



FORT MYERS MONTHLY MEETING OF THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

Newsletter, Second Month, 2017

Worship: In the Iona House at the Calusa Nature Center
Mailing Address: 902 Big Pine Way, Fort Myers, FL 33907
Website: fortmyersquakers.org
E-mail: FtMyers.Quakers@gmail.com

Clerk: Nancy Fennell (239-437-4615)
Recording Clerks: Kathy Hale / Richard Frechette
Treasurer: John Battin

- Worship: Every Sunday at 10:30 AM
 - 1st Sunday of the Month: Pot Luck Lunch
 - 2nd Sunday of Month: Meeting for Worship
With Attention to Business
-

QUERIES & ADVICES *from Faith & Practice of Southeastern Yearly Meeting*

On Meeting for Worship With a Concern For Business

Queries:

- Are meetings for business held in the spirit of meetings for worship?
- In decision-making, do we promote a spirit of love, understanding, and patience as we seek unity on an appropriate course of action?
- Do we keep our remarks simple and speak only as the Spirit leads?
- Are we able to unite in good grace with the sense of the meeting when our personal desires tend in another direction?
- Do we maintain respect for others, however strongly our opinions may differ?
- Are meetings for business seen as positive opportunities for testing and practicing our spiritual life?

Advices:

- As members, attend the business meetings and extend our support to the meeting's

affairs so that the burden will not rest upon a few.

- In meetings for business and in all duties connected with them, seek the leadings of the Light.
- Avoid undue persistence. As we release our attachment to our ideas, the Light may reveal solutions none of us has considered.
- Be willing to admit the possibility of being in error.
- Remember that the foundation of a lasting decision lies in the search for unity—that is, a corporate seeking of the Light in an atmosphere of love, trust, and mutual forbearance.
- Attenders are warmly invited to attend and participate in meeting for worship with a concern for business.
- Have a sense of when to continue to labor on or to lay aside an issue.

MINUTES OF THE FORT MYERS MONTHLY MEETING OF THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

2nd Month 12, 2017

The Fort Myers Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends met in Iona House on second month twelve, with nineteen Friends present. The meeting opened with silent worship. Out of the silence, Clerk Nancy Fennell read advices and queries on the subject of Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business. In response to the queries, one Friend noted that our MFB is most often free of conflict and conducted in the spirit of love. Another related her first experience with MFB, remarking about not just how decisions are made, but also the time involved in making a decision – and that it takes practice to overcome a natural impatience.

MINISTRY & COUNSEL: Richard Frechette reported that the Committee considered the problem of hearing individuals' ministry during worship when the heating/cooling system is running. The procurement of a microphone and speaker system was discussed, but there are concerns about the potential of a microphone discouraging speaking out of the silence. The Committee agreed to hold off on this initiative for now, but will take steps to encourage people to stand (if possible), to speak slowly and to project their voices. The Meeting Clerk suggested that we look into a sound-system solution that Gainesville Meeting has used.

The M&C Committee considered the question of child care during worship. After considerable discernment, the Committee came to this sense:

- the primary responsibility for care of these younger children belongs to the parents;
- The Meeting is not in a position at this time to coordinate child care services
- A parent is welcome to establish relationships with other members of the Meeting family to assist in providing care for his/her child during worship.

In discussion, some Friends suggested that having a program of childcare would serve to attract younger families to our Meeting, and that we might need to continue to discern how we might be able to accomplish this. Nancy Murvine, who coordinates first day school, said that her Subcommittee feels its services must be focused on children over 5 years. She also suggested that the Meeting could provide a quiet space for children and their parents/caregivers, such as a pop-up tent in the spare room. Another Friend commented that offering music before worship that is appropriate for children as well as adults would serve to encourage families to come to meeting. Last it was noted that we need to include in the newsletter and website that persons intending to bring children for child care or first day school should call the meeting ahead in order for the Meeting to be prepared. The M&C Committee will continue in discernment on the matter of child care.

The Committee presented its draft of the Spiritual State of the Meeting Report. Friends focused on the matter of space between vocal ministries. One expressed uncertainty as to whether the implication of the report is that we need less speaking out of the silence or that we need to extend the total time of worship. Certainly the matter needs continuing study and discernment.

❖ **MINUTE 2017MM3:** Friends approved the following report of the spiritual state of our Meeting:

Members and attenders of Fort Myers Meeting met on 12th Month, 28th Day, 2016, to consider queries about the spiritual state of our Meeting, as requested by Yearly Meeting. The meeting was conducted in a worship sharing format.

Those gathered were asked if they felt a sense of the Divine Presence in our worship and whether they leave worship filled with a

feeling of peace and courage to carry on a Spirit-filled life. These queries drew many thoughtful responses.

Meeting for Worship was described as a spiritual home, where we are reminded to be kind and to care about others. Meeting was seen as an anchor, where we come to be grounded and transported beyond the daily and beyond ourselves.

“There is so much noise in life. It’s nice to focus on experiences, community, healing, and wellness.”

“People here are holding me in the Light. That is immeasurably important.”

Friends also mentioned that they miss having children and a wider distribution of ages in attendance in meeting.

Friends felt strengthened and deepened by Spirit-led messages and in the presence of love and Light in our community. Friends are encouraged to share their experiences of the Divine and “not let shyness, fear of public speaking, or anxiousness about saying the right thing block the sharing of messages.”

It was noted by several that more time between ministries was needed to process what has been said. After a ministry is spoken, listeners need time to absorb, to make their own connections, to discern. In this state of openness, we are often seeking healing, sometimes from feeling bombarded by language from media, politics, work, and other aspects of life. We find such healing in our own waiting silence and in the reverent and simple ministries spoken. Giving time between ministries may encourage those who don’t speak readily to share a message that they have received and also allows time for discernment of whether the message is meant for the Meeting as a whole or for the individual.”

Another query focused on our Meeting’s witness in the wider community. One Friend opened this exploration by stating, “We often

ask visitors, ‘How did you find us.’ We should ask, ‘How do we find you?’” Striving to make an impact on the community around us, we have recently formed an active Outreach Committee. We also impact the world around us by contributing two thirds of our annual income to the wider community. A number of our members and attenders donate untold hours in actively working within community organizations. As a Meeting, Friends have shown interest in working with the Pennies for Progress, a developing program to support and improve our schools, and we continue to support Lee Interfaith for Empowerment (L.I.F.E.), a commitment now of several years duration. We are indebted to our Peace and Social Concerns Committee for their faithful, dedicated guidance and direction in these matters.

As one Friend stated, “For me and for many of us, it is no longer about activism or need to fix problems. It’s ‘how do we carry the message of love into the community?’” Lastly, we reflected on the current condition of the Meeting, places where one sees new life emerging, or loss or sadness. Friends acknowledge how difficult it is to see the suffering in the world, notably in Syria and other war torn countries, and to have so little ability to intervene directly, such as sponsoring and giving aid to refugees.

Concerns about what will happen under the new government administration have become prominent in recent weeks. How best do we support our Quaker values and lead a Spirit-led life? Discussion of these concerns leads us back to the realization that we are to stay centered in love that is eternal, wisdom that survives temporary situations, and in that which is so much larger than ourselves.

FINANCE COMMITTEE: Joan Culver has been named Clerk of the Committee. She noted that the Committee will continue to discern how best to present financial information to the Meeting family.

FINANCIAL REPORT: Treasurer John Battin distributed the January 31 financial report.

	Jan-16	Jan-17
Contributions	\$1,560	\$1,565
Outlays	(\$262)	(\$207)
Difference	\$1,298	\$1,358

General Fund Cash on Hand 1/1/17	\$7,832
General Fund Contributions Jan, 2017	\$1,565
Budgeted Outlays Jan 2017	(\$207)
Outlay from 2016 Surplus	(\$500)
Cash on Hand Jan 31, 2017	\$8,689

John noted the adjusted 12/31/16 end-of-year general fund surplus of \$7,332, and proposed that Friends distribute the surplus in the same way that it had last year.

- ❖ **2017MM4:** Friends approve the distribution of \$7,332 surplus from 2016 to the following manner:
 - 25% to the Meetinghouse Fund
 - 25% to the Properties line item
 - 25% Peace & Social Concerns line item
 - 25% to Contingency

OUTREACH COMMITTEE:

The Committee has considered how it can collaborate with Calusa Nature Center on an Earth Day Outreach program on April 22. Carolyn Stanley met with appropriate staff and volunteers of the CNCP and presented them an informal proposal. The proposal would involve the use of Iona House on that day. It would include a music period with an environmental theme, informational tables (sponsored by our Meeting and possibly a few other organizations). Volunteers from our Meeting will be needed to work on publicity, decorate Iona House with an earth care theme, welcome visitors, set up and staff a table with

Quaker Earthcare pamphlets. We discussed possible ways of subsidizing children’s attendance and attracting attenders.

- ❖ **2017MM5:** We approve the Meeting’s sponsoring an Earth Day program at the Calusa Nature Center. We ask the Outreach committee to return to the Meeting next month with further specifics.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE: Richard Frechette has volunteered to serve as name tag maker.

PEACE & SOCIAL CONCERNS COMMITTEE:

John Battin has been named Clerk of the Committee. He reported that our Meeting participated in LIFE’s (Lee Interfaith for Empowerment) efforts to bring the Civil Citation initiative statewide, this having been successfully implemented in Lee County. John also told us that LIFE is facing coordination challenges in that the prior lead organizer has left and that funds are inadequate at this time to employ a replacement. He suggested that the Meeting consider providing a one-time grant of funds to LIFE from our contingency. John also noted that the annual suggested tithe to LIFE might be increased from 1% to 2%. Friends discussed the benefits of the civil citation initiative to the community as a whole. Friends also expressed their appreciation to Priscilla DeOliveira for her traveling to Tallahassee with other LIFE Reps to lobby for Civil Citation legislation

- ❖ **2017MM6:** We approve providing a one-time grant of \$2,000 to Lee Interfaith for Empowerment with the funds earmarked to partially fund a full-time lead organizer.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION COMMITTEE:

Nancy Fennel reminded friends of two upcoming adult religious education opportunities.

- On Sunday, February 19, at the rise of worship, Nancy Fennell will lead a discussion

on “The Unwritten Rules of Meeting for Worship.”

- On Saturday, March 18, Eduardo Diaz of Miami Meeting will be leading our Meeting retreat, with the theme “Deepening our Spirituality”.

HOSPITALITY COMMITTEE: The Committee has named Nancy Howell to serve as clerk. The Committee is moving towards simplifying the post-worship food and snack process.

PROPERTIES COMMITTEE: Mary Smiley has been named to serve as Clerk of the Committee. On behalf of the Committee, Joan Culver is working to secure an informal bid for a replacement HVAC system for the Iona House. The Committee will report back to the Meeting with findings.

CLERK’S REPORT:

The Clerk noted that the Meeting has named Nancy Fennell, Tom Fennell and Richard Frechette as formal representatives to Southeast Yearly Meeting, but that all are invited and encouraged to attend the annual gathering, which will be held on Apr.12-16 in Fruitland Park.

She shared correspondence from SEYM about two matters, and asks that Friends consider a corporate response for the SEYM reps to carry forward. The documents will be posted in the Meeting’s newsletter, and will be considered at the next Business Meeting:

- ❖ The Committee for Ministry on Racism’s draft of a minute entitled "End Slavery for All;"
- ❖ Recommendation of both the SEYM FLGBTQ Representative (Friends for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, & Queer Concerns) and the SEYM Committee For Ministry on Racism that SEYM approve contributing funds for a proposed Institutional Assessment of Structural Racism of Friends General Conference.

OTHER: To date the Meeting has donated 385 pounds of food and \$42 in cash to the Harry Chapin Food Bank. We expressed our appreciation to Connie Summerlin for her coordinative work in this.

The minutes of the meeting were read and approved. We ended the meeting in centered silence.

Richard Frechette
Co-Recording Clerk



Friend: Does thee have good habits?

(like bringing a food item weekly for the Harry Chapin Food Bank contribution box)

First Day School:

We offer First Day School for children ages 5+. If you intend to bring a child for First Day School, we ask that you contact Nancy Murvine (239-394-5534) ahead of time so that appropriate material can be prepared. Also, contact Nancy if you have any questions

Women's March for Social Justice



On January 21, the day after the presidential inauguration, approximately 2,500 people gathered in Naples for the Women's March on Social Justice, in solidarity with the Women's March in Washington DC. Fourteen Friends from our Meeting community attended the March. Besides marching, Fort Myers Friends sponsored a table with Quaker information relevant to the issues being addressed by the march. A few observations...

"I was expecting a few hundred at the march. My heart was full as the numbers swelled to 2.5 thousand for tiny Naples – the number given by the news media. I did not want to see an anti-Trump parade as I believe the issues are far greater than a one-man creation, so I was heartened by the number of positive signs and chants that flowed through the crowd. The sign that Vicki carried and was made by Chris R. read Build Bridges Not Walls and epitomized what I had hoped the message of the march would be. I only heard two observers along the way make comments about the need for a wall. I silently prayed that their minds and hearts be broken open by this huge, peaceful gathering to see another possibility. There is a movement of millions around the globe who have been silent or unseen but who are now being led to tell the world there is an alternative vision to the fearful one the has pervaded our lives recently" (Nancy Murvine)



"Paula Peterson and John Tusa, snowbirds from Peconic Bay, Long Island, Meeting went to the March in downtown Naples. It was inspiring to join with like-minded men and women in solidarity. We were, according to the paper, 2500 people. There were also enthusiastic on watchers giving us victory heads up signals from the sidewalks. A rewarding day for all and the Quaker table at Cambria park gave curious others to find out if they too might be Quakers and don't know it." (Paula Peterson)

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END SLAVERY FOR ALL

Second Draft

(Note: The following is for consideration of Friends and will be on the agenda of the March Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business.)

Action Request on the Thirteenth Amendment, for Further Seasoning for Suggested Approval at SEYM Yearly Meeting Sessions, 2017

The SEYM Committee for Ministry on Racism asks Worship Groups, Monthly and Yearly Meetings to affirm, and publicize the need for:

1. The removal of the exception clause of the 13th Amendment to the US Constitution which otherwise abolishes slavery (exception clause has been put in bold below);
2. Knowledge that the purpose of prisons should be to protect members of society and

to prepare those imprisoned to return as productive members of their community through provision of comprehensive education and training;

3. Persons formerly in prison to have full restoration of constitutional rights, including access to housing and jobs.

§§§

The 13th Amendment reads:

- Section 1. Neither slavery or involuntary servitude, **except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted**, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.

- Section 2. Congress shall have the power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

§§§

We seek this in the light of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) testimony on equality and our history of seeking to honor that of God in everyone through justice that restores. Currently, persons in prisons are coerced into working in what amounts to slavery. They leave prison with severely restrictive conditions of freedom that shackle their efforts for normalcy, often for the rest of their lives.

Institutional Assessment Regarding Structural Racism Friends General Conference (FGC)

(Note: At our February Meeting for Business, Clerk Nancy Fennell asked that Friends review this request for funding from FGC and to give guidance to our SEYM representatives as to whether to recommend that SEYM provide financial support.)

Central Committee united around the need to undertake institutional assessment to uncover structural racism within our organization - and to prepare plans for dismantling such structures. We heard from many yearly and monthly meetings about the importance of taking this step. As part of our commitment to collaborate with our affiliated yearly and monthly meetings, we will be sharing our learnings from this assessment with Friends across the USA and Canada.

Although structural oppression doesn't diminish the presence of the Spirit in us or the vision of a "great people to be gathered," it does create barriers that are stumbling blocks to full participation by many in our faith community. In dismantling these stumbling blocks, we must tap into the power of the Spirit while acknowledging the truth that structural oppression and systemic racism does spiritual violence to us all. To

be faithful in this time we must do more than admit that such oppression and attitudes of privilege exist. We must act to eliminate them if we wish to be fully inclusive in ways that are more than mere words.

After getting bids from anti-racism consulting firms and building a draft budget, it's become clear that this assessment may cost as much as \$60,000. We will need financial support from meetings and individual Friends on top of their regular support for the FGC's ongoing programs and services. We do have some pledges in hand for this work, but we need many more.

From Vital Friends, FGC E-Newsletter, Barry Crossno, FGC General Secretary and FGC Staff. November 2016

Welcome to FMMM's 2017 Annual Retreat

Presenting:

Explorations of Spiritual Deepening

With Speaker: Eduardo Diaz, PhD

Eduardo is a Cuban/American Quaker and Peace Psychologist from Miami Monthly Meeting. He is past president of the National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement, and a member of the Council of Representatives (COR) of the American Psychological Association. He is past president and current COR Representative of the Society for the Study of Peace, Conflict and Violence.

Schedule:

Friday, 3/17/17: An informal **Worship Sharing** with Eduardo and Clara Diaz at the Fennell's home, 7 to 8:30 pm. Directions and a sign-up sheet will follow.

Saturday, 3/18/17: Join us for a retreat at Iona House 9:30 AM to 4:30 PM with Eduardo as speaker and facilitator. **Bring a potluck dish for lunch on Saturday.** A group dinner at a local restaurant to follow.

ALL ARE WELCOME! PLEASE JOIN US!

SEYM 2017 Gathering & Annual Sessions

April 12-16, 2017

United Methodist Life Enrichment Center, Fruitland Park, Florida

- *This Year's Theme is* **Climate Justice**
- **Peterson Toscano** will lead the Walton Retreat and present the Walton Lecture
- There are 26 individual Workshops, Discussion Groups and Presentations
- You may register for the entire Gathering, or for any individual days/nights
- Children under 18 can participate for free; financial assistance is also available for adults
- You may register online, via mail, or via telephone.
- For more information, go to seymquakers.org, or pick up materials at our Meeting's information table

Are You Looking for Spiritual Nourishment Opportunities, But Lack Adequate Funds to Pursue Such Opportunities?

The Meeting's budget for Ministry & Counsel Committee includes "scholarship" funds to assist folks from our Meeting family. Talk to any member of Ministry & Counsel.

Helen Fox

(Interview by Pat Iyer)

Helen Fox embraced Quaker values long before she became one. She spent her childhood in Hyde Park, a neighborhood on the south side of Chicago that thought of itself as a liberal, integrated community but in reality, was quite segregated. She went to Hyde Park High School, which, by the time she graduated, was about 80% black and very diverse in terms of economic class. Some of the black students came from the area where Barack Obama lives, a wealthy, black enclave. Many others were very impoverished; their families had been part of the Great Migration from the south that brought them to Chicago for jobs in the steel mills and stockyards. Blacks lived in very poor housing, totally separated from whites of any class. At school, black and white students were discouraged from mixing socially or educationally. This situation was troubling for many teens, yet few dared challenge the unspoken rules about race.

Brought up to be a skeptic by her atheist, cosmopolitan mother, Helen was encouraged to attend the churches and synagogues of her friends but at that point in her life, she did not identify with any particular religion.

After starting school early because of an October birthday and skipping a few grades, Helen was in college before she turned 17. She went to the University of California at Berkeley, which she chose more for its beautiful environment and its closeness to the mountains and the sea than for its rigorous science program. However, she did well, and graduated Phi Beta Kappa in 1964, just as the Free Speech Movement was beginning to roil the campus.

Peace Corps in India

While still in college, Helen married a fellow student. Right after she graduated with her degree in biology, she and her husband joined the Peace Corps. They were sent to India, to the remote area of Tripura, east of what is now Bangladesh (then East Pakistan). Helen became a sci-

ence teacher at a junior college, teaching introductory biology and some of the science courses she had just completed at Berkeley.

Although her Indian students were excellent, Helen and several of her fellow Volunteers soon realized that the Indian school system relied almost exclusively on memorization. Students had little understanding or interest in applying what they had learned to the natural world. Helen and her husband managed to convince the Minister of Education to run a series of short courses (or inservice training) for elementary school science teachers from all over the State of Tripura. Groups of teachers came to the college for a month, where they learned to teach their young students the practical aspects of observing nature and doing science in the field. After training many teachers, she had the opportunity to visit some of them in their schools in the beautiful, remote jungle areas.



Helen's Peace Corps work coincided with the time that hostilities were breaking out between India and Pakistan. She and her husband lived close to border. War activity meant that kerosene and food were rationed,

trenches were dug outside of the house, and windows had to be blacked out at night. Peace Corps finally evacuated the five Tripura Volunteers to Assam, and then on to Darjeeling, where they spent several months at a language school. Later, Helen became pregnant with her first daughter, who was born in Tripura after the hostilities had ceased.

Return to the U.S.

Helen and her family returned to the U.S. by way of Moscow, which in those days had few U.S. visitors. They then flew over the North Pole to Alaska, bought a car, and traveled to California via the Al-Can Highway, which at that time was a two-lane gravel road. Back in Berkeley, they decided to move to Boston, where her husband would attend graduate school. Although Helen was somewhat frustrated staying home with the baby, she was skeptical both of the Women's movement, which was active at that time, and of graduate programs that seemed both ethnocentric and disconnected from what she saw as "real life." Having seen dire poverty in India, she wanted to learn more about poverty in her own country.

Helen found a job at a Settlement House in Roxbury, where she started a program for preschool and school age children who had been rejected by the public schools. This was before public schools were required to allow children with disabilities and mental illness to participate in classrooms. Seeing the need for this school, Helen read all she could find on the topic at the library, talked to social workers and, with support from the Settlement House, began the program with a dozen children and volunteers from the community. It was a fascinating, if disheartening introduction to U.S. poverty, the welfare system, and the ways that public institutions were marked by race. Helen's involvement with the school took place during the era of Boston-area demonstrations against busing, the rise of Black Power, the Black Panther movement, the assassination of Martin Luther King, and of course, the Vietnam War.

Although Helen was not politically active in college, her experiences in India and Boston began to radicalize her. She became frustrated with the contradictory way her country was treating vulnerable people, both at home and abroad. The U.S. was promoting foreign aid through the Peace Corps at the same time it was bombing Vietnam, at that time one of the world's most impoverished countries. The U.S.

government was sponsoring anti-poverty programs, but turning a blind eye to the needs of racial minorities, particularly their most vulnerable children. Finally, like many young adults of that era, Helen "dropped out," hoping to find an alternative route to a better world. In the process, she divorced her first husband, and, with her young daughter, moved into a commune.

Helen's second husband, an "intelligent drop-out" who she met in the commune, moved with her around the country for a while, finally settling in Quebec. There, they made a home in the countryside where their three daughters were raised to be bilingual in French and English. While enjoying rural life, Helen taught English as Second Language to adult French speakers while training herself to become a writer. She tried her hand at children's stories and plays, science writing for primary school teachers, and op-ed pieces on social issues for U.S. newspapers. She had little success getting published, but she persisted, papering her walls with rejection slips. After 15 years, her second marriage dissolved, and she was on her own with a teenager and a pre-teen.

Return to the U.S.

Helen saw that the only way she could support her family was to get a higher degree. Fortunately, she was accepted at a graduate program that turned out to be a perfect fit for her: The Center for International Education at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. The program was designed for mid-career professionals, half of whom came from the Global South. Through her friendships with international students she became interested in cultural issues in academic writing, which became the focus of her doctoral research. After five years in the combined Masters-Doctoral program, she received her Doctorate in Education. Along the way she had many interesting work opportunities that included trips to Cote d'Ivoire, Togo, and the Solomon Islands.

Helen was relieved and excited to be offered a job in the writing program at the University of Michigan, and moved to Ann Arbor in 1991.

During the next 22 years, she taught undergraduate courses in academic writing, race and racism, international development, human rights, and nonviolent social movements.

Helen was pleased to discover that getting published is much easier when affiliated with a university. She has since written a number of books:

Listening to the World: Cultural Issues in Academic Writing (based on her dissertation)
“When Race Breaks Out”: *Conversations about Race and Racism in College Classrooms* (now going into its 3rd edition)
Their Highest Vocation: Social Justice and the Millennial Generation
Fractured: Race Relations in “Postracial” American Life (her most recent book)

Early on in her time at U of M, Helen was lucky enough to find Jim Koopman, a professor of epidemiology who also loved to travel and enjoyed the natural world. They have been happily married since 1998. Between them they have 5 adult children and 5 grandchildren. Helen and Jim live half the year in Bokeelia on Pine Island and half the year in Ann Arbor. Technology allows them to stay connected with colleagues and to carry on some of their work while here.

Introduction to Quakers

When she arrived at the University of Michigan in 1991, Helen was looking for group of friends who shared similar values. Some of her colleagues were Quakers, and soon they invited Helen to a Quaker meeting which was across the street from the university.

The first time Helen entered the meetinghouse she immediately found it appealed to her. The silent worship, the heartfelt testimony, the appeal to the mysterious, and the open, un-programmed nature of the Meeting spoke to her. She recalls a very old man who did not speak of

God, but of visiting the cloud forest in Costa Rica and his awe of nature. She began learning more about Quakers and after a few years, she decided to become a member of the Ann Arbor Meeting.

Fort Myers Monthly Meeting

When Jim and Helen decided to spend six months of the year in Florida, Helen knew she needed to find a Quaker Meeting. Initially she thought the closest one was an hour and half drive, but then discovered the Fort Myers Monthly Meeting was only 45 minutes away. She immediately felt extremely welcomed and at home.

These are some of the Quaker highlights for Helen:

- Quaker antiwar and nonviolence values resonate with her. She has taught about nonviolence and the many alternatives to war.
- Quaker methods of clerking meetings are applicable to other situations in her work and civic engagement, for example, when she has been called to facilitate hard discussions around race, chair the Ann Arbor Human Rights Commission, or Clerk the Board of Friends School in Detroit.
- The Quaker history of speaking truth to power has helped her become an activist on controversial issues such as the Israel Palestine conflict and racial justice.

Although Helen formally retired four years ago, she continues to teach a mini-course on race in the fall at the University of Michigan. This gets her back in touch with students, whom she sometimes misses. But she is finding new interests and new friends at the Randell Research Center on Pine Island, where she is a Docent-in-Training on the Calusa Heritage Trail.

Thoughts on the Election

Vocal ministry given by Christopher Sammond at Fall Sessions 2016 – New York Yearly Meeting

I had not planned on speaking this weekend, having originally found no leading to do so. After the election, I gradually felt a leading to speak growing in me. Lucinda and I felt that we could not just enter into our business without acknowledging the impact of this election on many of us. This message is in response to that concern.

I want to preface these remarks with the recognition that I know that some members of our Yearly Meeting are Republicans, and that they anticipated voting for Mr. Trump. I respect their decision based on their best judgement and sense of leading. And I know that they often feel in a distinct minority in our fellowship, even beleaguered, and I want to say that we as Friends are not Republican nor Democrat, conservative nor liberal, that we are a fellowship of people drawn to a practice of listening for God's voice and leading, and seeking to live out our lives in accordance with the will of the Divine as best we can discern. I believe we would be a healthier Religious Society if we had more people in our ranks who differed from what can often be an assumed liberal norm, and can even feel at times like a liberal enclave.

That said, I have spoken with many Friends who are deeply, overwhelmingly traumatized by the election of Mr. Trump. One Friend told me when it happened she was so distraught she repeatedly threw up. Another reported waking up screaming in terror at the prospect of a Trump presidency. I myself have had many a night with disrupted sleep over the past six months at that prospect, chilled with an overwhelming fear of what that might mean.

Some here are not traumatized. Some I have spoken with are concerned, yes. Disappointed, yes. But by no means bearing the trauma I witness in others. We need to be able to be present to each

other in all the different ways we are responding to the election.

Some see the Trump presidency as being disastrous for abetting the growing impact of climate change. Bill McKibbin, founder of 350.org, wrote that this election is "game over" for averting the catastrophic impact of global warming, meaning literally the eventual end of life on Earth as we know it. Some see a Trump presidency as a legitimization of the racism which has permeated our society, now more visible, and now both tacitly and overtly acceptable in the eyes of some. In the night after Election Day, racial epithets and swastikas were spray painted in public places across this country. Some see a Trump presidency as putting the world at grave risk, with someone whose emotional maturity and psychological balance they question now in charge of the largest military on earth, and the codes to deploy our nuclear weapons. Some see a Trump presidency as threatening our civil and human rights, as his campaign promises included resuming the practice of torture, limiting the rights of Muslims, and supporting an aggressive police response to those protesting the reality of racism in this country. For some of us, the horror of having, as evidenced by his many public statements, a racist, bigot, misogynist, and xenophobe in the White House is more than we can bear. Some see a Trump presidency as threatening to fill the Supreme Court with justices so far to the right as to tip the balance in this country on a variety of issues for a generation, or more.

I, personally, hold all these fears, and more. And in the moments when I could find centered connection in the midst of the terror I felt leading up to and after the election, what I heard in that place where I know the voice of the Divine to speak in

me, was “Will you trust me?” Over and over I heard, “Will you trust me?”

Now, I don’t interpret this to mean everything is going to be just fine. I think quite the contrary. But I do hear it as both a query and a request. And I will tell you what I know I can trust:

- I trust in God’s presence, and availability.
- I trust in my ability, when I am centered and grounded that I will be led.
- I trust in the power of love and compassion to overcome fear, hatred, and bigotry.
- I trust that when I am aligned with God, that my meager resources of abilities and gifts are multiplied many times.
- I trust in the power of non-violence, love, and the willingness to suffer to soften people’s hearts, and thereby overcome structures of domination, injustice and intimidation.
- I trust that the arc of the Universe does indeed bend toward justice.

Speaking with a friend about what I trusted, she told me the story of a woman in a village near Bhopal, when the chemical plant blew up. Everyone in the village was running away, screaming in panic. She, having had a long practice of meditation, listened inwardly for what to do. What she heard was “turn on the fan, lie down on the floor, and go to sleep.” She did that, and she was the only one in her village that survived that day.

All those running away were breathing in the poison in great gulps, while her metabolism slowed down, in sleep, where the air was better, down low, on the floor.

On a lesser note, the Friday before the election, I had had an intimation of which way it was going, and I was utterly undone, so upset and grieved that I couldn’t really function. I could hardly manage to pack to go to the workshop on Beyond the White Privilege Conference. I was already running late. But I kept getting a pull to go out to the garden and weed. I finally heeded it, and after about 45 minutes with my hands in the rich soil, I felt grounded and enough together that I could function.

This is what we do. This is what we do as Friends. We listen, and are guided. We act.

Night before last, as I held the question of what to say today, the words “baptism of fire” came to me. I believe we are at the dawn of a moment in history that will shake us as a nation to our very foundations. We will be called to new depths in our practice. We will be challenged in ways I can only imagine. We will be tempered. It will not be easy. And we have the resources to face this time. So I ask you, in what do you trust?

Christopher Sammond is the General Secretary of New York Yearly Meeting

(Passed on to Ft. Myers MM by Paula Peterson)

Sojourning Fort Myers Friends:

- Rebecca Garofano and her husband, Patrick, are the proud parents of a baby son, Amos Michael Garofano. They have returned from Thailand to the Northern US in order to care for Rebecca’s mom, who is in poor health. One upside, though - they are enjoying snowshoeing (snow is new to Patrick, from New Zealand).
- Chris Ruhnke has moved to Brooklyn for an extended visit with his older brother. His date of return to Fort Myers is uncertain. He welcomes text, calls or e-mails from f/Friends.
- Melinda Russek, sojourning Meeting member and former employee at Calusa Nature Center, e-mailed: “I miss all of you! I am still living in Palm Harbor. I go to college full time and work when I can around my school schedule, it’s been a busy time! We do not go down south much, money is really tight and we stay close to home! I have attended meeting (Clearwater) up here but I miss Iona House so very much!”

USEFUL WEBSITES FOR FRIENDS

<http://seymquakers.org>

Southeastern Yearly Meeting

www.fcnl.org

Friends Committee for National Legislation

www.fgcquaker.org

Friends General Conference

www.afsc.org

American Friends Service Committee

<http://fwcc.world>

Friends World Committee on Consultation

www.quakerspeak.com

QuakerSpeak: a Quaker YouTube channel.

www.quakerhouse.org

Quaker House, Fayetteville

Note from the Editor:

- Please send articles, favorite passages, book reports and items of interest to Friends.
- Please send important dates, news of Friends/friends, etc.
- Those wishing to receive the newsletter by email, please contact the editor.
(Editor's email address: Rich.Frechette@gmail.com)

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