



Newsletter of the Northwest Quarter of
New England Yearly Meeting,
Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)
November 2016

**Come to the winter Northwest Quarterly Meeting Gathering
at Putney Friends Meeting, December 3 & 4, 2016,
hosted by Putney and Keene Friends Meetings.
See page 7 for schedule, registration information and travel directions.**

NWQ Clerk's message: What does 'membership' mean?

Dear Friends of Northwest Quarter,

Last year at this time we had before us a concern from one of our Meetings about the process being used by New England Yearly Meeting's *Faith & Practice* Revision Committee. This year, in an effort to facilitate the current process of that committee, I am addressing the letter sent to all Monthly Meeting clerks in September.

In this letter, the committee explains that they are presenting for Meetings' consideration a "working paper" on membership. To use their term, this is a "hot topic" for Friends. The committee is seeking as many responses formulated through discernment as possible; so that the final document reflects as closely as possible the faith and practice among New England Friends at this time.

Phebe McCosker, the current clerk of Faith & Practice Revision Committee, has offered some suggestions for Meetings as they consider the working paper. Remember that what you have before you is a first pass, not a final document.

In order for the committee to go further with the document, they need to hear what Friends understand about membership in the Religious Society of Friends. She offers a few queries that might be used by a Meeting in discerning where they find themselves on this topic:

- Are the concepts expressed helpful?
- What has been missed?
- What does membership mean in your Meeting?

- One of the more controversial items is that of dual membership, is such a thing possible among Friends?
- This document suggests eliminating junior membership. Does your Meeting feel this is a useful change? Does doing so allow for expression of one's spiritual journey from childhood relationship into an adult relationship?
- What is the truth experienced by your Meeting as you wrestle with questions of membership?

In addition to sharing what your Meeting discerns about this working paper, it would be most helpful to hear why your Meeting feels that way.

If your Meeting does not have a hard copy of the working paper, please download your copy from the NEYM website on the *Faith & Practice* Revision Committee page, <www.neym.org/fp-revision/documents-discussion>.

Please submit Meeting comments to <fanp@neym.org> by February 1, 2017. Or mail them to Phebe McCosker, Clerk, P.O. Box 66, Thetford, VT 05074.

Looking forward to seeing many of you at our next Quarterly Meeting in Putney on December 3rd & 4th, 2016. Details of the weekend can be found in this newsletter.

In Faith and Love,
Penny Wright, Clerk

Northwest Quarterly Meeting, September 10, 2016 at Bethany Birches Camp

FRIENDS FROM BURLINGTON, Hanover, Middlebury, Monadnock, Putney and Quaker City Unity Monthly Meetings gathered over the weekend for Northwest Quarter's annual retreat. Our numbers were smaller than in previous years, but we found the time together more intimate and enabled us to go deeper in that which is Eternal.

Ordinarily we do not conduct business during our retreat, but we had some time-sensitive items that needed our attention.

We received a Memorial Minute from Putney Friends Meeting for Katherine R. Frazer, and, in keeping with the new process for dealing with memorial minutes, approved sending it forward to NEYM's Ministry & Counsel Committee for their consideration. (See appendix A).

We received a Travel Minute from Burlington Monthly Meeting for Ruah Swennerfelt. After a few minor adjustments we approved it and forwarded it to Permanent Board for their consideration. (See Appendix B).

We received another document from Putney Monthly Meeting for Sadelle Wiltshire, but were not clear if this was meant to be a letter of introduction or a Travel Minute. Friends asked the clerk to follow up with Putney to clarify their intention, with the request that if it is meant to be a travel minute, we would like to hear more details about the leading and process Sadelle engaged in. Ideally, if this is meant to be a Travel Minute, we would welcome a visit from her to speak with us about her leading.

Ruah Swennerfelt shared the information about the Deep Change for Climate Justice to be held October 15-16, 2016 in White River Junction, Vt. She brought us this information as our representative to Vermont Interfaith Power & Light, which is co-sponsoring the event.

We closed our business with gratitude for those present and moved into the program for the evening: hearing from each other the many and varied ways in which we care for one another. Acknowledging that when basic needs are met, space and energy are created for reaching further toward those in need.

Respectfully clerked and recorded,
Penny Wright, clerk Northwest Quarter

Appendix A—Memorial Minute for Katherine R. Frazer

Katherine R. Frazer, 92, of Saxtons River, Vt., a long time member of Putney Friends Meeting, died on January 28, 2016. Kay was born in Hazlet, N.J., daughter of Angelo and Madeline R. (Young) Webster. She had academic credentials in nursing and in divinity, and graduated from Methodist Teaching Hospital and Temple University in Philadelphia. In 1954 she married Grant Frazer. In 1960 his teaching career brought them to Saxtons River, where she had what she considered the good fortune to live for the rest of her life.

At this time Kay and Grant became active in Putney Friends Meeting, contributing richly to its spiritual life and social outreach. At that time the location of the Meeting was fluid and held at various locations including Friends' homes. Kay and Grant welcomed Friends on numerous occasions to their home for worship, business, and committee meetings of Friendly Eights, Quaker women's luncheons, and other social events.

Kay's interest in social concerns and justice led her down many pathways. In 1965, seeing a need in the community for seniors and shut-ins to have a social outlet, she formed "Club 39," whose Christmas parties became a much anticipated community event. Working in the area's hospital and a physician's office, she recognized the need for better home nursing care and was instrumental in the formation of the Visiting Nurse Association. Later, she played a role in the formation of Our Place Drop-In Center, which provides services for people with limited resources in Bellows Falls, Vt., and volunteered at Parks Place, a center for numerous community services in Bellows Falls until her 90th year. In the 1980s Kay participated in forming one of the first restorative justice programs in the state of Vermont and served on a restorative justice panel in Springfield for many years. This served as a model for the restorative justice system to take root and spread throughout the state, with 20 restorative justice centers now active.

Another important concern to Kay was Quaker adult education. She and her close friend Hattie Reeves-Forsythe convened the Putney Friends Meeting adult education committee for many years, imparting their life experience and wisdom in Quaker faith and practice to new members and seekers.

Sensing a need in the Meeting, Kay was instrumental in initiating a "healing circle" that promoted healing through focused friends worship. The healing circle of members and attenders met for a number of years providing comfort to those in distress.

Kay served the Meeting in many ways from recording clerk to fellowship on various committees. Her baked

>> **September 2016 NWQ minutes**, from p. 2

desserts were favorites at Meeting potlucks and her recipes are still shared among Putney Friends.

During Meeting for Worship, Kay's vocal testimony was always powerfully Spirit-led and long remembered. Her voice and presence among us will be missed. We hold up Kay's life as a pattern for creating social outreach and justice in our community.

She is survived by a son, Dr. James E. Frazer and his wife Sharon, of Mishawaka, Indiana; a daughter, Susan R. Frazer-Stebbins of Saxtons River; five grandchildren; and seven great-grandchildren.

Approved by Putney Friends Meeting 6/19/21016

Appendix B—Travel Minute for Ruah Swennerfelt

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

August 2, 2016

Dear Friends and friends of Friends,

We pray this finds you in God's love.

We write this letter to introduce our dear member Ruah Swennerfelt. Ruah has long been an active member of our Meeting, our Quarter (Northwest Quarter) and Yearly Meeting (New England Yearly Meeting), and the wider Quaker world. For decades, in a variety of roles, she has served Friends and Earth in matters of peace, justice and Earthcare.

More recently she has felt a call to become involved with the Transition Town Movement. In faithfulness to this calling, Ruah visited Israel Palestine, several European and U.S. towns, interviewing others engaged in this work. Her visiting and interviewing have culminated in the book *Rising to the Challenge: The Transition Movement and People of Faith*. She now embarks on visits with Friends and friends to share her writing. As this work has taken on the nature of ministry, Ruah appropriately sought clearness with her Meeting for consideration and endorsement of a Traveling Minute of ministry. This we approved at Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business on July 10, 2016.

In Faith and Love,
Jeanne Plo, Clerk of Burlington Monthly Meeting
Penelope Wright, Clerk of Northwest Quarter
9.10.2016

Sarah Gant, Clerk of Permanent Board
New England Yearly Meeting
9.24.2016

Standing Rock, a Kairos moment

RECENTLY while I was eating breakfast with my husband, Louis Cox, we watched a Barred Owl that had landed on a fencepost in our garden. It must have been hoping to make its own breakfast of a vole or other small creature "stealing" our food. What an amazing experience to see the wild creatures that inhabit the land we care for. I am so grateful for the chance to live surrounded by so much beauty. And I'm sure the healthy owl, with lots of habitat to hunt and live, is also grateful.

My feelings of gratitude are juxtaposed with my despair and concern over the ever-continuing push by fossil fuel companies encroaching and bullying their way onto places where they don't belong. Investing in fossil fuel infrastructure instead of renewable energy infrastructure will only make the climate crisis worse. And today at Standing Rock, near the Lakota Sioux nation in North Dakota, we see an extreme example of the bullying and the dangers that these companies impose on the most innocent. We also see the rising tide of principled resistance among the oppressed.

Last month, the Rev. Peter Sawtell in his *Eco-Justice Notes* so eloquently wrote:

"The Standing Rock witness is emerging as an exceptionally bold, visible and prophetic witness for tribal rights and climate justice. The Lakota Sioux of Standing Rock, joined by representatives of 200 other tribes, are revealing the way in which our culture's fixation with oil overwhelms all other concerns—clean water, tribal rights, and a livable climate. The escalating conflict between water protectors and the repressive power of the state echo some of the most momentous events of the U.S. civil rights movement. This is a Kairos moment which must be acknowledged."

"My conscience has just been stirred by a renewed awareness of the deep historical roots of the conflict about the Dakota Access pipeline. The Smithsonian Magazine that arrived at my home a few days ago has a deeply disturbing article, "Ulysses S. Grant Launched an Illegal War Against the Plains Indians, Then Lied About It." The article documents the secret and illegal actions of the U.S. government which led to the displacement of the Lakota from reservation lands. The passion of those at Standing Rock, and the justice of their claims, is rooted in this long history of land theft."

When will we consider the rights of the owls? The people? The waters? The soil? The air? When will we learn to care for all of life on our planet by living simply and urging our corporations and governments to act with conscience and care? There's so much to do and so little time to make a difference. I pray that today, and every day for the rest of my life, I will help bring about the future that we all hope for—one that cares for the people and cares for Earth, one in which everyone has equal access to nourishing food, good housing, clean waters, clean air, and healthy soils.

—Ruah Swennerfelt
Burlington Friends Meeting

[Adapted from Ruah's blog, <www.transitionvision.org>]

On stepping up to open our eyes to racism

Jean Rosenberg, Middlebury Friends Meeting

IN THE LAST *NOR'WESTER* (July 2016), Rachel Walker Cogbill wrote movingly of how she decided to go to the White Privilege Conference and what she learned there. This is a wonderful piece. I find particularly interesting how insightfully she expressed and addressed her hesitations about going. All of us white people have them, but such hesitations, I think, can deter many of us from even opening to the subject, and thus from recognizing white privilege and understanding racism.

We can so often feel defensive about racism, thinking we personally are being berated and blamed. We can also fear the “negative” feelings that will come up when we really let ourselves see the suffering and injustice of the racist system: our grief, dread, outrage, and perhaps especially the guilt. So we may choose instead to look away and ignore, or minimize, or even deny it all. We get willfully blind to it. We may even see the participation in the racist system by others, but deny our own participation. What, our participation? Yes, because when we live in this system, if we do not disrupt it, we maintain it. We Friends understand this about the system of militarism; well, it works the same way with racism. There can (and must) be struggle against it, but we still participate in it, and thus are complicit in it, just by living in it.

Complicit! Now that is going to bring up instant guilt, if we let ourselves see it. So we so often turn away, or let ourselves see only a little bit of it. We get willfully blind.

Now this is exactly the kind of blindness that George Fox and John Woolman decried and called us to overcome. And they told us explicitly how to overcome it, including how to deal with those “negative” feelings. Take courage, wait in the Light, and open our eyes. The Light will show us ourselves and our community. Pay attention. See, listen, and learn. Look around and listen, and the Light will show us the reality. And as for the grief, the fear, the guilt, the outrage we will feel? We are to see them, feel them honestly, let them inform us and motivate us to change things. That is what these feelings are for. Indeed, Fox told us not to wallow in them, but to acknowledge these feelings and keep looking to the Light. The Light will then show us what to do next, and strengthen us to do it.

One of the things the Light is likely to show us to do is to learn more about how the system works, which we need to do because we white folks were mostly brought up to be blind to it. So that's when we go to the White Privilege Conference and take up all the

many other ways to learn. And when we keep at it, the Light will show us how to take our own first steps of resistance, to examine our own lives and figure out what changes to make, how to speak and listen and act differently, and how to join in the work of change.

To be very clear, acknowledging white privilege and our complicity in the racist system is not to wallow in guilt. It is not self-flagellation. It is to recognize reality. And then we can figure out how to work for change. And, very important, as we hold the awareness and feelings but, as George Fox says, do not look down to the evils (my translation: do not wallow in them) but look to the Light, the feelings will transform, from guilt into clear-eyed self-knowledge and understanding, from grief into compassion, from dread into courage and calm preparedness, from anger into energy and determination.

John Woolman is our great example of doing this. Looking courageously at reality, not turning away or denying, but standing in the Light, and being transformed. He faithfully examined his life, made creative changes, and shared his vision and courage compassionately. Fox told us how to do it, and Woolman showed us how to do it.

At NEYM sessions in August, we minuted our recognition of our complicity in the American system of white supremacy, which is what our racist system is, and we supported the important step of doing a “cultural competency” audit for FGC and ultimately for NEYM. Such an audit is an examination of the practices and policies and assumptions of our institution to see how racism may be built into it. So in this Yearly Meeting Minute, we both acknowledged the reality that we live and participate in a racist system, and we took a first step to examine our Quaker institutions. This was hard for some Friends, but surely it is a healing step.

Acknowledging and understanding the system of racism and our parts in it are a spiritual issue for us white people. It is not only because the racist system offends our testimonies of equality, peace, and community, but because it compromises our integrity. To willfully blind ourselves to the system, to ignore or minimize or deny it, is dishonesty. It is to refuse to see and feel what the Light will show us. It cuts us off from the Light, and the spiritual gifts that flow from faithfulness. Thanks to Rachel for showing us part of her faithful journey of integrity.

Our emotions in the face of injustice, hatred, and violence.

Our emotions are a very important part of our system for feedback, information and motivation, to help us deal well with living in the world. They give us crucial information about how things affect us, and provide motivation to respond creatively. They provide both positive feedback: Do this more, this is good; this comes from “positive” emotions such as joy and peacefulness. And negative feedback, in what we so often call “negative” emotions: sorrow, pain, fear, anger and outrage, guilt. These say: Change this situation. These emotions are in fact positive in that they provide useful information and motivation to us to improve our situation.

How do we use these “negative” emotions? As with so much in our lives, we have to learn how to use them constructively. We see this so clearly when we teach young children what to do with their fear, hurt, anger, embarrassment, envy, guilt, etc.

We don’t like feeling these “negative” emotions, and our discomfort with them makes them powerful and useful. They can motivate us to change things. But another possible response to them is to avoid them, turn away, to bury them if possible, to ignore if possible the situation creating them. To become blind to the situation that prompts them, by ignoring or denying it.

If we look to the Light and see what it shows us, and then stand in the Light with all the feelings this brings up, the feelings will transform from “negative” feelings:

- Grief, pain, and sorrow, can transform into compassion and love.
- Anger can transform into determination, and energy for change, and persistence.
- Dread and fear can transform into courage, and calm preparedness
- Guilt can transform into self-knowledge, understanding, perspective, awareness.

If we stay with these feelings and look to the Light with them, they will all show us our connectedness, our caring, and our community. They will lead us into clear-eyed creativity. They will lead us into clarity, realism, and goodwill. They will lead us into wisdom, and willingness to change, and to work for change, and into strength.

Truth means engaging courageously with reality.

If we take a look at racism, allow the “negative” feelings to come us, but then refuse to stay with them and turn away, we turn away from the Light. Turning

away leads to numbness and apathy. Denial leads to embracing cruelty. This was what John Woolman was so concerned about in the slave-owning Friends that he visited, how slave-owning led people to denial of suffering and injustice, and how that led to believing in and practicing cruelty, and turning from the love that God calls us to.

If we do not turn from what the Light shows, but feel the feelings but look at the feelings, as George Fox says, rather than looking then to the Light, that could be called wallowing in the feelings. Grief and sorrow then turn to despair; anger and outrage turn to bitterness, cynicism, or hatred; dread and fear can turn to terror and hatred, and guilt can turn to self-flagellation and self-denigration. If we can’t take these, then we turn away again to numbness and apathy.

—Jean Rosenberg
Middlebury Friends Meeting

Sas Carey available for programs on Mongolia

RECENTLY RECEIVED—an offer from Sas Carey of Middlebury Monthly Meeting to facilitate a discussion, “My 22 Years in Mongolia: A Tale of Leadings,” on spiritual leadings as illustrated by showing one of her two films, with an interactive time after the screening. The first film is *Ceremony* (45minutes) about a shaman ceremony with comments from various shamans in northern Mongolia. The other is *Migration* (80 minutes) documenting the migration of a family of reindeer herders from spring to winter camps.

You can preview trailers and find more information about her films at www.nomadicare.org.

Sas is available to visit Meetings, First Day Schools, or perhaps as a program for one of our Quarterly Meetings. (She is currently scheduled for our next quarterly meeting at Putney in December.) She will be returning to Mongolia to continue her work before our June Quarter Meeting.

Please contact her at sas@nomadicare.org or 802-388-1301.

In Service,
Penny Wright
Presiding Clerk, NWQ

Understanding racism and privilege among Friends

Living the Truth of our Testimony of Equality

THE FACT THAT racism, bias, and privilege exist among Friends has been painfully brought forward and acknowledged by Friends of Color and their allies. This is a social condition that affects our spiritual progress both as individuals and as a religious society. It impedes our ability to live out our testimonies of integrity, equality, and community. Acknowledging and naming the seen and unseen racism and privilege that pervade our society is the first step to ending it.

As part of the process of expanding our awareness of the impact of racism and privilege among Friends, we offer these queries for your Spirit-filled consideration:

1. Are we ready to accept the challenge to move out of our area of comfort with regard to awareness of racism?
2. What things do we do or say that continue racism?
3. When dealing with others, do we come from a place of aloneness and separateness, or from our place of connectedness?
4. Taking responsibility is not accepting blame. It is empowering. Do we accept the gift of our responsibility for positive change and racial justice?
5. How do we use our Spirit-given creativity to confront and heal the effects of oppression/racism?
6. Many Friends of Color say that they feel unwelcomed in Quaker Meeting. What is our response to this? Are we content with our response?
7. What are we as Friends doing to reach others on the subject of racial equality when they don't think there is a problem?
8. Are we ready to let go of a need to justify and defend ourselves in order to acknowledge the painful experiences of Friends of Color?
9. Can we stop resting on the laurels of our history and grapple with the reality of inequality in the present?
10. Can we take the testimony of equality and write it into our hearts?

—FGC Religious Education Subcommittee on Ending Racism and Privilege among Friends
FGConnections, 2002 Quaker Resources
<www.fgcquaker.org>

Queries on Corporate Discernment

ALTHOUGH Queries may often be answered with a simple affirmative or negative, it is vital to ask corollary questions such as “why,” “how,” or “when.” A qualified answer arising from introspection is more meaningful and constructive than an uncritical “yes” or “no.”

—North Carolina Yearly Mtg. (Conservative) 1983

1. Do you seek the leadings of the Light in meeting for business as you do in worship?
2. How do you prepare your heart and mind for meeting for business?
3. Do you come prepared for the business at hand, having read relevant material or with committee reports ready for distribution?
4. Do you make an effort to maintain your awareness that God is with us as we work?
5. Do you proceed in a peaceable spirit with forbearance and warm affection for each other?
6. Do you trust that the Spirit has guided those involved with the process which has brought the group to its current place and do you respect the decisions that have already been made?
7. Do you attend to the clerk, speaking only when acknowledged and refraining from conversations back and forth across the room?
8. As a member of a spiritual community, do you acknowledge differences and seek to settle conflicts promptly in a manner free from resentment and all forms of inward violence?
9. Do you take care to consider, in a patient, loving and prayerful spirit, the perspective of those with whom you disagree?
10. Have you considered whether God's will for you as an individual may differ from God's will for the meeting?
11. When a decision is being reached with which you disagree, are you faithful to your responsibility to speak if led?
12. When the Meeting comes to a decision, do you accept it as “our” decision rather than “theirs”?
13. Are we willing to recognize when we are in a place where we should not act, but rather to wait patiently for further guidance to come?

[From the resource-materials packet at a recent clerking workshop at Burlington Friends Meeting, led by Jan Hoffman of Mount Toby MM and Jackie Stillwell of Monadnock MM]

December 3 & 4, 2016 NWQ Program and Registration

PUTNEY AND KEENE FRIENDS MEETINGS warmly invite you to the winter gathering of Northwest Quarterly Meeting at Putney Friends Meetinghouse, Rte. 5, Putney, Vt. (See Driving directions below.)

Quarterly Session Schedule of Activities:

Saturday, December 3rd

6:00 p.m.—Gather with potluck supper

7:00 p.m.—Program: *Ceremony*, a film by Sas Carey of Middlebury, Vt., Friends Meeting Q & A and sharing about the process of following leadings

Sunday, December 4th

8:30 a.m.—Early Meeting for Worship

9:30 a.m.—10:30—Tea, coffee, muffins in the Community Room

10:30 a.m.—11:30 a.m. —Late Meeting for Worship, First Day School

11:45 a.m.—Lunch potluck

1:00 p.m.—Quarterly Meeting for Business

Driving directions to Putney, Vt. Friends Meeting

From I-91 in southern Vermont, take Exit 4 to Rte. 5N.

Proceed 1 mile on Bellows Falls Rd. (Rte. 5)

Putney Meetinghouse is on the left.

Registration Form

To help us with planning, please provide the following information no later than **November 26, 2016**.

Name: _____ Telephone _____ E-mail _____

Number of family members attending for:

Saturday potluck and program _____

Sunday _____

Will you be bringing a food contribution to the potluck? Yes___ No___

Do you need overnight hospitality for Saturday, December 3rd? Yes___ No___

Do you need childcare?

Saturday evening: Yes___ No___

Sunday for Early Meeting: Yes___ No___

Sunday for Business Meeting: Yes___ No___

Please indicate the number of children and their ages. _____

Send registration information to Putney Friends Meeting c/o Roger Vincent Jasaitis
(802) 365-0247, <roger@putneyfriendsmeeting.org>

**Northwest Quarterly Meeting
Religious Society of Friends**

November 2016

**122 Batchelder St. #25
Barre, VT 05641**



February 2017 Nor'wester deadline

The submission deadline for the February 2017 *Nor'wester* is January 7, 2017. Please send all submissions to Louis Cox, *Nor'wester* Editor (see contact information below).

Northwest Quarter contacts

Penny Wright, Clerk, P.O. Box 298, Norwich, VT 05055-0298 <pennywright43@gmail.com>, 802-649-1802 (h); 615-587-0950 (c)

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NW Quarter Hosting Rotation*

December 3 & 4, 2016—Putney/Keene

March 4 & 5, 2017—Hanover

June 3 & 4, 2017—Middlebury/South Starksboro

September 9 & 10, 2017 @ Bethany Birches—NWQ Planning Committee

December 2 & 3 2017—Burlington

March 2018—Bennington/Wilderness/ Poultney Worship Group

* Subject to change