rapone, 2020, 1st term

Tom Sharpley, 2019, 1st term

Spencer Smith, 2019, 4th term

Property—No clerk has been named.

Bob Dill, 2020, 1st term

Jim Geier, 2020, 5th term

Susan Larkin, 2020, 1st term

John Moore, 2019, 3rd term

Jeanne Plo, 2020, 5th term

Charles Simpson, 2020, 4th term

Christopher McCandless, ex-officio as Meeting Scheduler

7. **Small Potatoes**—Helen Head, co-coordinator, 2018, 2nd term; Martha Penzer, co-coordinator, 2018, 2nd term

8. **BFM Young Adult Friends**—Position unfilled at this time.

9. Quaker Organizations

New England Yearly Meeting

Christopher McCandless, Nominating Committee Representative 2019 3rd term

Ministry & Counsel Representative—To be named by BFM Ministry & Counsel

Other Quaker Organizations

Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) Representative—Catherine Bock, 2020, 1st term

Friends General Conference (FGC) 2017—Position unfilled at this time.

Jacob and Greta Stone, Plainfield Meeting will report to us about the 2017 FGC Gathering.

Quaker Earthcare Witness (QEW) Representative—Louis Cox, 2020 1st term. •

April 9, 2017 Burlington Friends Monthly Meeting for Business (continued)

>> **April 2017 business**, from page 3

co-clerks, and passed on to Ministry & Counsel.

Report from Ruah Swennerfelt and Louis Cox on their visit to the Emanuel A.M.E. Church in Charleston, South Carolina (see March 2017 BFM newsletter):

Louis and Ruah indicated that racism has gotten worse over the years. Racial hatred remains strong. They spoke with the new pastor for 45 minutes, giving him our Meeting's letter and contribution. Louis and Ruah reported they were warmly welcomed. Many in the congregation have forgiven Mr. Roof. Recovery for the community is difficult but continuing. They are not quite ready to reach out to our Meeting for a continuing relationship but may do so in the future. Louis recalled seeing, while growing up in the segregated South, chain gangs of black convicts guarded by white officers. Inequities affecting the Black community continue.

Ruah said, "Louis and I recently returned from travels in the South that included a visit with the Rev. Eric Manning, the new pastor of the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church in Charleston, S.C., the site of a horrific mass shooting two years ago. In our 45-minute sharing, we and the pastor began the process of finding ways that our two faith communities can work together against hate crimes and help to heal the wounds of racial injustice.

"Our hearts have been very heavy with the news of what has happened to the nine beloved souls of your congregation," began a letter that Burlington Friends wrote to the Emanuel A.M.E. Church in July 2015. "Several in our midst have close ties to people in Charleston. Please know that Burlington Friends (Quakers) are holding you in the Light of Christ and are grieving along with you." This letter was written on the heels of the shooting by professed white supremacist Dylan Roof that took the lives of nine members of the church, (including the pastor) now known as the "Mother Emanuel Nine." In that letter our Meeting pledged to work on the issues of racism within ourselves and within our community. Since then we have taken some measures to live up to that pledge, knowing we have much more to do."

Ruah continued: "Louis felt particularly touched by the tragedy, having not only grown up in Charleston, but having attended the Citadel Square Baptist Church just around the corner from the Emanuel church. The news brought back memories of a spring day in the early 1960s when he and others had watched from the Citadel Square parking lot as a large group of African-Americans filed out of the Emanuel church to begin a civil rights march in downtown Charleston. During our years of visiting Louis's late parents, he and I also had often worshiped at Charleston Friends many times, and it turned out that one of the Meeting attenders had been a co-worker of one of the people slain during a Bible-study class at the

Emanuel church. Since we had plans to be back in Charleston in March of this year, we asked for a letter to be written by the BFM clerks, introducing us, and outlining some of the steps we had carried out in the almost two years since that tragedy. On Monday, March 20, we were warmly welcomed by the Emanuel church secretary, Cathy, who gave us a booklet about the tragedy. She also gave us two bracelets that included the names of the victims and the words, 'Only love can conquer hate.' In the booklet we learned that, 'some relatives of the Mother Emanuel Nine have expressed forgiveness. Others have not. If it were not for the sincere expressions of forgiveness this hate crime would have been just another attack on an African-American church. But the unexpected expression of forgiveness speaks to the core of our belief as Christians.' It was a rich exchange of getting to know one another and exploring ways we might stay in contact.

"The Rev. Manning expressed appreciation for our reaching out and wanted to find a way for his church to reciprocate. He said that he knew it was time to reach outside of the congregation to people in other denominations and faiths, but he wanted to move gently with the congregation since many of them were still in much distress. We will continue to reach out to him. Maybe some day others from our Meeting will be welcomed as we were by Emanuel church members and that those from Charleston will come visit us. We have a lot to learn from them."

Ministry & Counsel

Linda McKenna requested approval of the 2016 State of Society Report, which was sent out on the listserv for review after the March Business Meeting. Discussion included a suggestion that the report include comments on our difficulty filling leadership positions. Gifts & Service will add this item. The report was approved by the Meeting which will be printed in the May BFM Newsletter.

Membership Clearness for Catherine Bock

Linda read the letter of application for Catherine from the Clearness Committee:

"Catherine Bock has attended and been involved in the activities of Burlington Monthly Meeting since moving to Vermont three years ago and had attended Palo Alto Monthly Meeting during her trips back from Sweden to visit her mother in California. She also attended a Friends School in eighth grade, an experience she describes as 'changing her life' in that it provided her an opportunity to be herself.

"In February of 2017, she formally applied to Burlington Monthly Meeting for membership in the Religious Society of Friends. Her letter of intent was received by Ministry & Counsel, who then appointed a Membership Clearness Committee who met with Catherine to discern

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her readiness for membership and her continuing commitment to full participation in Burlington Friends Meeting. The Membership Clearness Committee members were Linda McKenna, convener, Robin Lloyd, and Bill Williams. They met with Catherine on two occasions in March, one of which was at her amazing home at Champlain Valley co-housing in Charlotte, Vermont.

“Catherine’s choice of housing represents her strongly held beliefs and the way in which she practices Quaker testimonies such as community, stewardship, simplicity, and integrity. It is here that she has financially sponsored the construction of an environmentally sustainable house for a low income family. It is also here that she supported an immigrant farmer from the Congo to farm on the common land attached to the co-housing trust. Catherine has lived as a citizen of the world, and her many life experiences have revealed to her the interconnectedness of all life. She described that connection as vast and larger than the the sum of all the individual members. She believes that ministry is found in all daily moments and in the routine and not-so-routine choices and tasks of her life.

“Catherine has been involved in the work of the Peace, Justice & Earthcare committee, both locally and nationally. Her presence at rallies, demonstrations, meetings, marches for justice and particularly her travel to be with the Native Americans at Standing Rock all demonstrate her passion for stewardship of our planet and fair treatment of all of its peoples. Catherine understands the many aspects of membership. She is particularly clear that the political action of each individual and the way in which they ‘let their lives speak’ testifies to their sincerity as a Friend. She continues to learn about the many practices of Friends and her attendance at New England Yearly Meeting sessions has also helped her to get a sense of the larger Quaker world.

“Catherine’s membership clearness process was very enjoyable for all of us as we learned more about her and her life and reflected deeply on the questions of spirit and membership in the Religious Society of Friends. It is the committee’s sense that Catherine is ready to continue her spiritual journey as a valued and loved member of the community of Burlington Quakers. In her words, she has found her ‘tribe,’ and we, luckily, have found her. The committee heartily recommends that Catherine’s application for membership be accepted by the Monthly Meeting.”

—Respectfully submitted,
Linda McKenna, convener
Robin Lloyd
Bill Williams

Catherine’s request for membership was approved.

Children’s Religious Education—Abby Matchette

Children's Religious Education added an agenda item supporting a Friends Concern around the Vermont Refugee Reads initiative. Letter attached. Abby asked if this could be supported by the Meeting. Their two books cost \$15 to \$20 and \$18 to \$25 respectively. Images and words are diverse. Friends approved the establishment of a Friends Concern in support of this project. Abby will write up an article on this for our newsletter, including purchase information for individuals. The books appeal to a wide age-range.

Gifts & Service—Jean McCandless

Jean presented the results of the nomination process, including last-minute changes. These included the nomination of Holly Gorton to serve as Co- Clerk with Co- Clerk Charles Simpson. Louis Cox has offered to be BFM Quaker Earthcare Witness representative to NEYM. The nominating process was complex and lengthy.

The Gifts & Service Committee members talked with members of each committee, new Friends not yet on committees, as well as those nominated. The total was 62 conversations. Some Clerk and NEYM Representative positions have yet to be filled. Additions include naming Louis Cox to serve on the Ministry & Counsel Committee. Holly will step down from the Library and Ministry & Counsel committees. Susan Larkin will serve on Property Committee.

Some terms of service were adjusted. This report will be seasoned for one month (see p.2), to be approved at the May Monthly Meeting for Business. Terms begin June 1.

The committee will bring the entire process of nomination to the May Clerks’ Meeting for discussion. The Webmaster will prepare a URL draft for approval at Monthly Meeting for Business, including an end-date for each term of service.

The Meeting expressed our gratitude to Gifts & Service members for their work.

Treasurer’s report

Christopher McCandless presented the report on the 2017 FY quarter ending March 31st. Overall, he reports that we appear to be on target to meet our budget goals. The report was accepted.

Announcements

David Millar of Montreal Monthly Meeting sends appreciation from Dzaleka Refugee Community in Malawi for recent BFM donations, which will help to buy new seeds for planting after devastating floods.

David Millar encourages Friends to travel 1½ hours north to attend a Canadian Singing Intervisitation at Montreal Monthly Meeting on April 30th. Contact Jeanne Plo if you would like to attend.

The Meeting ended with shared silence.

Burlington Friends Meeting State of Society 2016

HOW DID THE SPIRIT MOVE AMONG US this past year? We have been touched by the Spirit and Friends have been faithful. Even though we cannot measure these things, we see signs in the attitudes, the words, the actions and behaviors in our community.

In response to the New England Yearly Meeting Epistle on Climate Change, Burlington Friends sought greater connection and unity with nature by holding open discussions at the start of every business meeting to acknowledge the effects of climate change on the planet and each other. Friends were in acute awareness that we cannot do it alone, that healing will come from working together. Friends ministered to each other about the transformative process of growing older while looking after the needs of those who depend on us: the children, the sick and the dying. Friends looked within themselves and in the world around to see the systemic cultural patterns which have contributed to climate change, white privilege, war, a refugee crisis, discrimination, racism, mass incarceration, homelessness, and poverty.

Burlington Friends met these challenges with compassion and creativity over the past year. As is clear from the details of Committee Reports, we did this with grace and a welcoming heart.

Our facilities for the Meeting, for tenants, and for outside groups were maintained at a high standard, attracting increasing use. This even included more intensive use of our garden space and work to enhance our grounds. We have continued to meet our financial obligations for past building restoration in both the Meetinghouse and the Bassett House, positioning ourselves to take on new challenges in the social use of our space. As the needs of low-income people increased this year, our contributions to welfare efforts increased and our weekly program making sandwiches for the homeless continued.

We have cherished our Meeting members. That began with the growing participation of children and additional caregiving adults in our First Day School through to the ministry we were able to provide to aging members and the families of the departed. Through potlucks and after-Meeting hospitality, we created a social space in which attenders could interact and affirm our support for one another.

Committees were very active: The library group has reorganized our holdings and supported outreach to schools and prisons. Ministry & Counsel met the needs of Members in their last years. Finance kept us current with expenses and Property saw to the stewardship of our facility while enhancing its value to the wider community. On a weekly basis, Hospitality met the challenge to provide the culinary setting for socializing while remaining aware of dietary restrictions. Aware of our need for continuous spiritual growth, Ministry & Council initiated a bi-monthly program in Quaker education for members and attenders which continues. A new co-clerk was sent to

Pendell Hill for a workshop in clerking the Meeting for Business. In an effort to raise our awareness of the climate crisis, Monthly Meeting for Business altered its schedule to foreground a general discussion of our changing relationship to energy use, as well as the possibilities for engagement in efforts to achieve a sustainable economy. In this latter effort, Peace, Justice & Earthcare focused our outreach, including lobbying visits to the offices of our Congressional Representatives and a physical presence at the Standing Rock vigil in support of Native American treaty rights and the need to keep fossil fuels in the ground.

While it is clear from this report that our committees were particularly active during 2016, it is also true that many members were serving on more than one committee at the same time. Gifts & Service has had difficulty in filling key committee clerk positions and in finding Friends to serve as representatives to several Quaker organizations

The shadow that was cast over our Meeting by national events—the longest foreign war in American history; an acrimonious presidential campaign that failed to engender support for comprehensive health care, peace, or a solution to the refugee crisis—was met with both awareness and resistance in the life of our Meeting.

—Jeanne Plo, Charles Simpson, Co-Clerks

Ministry & Counsel

Adult Religious Education and Pastoral Care have dominated the work of the Ministry & Counsel committee during 2016. We have hosted several speakers, beginning with Jacob Stone, of Plainfield Meeting, who provided a very interesting reflection on the works of Walt Whitman. In January, adults met to read and discuss *The New Jim Crow*, and that conversation was followed up with a one-day workshop led by Vanessa Julye, who co-authored *Fit for Freedom, Not for Friendship*. She not only led the all-day workshop but met with Meeting members and attenders on Sunday before Meeting for Worship. In April, Peterson Toscano entertained and informed us about climate change, and Sue Mehrtens led an afternoon presentation on the Jungian guide to aging and elder care. In May, Jean Hopkins and Elinor shared their knowledge of “the care of elders” and aging from information they gleaned from the SAGE conference. In October, Jan Hoffmann and Jacqueline Stillwell led an all-day workshop on clerking. This workshop was made available to and attended by many different members of the Northwest Quarterly Meeting. In November, David Millar presented us with his international peace work, and in December, Sas Carey of Middlebury Meeting shared her film on *The Peoples Who Migrate with the Reindeer in Mongolia*. Each of these many events was well attended. They broadened our knowledge of the various topics and also gave us a chance to share out beliefs and questions as a community.

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>> **State of Society**, from page 6

We were presented with many opportunities to share intimately in the lives of each other through our pastoral care. There were clearness committees for leadings, and for membership. There were support committees for end-of-life issues, for family support, and for providing ongoing worship opportunities outside of our Meeting space. We were granted the honor of supporting John and June Clark as they approached the end of their lives. We held a closely gathered memorial service for John in December, which was attended by members of their home (Roanoke, Va.) Monthly Meeting. Mid-week worship has been faithfully cared for by John Sharpless, and although the attendance remains small, there is a consistent group which worships together. We enthusiastically welcomed Holly Gorton's and Bill Williams's transfers of membership and Tom Sharpley as a new member. We sadly had to say good-bye to David Millar when he moved back to Montreal. Luckily he returns to visit occasionally.

As well as the education received in elder care by Elinor Yahm and Jean Hopkins, Ruah Swennerfelt attended a conference on White Privilege and brought that information back to us. Jacob and Gretta Stone brought songs to our hearts by leading a sing along from the new Rise Again Songbook.

Burlington Friends treasure the silence of the waiting worship, but appreciate the occasional vocal ministry which brings much richness to the worship when its offered. 2016 has been a very busy and rich year. We have had challenges with meeting the demands but are very grateful that our community has responded so positively to events, speakers, and discussion opportunities. In the context of the wider political chaos of our country at this time, we take strength and courage from our bonds within Meeting and support for each other as we each find ways to take our voices into the world.

Finance

The Finance Committee's purpose is to nurture the spiritual goals of the Meeting through its oversight, collection, and allocation of monetary resources. It meets quarterly with the Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer to develop and approve budget allocations and expenditures to Meeting for Business. The committee met two times this year to discuss the financial health, mortgage obligations, and budget planning of the Meeting. In addition, an electronic review of the proposed 2017 budget was facilitated prior to its approval by the Monthly Meeting. One more meeting is anticipated prior to the end of the fiscal year, June 30, 2017.

Property

As members of the Property Committee, we are all still together following a successful renovation and now are working hard to pay off the mortgage debt in as short a time as possible. This year we made extra payments of

\$5,000 on the mortgage principle, instead of just letting money sit in the bank. We have good communication with each other and have maintained connections with BFM committees, including Ministry & Counsel, Finance, Peace, Justice & Earthcare, Library, and Children's Religious Education.

We are slowly growing, lifting ourselves up, and reaching out to the larger community, and promoting the use of our beautiful space. It is a pleasure to work with Small Potatoes in the newly renovated kitchen. The property is being used for respite, rest, and recuperation. There is relatively little conflict or tension with tenants, BFM community, or other users of our space. We continue with outreach to the wider community regarding the availability of space in both the Bassett House and the Meetinghouse. We offer a venue for a variety of uses such as conferences, educational classes, workshops, weddings, and memorial gatherings. The tenancy in four apartments has been stable and committed, and the tenants contribute to the life of the Meeting by helping with cleaning and snow removal.

Property Committee has organized a small community vegetable garden for Friends who are interested in growing good things to eat. Property Committee has discovered that many Friends will turn out for regular workdays twice a year on Sunday afternoons to help maintain our spacious and contemplative gardens. We have hired professional tree services to help prune and maintain our trees. The removal of overgrown yew bushes has made for a more inviting view of the property from Prospect Street.

Children's Religious Education

What a joy it is to see our children grow and become rooted more in their spiritual lives as they bring their wonder and curiosity to First Day School. This past year we have continued to deepen our time together focusing on Quaker testimonies. As we learn these testimonies through service projects, movement, art, and cooperative play, we experience a deepening of relationships with each other and our spiritual, emotional, and physical worlds. We ended 2016 with a Christmas pageant where the children engaged in a readers theater. As in previous years they were so excited to adorn costumes and come together with the whole community for laughter, reflection, and a united joy. This year we also focused on making decisions about who would play who in the Christmas pageant in the manner of Friends by using consensus decision making. The children were able to see the needs of the community and rise to meet those needs with creativity and communication.

We have enjoyed focusing on service in our community through the gathering of food for a local ministry called Joint Urban Ministry Project (JUMP). We meet only during the school year, and in June we were able to have a summer kick-off picnic. This picnic is a great time of

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Burlington Friends Meeting State of Society 2016 (continued)

>> **State of Society**, from page 7

gathering intergenerationally, sharing song, food, and exploration of our beautiful grounds. For our summer adventure we recognized our children were getting older so a decision was made to do a day canoe trip instead of a summer beach day. It was a small gathering but such a sweet time of using our muscles, teamwork, and enjoyment of the natural world to canoe out into Waterbury Reservoir, where we found a great lunch site and a beautiful jumping rock. I wish all could see the smiles and courage each child had as they jumped off the rocks into the cool water.

All our Children's Religious Education committee members, Isabelle our childcare person, and members who have helped teach are blessings as they cultivate a great atmosphere for curiosity and learning. We are thankful for all who take this step to foster the children's spiritual life. Through the winter our insightful children of First Day School will continue to talk about the Quaker testimonies, and a strong focus will be on community from the perspective of seeing ourselves as Peacemakers.

As the children grow up we continue to hold their Religious Education in our hearts and strive to look for ways of cultivating and enriching their spirituality. We also hold the questions on how we can welcome and incorporate families more in our meeting and stretch our inclusion of children from beyond First Day School, to the Meeting, and the community.

Library

The goal of the Library Committee is to develop and maintain a collection of relevant, challenging, and engaging reading materials about Quaker testimonies, practice, and history that are readily accessible to the Meeting community. To do so, we have been processing the large backlog of books in the library that do not have pockets with check-out cards in them. Without such cards in place, it is impossible to keep track of library books and pamphlets, resulting in substantial losses. Committee members now regularly leave monthly committee meetings with cardboard boxes full of books that need labels typed and printed!

The Library Committee greatly benefited from having an expanded four-person membership in place by early fall. It allowed us to re-establish our annual Secondhand Book Sale in November. This event is made possible by donations of books and art by Meeting members, attenders, and individuals from the wider community. In preparation for the sale, the Library Committee joined the local Front Porch Forum for our surrounding neighborhood so we could take advantage of the possible community outreach of this event. Despite rainy weather, the advertisement brought in several neighborhood families interested in children's and youth books. Books remaining at the end of the sale were donated to: a Meeting family's school project to collect books for incarcerated women; a South

African Women's College; and a Connecticut prison.

Most of the proceeds of the book sale went to purchasing a large plastic wall display board with multiple pockets for pamphlets and information cards about various aspects of Quakerism. A first round of these materials were also bought from the FGC Bookstore at Pendle Hill. That display board will now be mounted in the lobby with the contents easily available to Meeting members, attenders and visitors.

In 2017 we hope to: increase the use of the Sunday morning library cart; finish sorting and processing all the accumulated adult books; establish a viable lending library for parents and children; add more Quaker fiction to our small library; and, continue to develop resources for visitors, which routinely include classes from local churches, and students from college religion classes.

Communications

We have been fortunate to have someone who is knowledgeable and dedicated to keeping our website up to date. The web presence events page, the most volatile page, has been an important resource to members and to those who are looking for our presence in the Burlington area as well as the offerings we provide. There was some confusions between the Meeting calendar and the property use calendar, but those problems seem to have been solved. The website has been moved to a different server for technical reasons and also because the former company started making mistakes and became unresponsive. We believe that this move has and will continue to make the website more lively. Our up-to-date existence on the web and the regular newsletters and emails have been bringing more and more people into our community for worship and for events.

E-mail and website are inclusive and good for a newcomer. "Even if you're home sick you're still part of the group." and our community extends many thanks for the two people who provide these vital services.

Great gratitude is expressed for all the work done on committees. That dedication, vision and work speak to life of the Meeting and love for the community. It makes our community a place where Faith is accessible.

Summary of Member Surveys

Members were asked to respond to six questions via internet survey. Some of these members serve on committees and their work is reflected above, and many of these members and attenders were able to express their ideas through this format. A summary will be given for each question asked.

1. Was our Meeting welcoming to newcomers? Was it easy for seekers to find information about our Meeting and about Quakers in general? Was it easy for

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newcomers to become integrated into our community? How can we improve?

While there was agreement that our Meeting is very welcoming to newcomers, several mentioned that it was difficult to transition from that first welcome to becoming integrated and included in the community.

2. Please reflect on worship: was it spiritually fulfilling for you; was there enough spoken ministry or too much; are there ways could improve the experience?

There was general agreement that there was the correct balance and relationship between spoken ministry and silent worship.

3. 2016 was a busy year, with programs, speakers, workshops, discussions, etc. We would like any comments you might have about which of these have been most helpful to you. Are there specific types of programs or activities you would like to see in the future?

Many responded that, while the programs were very interesting, there may have been too many of them. Some found it difficult to decide which to choose and/or which to follow through on.

4. If your family was involved in the First Day School during 2016, please reflect on how well it met your needs, aided the spiritual development of the children, and helped them to be part of our meeting community. Do you have suggestions?

There was little response from parents, other than to say that more attendance of the First Day School children in Meeting for Worship would be nice.

5. Did our Quaker faith translate to action in appropriate ways during 2016.? How is our activism grounded spiritually?

The Friends who responded were mostly active through the Peace, Justice & Earthcare Committee. They were very happy with the energy and scale of social activism that sprang from our beliefs and from the work of their committee. There was one Friend who wondered if those less active Friends feel wholly integrated into the community.

6. New England Yearly Meeting wants to know what is going well with our Meeting and what our challenges might be.

Friends want NEYM to know that, in general, there is satisfaction with the way in which our spiritual and socially active life is balanced. There was concern that while we do attract significant numbers of young attendees, it has been difficult to get them involved in the community and it's life. There was definite hope that we could attract more young families. There was clear praise and gratitude for the work that our communication clerk and the website manager do to help all feel informed and included. •

Tax Resistance talk at BFM

TWELVE MEMBERS of Burlington Friends Meeting, joined by local war-tax resister Janet Hicks, took part in an absorbing discussion with Sam Koplinka-Loehr, Field Organizer and Outreach Consultant of the National War Tax Resistance Coordinating Committee, at the Meetinghouse on April 21st, a day after Sam spoke at the World Beyond War Conference in Winooski.

Sam has been a war-tax resister since the late 2000s and is a 25-year-old gender-queer young adult who is actively involved in long-term struggles for justice. Sam grew up in a tax-resistance family, including an aunt who was actively involved in the NWTRCC.

We are all alarmed at the budget priorities revealed in President Trump's 2018 budget. Most of us have been marching, writing letters to our representatives, and having bad dreams. Has the time come to make a deeper commitment to resistance?

Our discussion revealed the diverse ways in which resistance can be engaged. We can claim a higher number of allowances on our return, thus lowering our tax. We can gum up the works through "frivolous" and time-consuming communication with the IRS. We can withhold the percentage of our tax that is equivalent to the percentage of the federal budget committed to military madness. We can fill out the tax form but pay into an escrow account, such as the Peace Tax Fund. Some just manage to live their lives "beneath the radar."

Sam disabused us of the likelihood of arrest. Yes, the IRS can intimidate you, and perhaps take your car, but since 1940 only 38 people have gone to jail.

Sam recommended reading *99 Tactics of Successful Tax Resistance Campaigns* by David Gross. One idea for us locally is to refuse to pay the percentage of the military budget wasted on building and deploying the F35 long-range strike bomber fleet—costing an estimated \$1.45 trillion.

John Reuwer of BFM explained the fascinating history of Pennsylvania, where (in brief) Governor William Penn's refusal to engage the state in war against the Indians kept taxes low. (Google the relationship between taxes and war: "If a thousand men were not to pay their tax bills this year that would not be a violent and bloody measure, as it would be to pay them, and enable the State to commit violence and shed innocent blood"!)

Catherine Bock of BFM explained how in Sweden citizens feel it is a privilege to pay taxes—they take care of you. (But as military conscription is being reintroduced in Sweden, more of their taxes will be drawn away to the military.)

Check out the NWTRCC website <<http://nwtrcc.org>> for stories of longtime, and new, tax resisters.

—Robin Lloyd

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

May 2017



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

Date	Event	Contact/Committee
Each Sunday	Meeting for Worship—11:00 a.m.	Ruah Swennerfelt, 425-3377 Linda McKenna, 879-4307
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
May 14, 2017	Meeting for Business—12:45 p.m.	Jeanne Plo, 233-6377
June 11, 2017	All-Mtg. picnic with First Day School	Abby Matchette, 765-618-8936

Send newsletter submissions to Louis Cox <jlouiscox@gmail.com>