

Southern Appalachian Friend

the Quarterly Newsletter of

SAYMA

Southern Appalachian
Yearly Meeting & Association

Fall
2008

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Editor: Kathleen Mavournin

Note from Ministry and Nurture

SAYMA's Ministry and Nurture Committee would like to meet you! In 2004, the committee decided that, in order to better support the Light within our yearly meeting, they needed to get to know individual meetings better. To that end, they have attempted to hold their meetings in different places throughout SAYMA. Since changing their way of work, they have been hosted by the following meetings and worship groups (listed in the chronological order of their visits): Crossville, Foxfire, Brevard, Swannanoa Valley, Oxford, Greater Atlanta Worship Groups (Canton, Gwinnett, and Anneewakee Creek), Huntsville, Asheville, Columbia, Charleston WV, Royal Worship Group, Chattanooga, and, most recently, Athens.

This spring M&N plans to meet in Cookeville and Greenville. They would especially like to encourage smaller meetings and worship groups to consider hosting a Ministry and Nurture Committee meeting. They are a considerably smaller group to host than representative meeting (6-8 people), and bring their own lunch! Over-night accommodations for those coming a long distance and a light breakfast would be needed. They do like to have a potluck dinner with the Friends who host them, and especially enjoy worshipping with the meetings they are privileged to visit. Please prayerfully consider whether your meeting might feel led to host them sometime in 2009-2010. If you are interested in hosting the committee, or would just like more information about hosting, or the committee's work in general, please contact Judy Guerry, clerk (guershea@hiwaay.net).

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Deadline for Winter 2009 issue of SAF is January 5

All Friendly reports, concerns, minutes,
announcements, humor, musings &
poems are welcome.

Send submissions to:
Kathleen Mavournin
SAFeditor@sayma.org

Please put your name and email address
or phone number on all submissions.

SAYMA Calendar 2008-9

No winter representative meeting

March 28, 2009
Spring Representative Meeting
Birmingham, AL

June 11-14, 2009
Yearly Meeting Annual Sessions
Warren Wilson College
Swananoa, NC

Correction:

The Summer 2008 issue of this newsletter listed Errol Hess as clerk of the SAYMA Nominating Committee. Errol has completed his term. Sallie Prugh of Columbia is the new Nominating Committee Clerk.

Message from the SAYMA Clerk

Dear Friends,

We are called to speak truth. I want to share with you some thoughts about the future of our families, our communities and our country.

Our country has entered a period of adjustment to some fundamental changes that cannot be reversed. The era of cheap energy is over. This will have a profound effect on every part of our economy. Simultaneously, the era of cheap credit is over (regardless of the interest rates). The government cannot fix this. They can help stabilize parts of the economy, but they cannot reverse the facts. People in the United States are going to consume less. Some might call this a recession, but it's really a different process, because we will not recover in the way we have in the past, we will transition to a very different economy. The notions of "growth," and "standard of living" are going to be challenged. People are already panicking. However, this new future, however painful the transition, need not be bleak.

We as a faith community with a testimony of simplicity have a unique opportunity to help. We recognize that spiritual wealth does not depend on possessions; that enough is plenty. With our testimony of community, we recognize that we are all in this together. Only solutions that treat all with respect and equality will be helpful when everyone is hurting. As seekers of the Spirit, we can keep ourselves calm for we know how to center to open ourselves to God's word. From that place of peace, we can also help others find peace in these turbulent times. That is fundamental – we cannot be of help to our communities if we cannot calm ourselves and act out of love for ourselves and others. Our Meetings must be sacred spaces where we can express our fears, frustrations, despair and anger and move through these emotions to God's peace. We must strengthen our relationships with each other so that we can provide the support we will all need. As we trust in God to bring us through this storm, we can find the many openings that will allow our families, our communities, and our nation to make this transition in a peaceful and loving way. What a gift we have been given!

Dennis Gregg, SAYMA Clerk

Pendle Hill Offers Weekends on Quaker Basics: Clerking, Recording, Outreach, and the Peace Testimony

A participant in a recent "how-to" weekend at Pendle Hill wrote, "I came to the workshop hoping for some 'tools' for the toolbox and left with the hardware store!" Many Friends serving their meetings as clerks, recording clerks, and committee members find it useful to add to their "toolbox" through workshops with Friends called to the same service. This winter Pendle Hill is offering several workshops with experienced leaders on Quaker meeting essentials:

- "Claiming Our Peace Testimony," December 5-7, with Mary Lord, former peacebuilding staff for the American Friends Service Committee;
- "Recording: Spiritual Discipline and Communal Gift," January 16-18, with Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Friends Mario Cavallini and Sondra Ball;
- "Meeting Growth and Revitalization," January 30-Feb. 1 with Deborah Haines (co-sponsored by the Advancement and Outreach Committee of Friends General Conference);
- "Clerking," February 6-8 with Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative) clerks Deborah Fisch and Bill Deutsch.

For more information visit www.pendlehill.org or call 1-800-742-3150, ext. 3. Pendle Hill will match grants from meetings to help enable Friends to attend these workshops.

Reflections on Travel with the Traveling Ministry Program for Friends General Conference

Mary Ann Downey, Atlanta Friends Meeting

Throughout our history, Friends traveling in the ministry have helped meetings deepen their spiritual lives. Ten years ago, the Traveling Ministries Program (TMP) of Friends General Conference (FGC) was created to encourage Spirit-led ministry and to arrange for travel by seasoned Friends to meetings requesting help. At the same time, the Traveling Ministry Program began assisting meetings in exploring how they can best nurture and support the spiritual gifts of seasoned members who may be led to travel. For the last 8 years, the Atlanta Friends Meeting has recognized, minuted and supported my leading to be one of these traveling ministers. After each visit, I take time to write a summary of the travel and my reflections on the work. I deeply appreciate all of you who have held me in prayer during these visits and this report is from my travel in April among Friends in Lake Erie Yearly Meeting with Bill Holland as my traveling companion/elder.

Reflections:

My preparation to travel among Friends in Ohio led me to hold each group in prayer asking God's guidance to deepen the spiritual life of these meetings. When I spoke with someone in each location before the travel, I asked for guidance on how to best meet the needs and use my time. The answer to my prayers for guidance was that I was to simply listen, to pray and pay attention to the Spirit among us.

We were blessed to feel the Spirit with us as we traveled among Friends and that our gifts were gladly received. I am continually amazed that, as the Bible tells us, when we ask, we receive and I kept asking to be given God's message each day. The message that I was led to give in each place and that is still guiding me is that the power and grace for spiritual renewal and transformation is always available for us. It is there for us both individually and corporately. We can deepen the spiritual life of the meeting whenever we act expecting God's guidance and grace.

The month of April in Ohio offered inspiration and lessons with the transformation of springtime beauty, warm sun, trees just beginning to leaf out, and wonderful flowering everywhere. We celebrated this demonstration of the natural world's transformation, the examples of renewal, of opening to the light. I was reminded that in winter growth is slower, less visible, at rest. In our times of spiritual 'winter', of struggle, or darkness we may forget that life begins in darkness and is renewed in dormancy and rest. The power and energy for transformation, however, is always within each of us and within all life.

Our challenge in building the spiritual meeting community is to be transformed to God's will, to follow the advice Paul gave in his letter to the Romans: "Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may know that good, acceptable and perfect will of God". (Romans 12:2) And today as I opened my latest book of poems by Mary Oliver, these lines spoke to me:

"That God had a plan for us, I do not doubt,
But what if his plan was that we would do better."

My advice for Friends is that we keep asking the question, "How can we as Friends 'do better' in meeting for worship and in our life together?" I've adapted some of the advices from *Britain Yearly Meeting Faith and Practice* about meeting for worship and offer you this summary of advices:

1. Come with heart and mind prepared
2. Try to find a spiritual wholeness which encompasses suffering as well as thankfulness and joy.
3. Be open to new light from whatever source it may come.
4. Listen for the Spirit in the silence.
5. Listen to the place where the words come from when someone speaks.
6. Accept the challenge of this journey together and expect continuing revelation.

My Experience: School of the Spirit

Ceal Wutka, Atlanta MM

School of the Spirit was a program I discovered in 2004 at The Gathering at a time when I was searching for something in Spirit that I was unable to name. In September 2006, I attended a "Testing the Waters" day sponsored by SotS to get an idea of the program. After a clearness committee, I applied and was accepted into the program for the years 2007-2009.

I am not sure just what I was searching for when I felt the Spirit tugging me toward this program. What most of us are searching for is God. We want a closer relationship with our heavenly father. There are many paths to use to accomplish this. For me, the School of the Spirit provided the framework I needed. Through the readings, retreats and daily spiritual practices, I found myself going through several transitions. Some of these transitions were painful and tearful, and a few were joyful. The community formed throughout seven retreats has been amazing.

The program is for those wishing to become a spiritual nurturer. I realize now that as Quakers, we are all called to nurture each other. Each person will have a different path to follow and each of us needs to find our own way. Having a good foundation is invaluable to this work. I don't fully know yet where God is leading me, but I know I am no longer afraid to go. I have learned about Quaker roots and beliefs and can better speak to Truth.

There will be another session starting in Fall of 2009 and I can mail you a brochure. They will again hold the retreats in Durham, NC. Information is online at www.quakerinfo.com/sos.shtml. Here you can find more details about the program and the two one-day retreats called, "Testing the Waters." (They will be Feb. 7 and March 28.) Feel free to email to discuss more deeply my own experiences, ceal@wutka.com.

News of SAYMA Meetings

ATLANTA: Friends continue to search for a meetinghouse resident manager; Friendly Eights Refugee Support Group welcomes and supports Burundi Friends who have entered the life of Atlanta meeting; Educational scholarships were provided to young Friends for the 2008-09 college year.

BIRMINGHAM: Birmingham Friends community outreach included cooking for a homeless feeding program, work with Alabama Faith Council, Greater Birmingham Ministries, and disseminating Eyes Wide Open displays around the state.

BREVARD: Brevard newsletter revived after two year hiatus. "Minibios" of meeting members and SAYMA information are highlights.

COLUMBIA: Building committee is actively searching for building sites. At September business meeting Friends shared experiences of being inspired and infused with the history of old meeting houses.

MEMPHIS: Memphis is led to pursue owning a meetinghouse and appointed a search committee for that end. Memphis Friends were seen recently at North Carolina Yearly Meeting Conservative, The Sixth Annual Faith and Labor Picnic, The National Summit on Torture, Chattanooga Meeting, Oxford Meeting, and will soon be seen at the Gandhi King Conference on Peacemaking. Rumors that Kristi has been cloned were discredited.

ROYAL Worship Group: Hallelujah! Our attendance has more than doubled in the past month! We have grown from 4 attendees to 9, including 1 year old Marlow Wood. Tears streamed down my and Daryl's faces as the baby made his cooing sounds during worship. We are so happy. And we give much thanks to Birmingham Meeting, whose care we are under, for supporting us by placing an ad in our local paper.

WEST KNOXVILLE: Peace and Social Concerns committee hosts an interdenominational group working on counter recruitment, educating about alternatives to enlistment and conscientious objection.

Please, Friends, send reports of meeting activities quarterly for this newsletter or send copies of your minutes to errol@kitenet.net so he can put something together for the newsletter. SAF is a resource to help pull our spread out community together. We need your help.

Weaving Sacred Wholeness: a regional, small conference sponsored by FGC

Ten years ago this upcoming March, Friends General Conference (FGC) hosted its first regional conference. This conference, *Nurturing the Nurturer*, occurred in the southeast at Penn Center on St Helena Island, SC. The purpose of the conference was to provide a spiritually rich and nurturing space in the southeast for Friends to gather, worship, share their experiences and nurture one another.

It is just as true today, as it was in 1999, that “At the core of FGC’s mission is our commitment to help nurture a vital Religious Society of Friends.” A part of this commitment is deeply tied to honoring Young Friends and hearing their voices, as well as ending racism within Quakerism and the world at large.

In the belief of needing to continue helping nurture the religion within the context of these issues and other joys and concerns of Friends today, FGC’s Youth Ministries and Ministry on Racism committees are co-sponsoring FGC’s second Southeastern conference, *Weaving Sacred Wholeness*. This is a new and exciting type of gathering—an opportunity for Friends across generations to come together in a small environment, exploring Quaker diversity in all of its forms, and ways that this diversity can be used as strengths in the religion. Hence, all who participate will co-create and foster the experiences throughout the weekend. The goals for the conference include, “sharing our stories and feeling we are heard; building our relationships so our ongoing conversations on diversity remain open and alive; and retaining the vitality of our mystical tradition.”

Weaving Sacred Wholeness will take place at Penn Center, on March 6-8, 2009, marking ten years since the first small southeastern regional conference, *Nurturing the Nurturer*, was held at the Center. Niyonu Spann will be the keynote speaker.

The weekend will include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Intentional small worship sharing groups.
- Exploring our personal spiritual journeys, relating how they connect us to or isolate us from our Quaker communities.
- Delving into queries that challenge us to examine our relationship with our meetings. We hope these queries will provide opportunities to listen deeply to each others’ experiences.
- We hope to provide a space for people to share their experiences with difficult issues such as racism, classism, sexism, ageism, and homophobia to begin healing from these hurts.
- Envisioning what a more inclusive Religious Society of Friends would look like and brainstorming ways we individually can begin living into this vision.

The details:

What: Weaving Sacred Wholeness, FGC’s second southeastern small conference.

Who: Friends ages 16 and older.

When: 6pm, Friday March 6th to 1pm, Sunday, March 8th, 2009

Where: Penn Center on St. Helena Island, SC

Cost: Fees are expected to be between \$175-230. Monthly, Quarterly, and Yearly Meetings are encouraged to offer financial assistance to members wanting to travel to this conference. There is limited financial assistance available through FGC.

Contact: To sign-up for updates, visit our website, www.fgcquaker.org. Early registration begins on-line January 2, 2009. For more information, contact emilys@fgcquaker.org or vanessaj@fgcquaker.org.

Acting Locally

The following first appeared as a letter on the SAYMA-discuss email list.

Surely, the DVD placed in newspapers in "battleground states" about Al Qaida was horrible and speaks volumes about the state of fear that a large part of the country is living with. It seems that we Quakers are too few to make a difference, but I've found a way that helps me deal with the current climate of despair and also helps bring the peaceable kingdom closer to reality. After many years of prayer I decided to get active in local politics. After attending 4 monthly meetings, I was asked to chair the candidate recruitment and education committee. After 9 months, I'm being considered for the position of 1st vice chair of my county's Democratic party. That would put me in the "Executive Committee" and get me invited to meetings where policy is made and budgets are decided. You can make a difference if you show up and look for that of G-D in every person.

The need for someone who can unite folks with disparate views is great, but especially in an organization where very diverse groups show up regularly. People like the way I work to build unity and uplift all who participate in the process. These are skills that Friends learn in our meetings and committee work so I was happy to see that non-Friends like them, too.

I brought my concern for ending war and now it is the party's concern. The party helps to publicize our monthly peace vigil. At the county Fourth of July parade, as part of the Democratic Party "float", I drove my 2004 Toyota Prius covered with signs FCNL saying "War is Not the Answer." The parade also included military service floats and I still got lots of thumbs up and cheers. I got to visit with the military representative before the parade and we found we agreed on the how war creates more problems than it solves. Later, I realized I was the only one driving a foreign car in a USA Independence Day parade. Yet, I am an advocate for Clean Air and driving a clean air car makes sense if we want to be "Independent".

As an "official" member of the party, I got to be part of an audience with our Congressperson, David Scott. I spoke to him about helping to end USA involvement in the War in Iraq and how a "War on Terror" cannot succeed. Also got to meet and connect with his advisors on policy and will be having lunch with them to further the discussion about various concerns. This is an election year and they are open to listening. Especially if I come as someone who helps his party elect people to office.

For those more conservative in their views, the Republican Party could use some Quakers, too. Help them to elect candidates who understand that they represent all their constituents, not just those who voted for them or sent them money. That's what I do every meeting - remind our candidates that they need to reach out to all, not just their "base". Of course third party candidates are also open to support.

It's not easy, takes time and energy. There are boring speeches (some that you helped to craft), long dinners (usually serving chicken) and such. This is how one meets like-minded people who are community organizers. It's a great way to provide service to your community. The candidates who meet at my home once a month, running for the Sheriff, School Board, County Commissioner, Clerk of Court, Tax Commissioner and State Representative, will surely be open to my ideas AFTER they are elected, since I was there for them BEFORE they were elected. If they are not elected, I will help with the healing that needs to take place and to encourage them to stay active so that we can be the change required to make this country live up to the image that draws so many to our shores.

There is still time to help your LOCAL candidates. Don't get stuck on just the BIG offices. The small ones have influence in how we live together (or not). And you never know if the mayor you helped elect gets asked to be Vice President some day.

Free Polazzo Atlanta Friends Meeting freepolazzo@comcast.net

PS: Make sure you ask all your relatives and friends to vote on election day. Find out if they need help getting to the polls.

SAYMA MEETINGS AND WORSHIP GROUPS

Asheville Friends Meeting	North Carolina	(828) 258-0974
Athens Friends Meeting	Georgia	(706) 353-2856
Atlanta Friends Meeting	Georgia	(404) 377-2474
Berea Friends Meeting	Kentucky	(859) 985-8950
Birmingham Friends Meeting	Alabama	(205) 592-0570
Boone Friends Meeting	North Carolina	(828) 263-0001
Brevard Friends Meeting	North Carolina	(828) 891-7793
Canton Worship Group	Georgia	(770) 720-4669
Celo Monthly Meeting	Burnsville NC	(828) 675-4456
Charleston Friends Meeting	West Virginia	(304) 756-3033
Chattanooga Friends Meeting	Tennessee	(423) 629-2580
Clemson Worship Group	South Carolina	(864) 654-3774
Columbia Friends Meeting	South Carolina	(803) 252-2221
Cookeville Monthly Meeting	Tennessee	(931) 268-2592
Crossville Friends Meeting	Tennessee	(931) 277-5354
Foxfire Friends Meeting of Holston Valley	Johnson City TN	(423) 283-4392
Greenville Friends Meeting	South Carolina	(864) 246-6852
Huntsville Area Friends Meeting	Alabama	(256) 837-6327
Memphis Friends Meeting	Tennessee	(901) 274-1500
Murfreesboro Worship Group	Tennessee	(615) 895-0953
Nashville Friends Meeting	Tennessee	(615) 329-2640
Oxford Quaker Meeting	Mississippi	(662) 234-1602
Royal Worship Group	Blountsville AL	(205) 429-3088
Sevier County Worship Group	Sevierville TN	(865) 429-1807
Sewanee Worship Group	Tennessee	(931) 598-5031
Swannanoa Valley Friends Meeting	Black Mountain NC	(828) 664-0092
West Knoxville Friends Meeting	Knoxville TN	(865) 694-0036

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