

ILLUSTRATION COURTESY OF BALTIMORE YEARLY MEETING

GUNPOWDER FRIENDS MEETING NEWS, Web Edition for April, 2020



SEEKING WAY IN TROUBLED TIMES

Advices:

Be alert to how Way Opens in these troubled times. **Shutting down** may **open up** opportunities to reflect, re-evaluate, prioritize, sacrifice, contribute. Being **alone** and temporarily isolated may heighten one's awareness that we're in it **together**. **Uncommon** practices may remind us of the **common good**. **Hording** may give way to **sharing**. And **taking time** now may lead to **giving time** later.

Way always opens. Be alert. Be cognizant. Be ready.

Voices:

The literal translation of the words, 'pray always' is 'come to rest'...This rest, however, has little to do with the absence of conflict or pain. It is a rest in God in the midst of a very intense daily struggle."
Henri Nouwen, The Way of the Heart

"We must be ready to be allowed to be interrupted by God."
Dietrich Bonhoeffer

"What is becoming apparent by the day is that we must all become contemplatives... in the way we live - awake, alert, engaged, ready to respond in love to the groanings of creation. Human life depends on us living this way."
Judy Cannato, Radical Amazement

"At every point in the human journey we find that we have to let go in order to move forward; and letting go means dying a little. In the process we are being created anew, awakened afresh to the source of our being."
Kathleen R. Fischer

"I don't really know why I care so much. I just have something inside me that tells me that there is a problem and I have got to do something about it. I think that this is what I would call the God in me. It must be this voice that is speaking to everyone on this planet."
Wangari Maatha



ANNOUNCEMENTS



PLEASE NOTE: The April newsletter reflects, wherever possible, adjustments in the time of COVID-19. Please read carefully. Our Clerk and others will also keep you apprised of news and information as time goes by.

GUNPOWDER FRIENDS MEETING



GFM FORUMS:

SUNDAY, APRIL 12TH, 11:15, EASTER FORUM FOR FIRST DAY SCHOOL (FDS) FAMILIES VIA ZOOM. A link to the session will be sent closer to the date.

BIBLE STUDY: SUNDAY APRIL 26, 9AM: VIA ZOOM



We invite you to join in our continuing engagement with the Bible, a complex, rich, and challenging compilation of texts that were so formative for our early Quaker ancestors. Using the Spears method, we read aloud a short passage and settle into a time of quiet reflection on five simple prompts: what is the main point of the passage?; what new Light do I encounter in this passage today?; how is the passage true to my experience?; what implications are there in this passage for further thought or action?; what problems do I have with this passage? After quiet individual reflection on these prompts, we open up for a worshipful discussion in the hope of receiving what wisdom the passage has to offer. The reading for 4/26 is: John, Chapter 19. A link to the session will be sent closer to the date.



RICHARD ROHR DISCUSSION GROUP APRIL 26, 11:15 VIA ZOOM

No advance preparation is required. We will read a short passage aloud and then settle into a worshipful discussion. A link to the session will be sent closer to the date.



ZOOM TUTORIAL:

Here is a great resource -- a video tutorial on how to use Zoom, shared with us by Jean Mitchell -- Thank you Jean! Click here to learn:

<https://youtu.be/-7gn2qJPRDI>. (See also Alan Schmaljohn's tips, page 7).

**GUNPOWDER
FRIENDSHIP NIGHTS**



**EVERY WEDNESDAY
7-8PM, ONLINE**

GUNPOWDER FRIENDSHIP NIGHTS, WEDNESDAYS, 7-8PM, ONLINE:

On behalf of the Ministry and Counsel Committee, please let me invite you to the first of our weekly "Gunpowder Friendship Nights," which will happen via Zoom each Wednesday evening from 7-8 p.m. We envision these gatherings as a way to stay connected socially and to check in with one another each week. You can drop in for a few minutes or stay the hour. Whatever suits your needs. Members of Ministry and Counsel and, we expect, Care and Oversight will be present to ensure that we are receiving the support we need from Meeting--and that our ministries in support of Meeting continue to be affirmed and nurtured.

If interested, please e-mail Gunpowder Clerk and request to participate. We've been using Zoom for a variety of meetings in the past week and have found it to be a great way for us to see and hear one

another. Look for more information in the coming weeks about connecting to Meeting for Worship, Meeting for Business, Bible Study, Spiritual Formation, and other forums and gatherings via Zoom.

Some Zoom Instructions:

- Click on the link in this E-mail, using either computer or smartphone (haven't tried iPad, but that should work too)
- For a first-time, user, you'll be prompted to download an application (my smartphone sent me automatically to app store).
- Follow minimalist (intuitive, same as usual) instructions to install and open the app.
- (to simplify your life, go to Amy's E-mail and "copy" the set of numbers that identifies this meeting).
- Click "Join Meeting" (only Amy had to "sign in" and open the meeting).
- When prompted, paste (or type) the meeting number you're joining.
- Opt-in (as you are led) to let Zoom use your device's camera (for video) and microphone (for voice only).
- *That's it.*

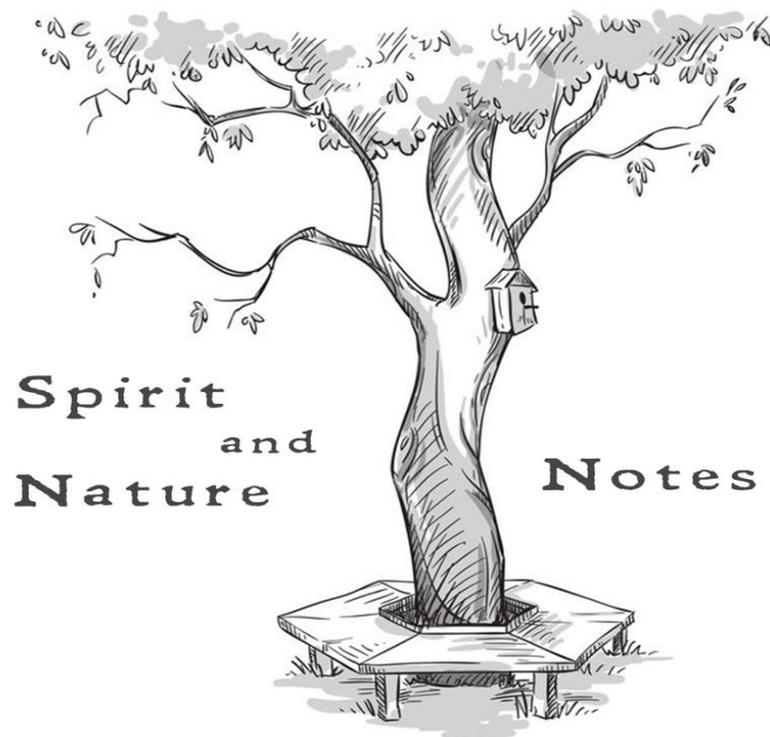
During meeting:

- When you touch screen (or move cursor), you may continue to see some options like "mute" and other features for you to pause, use voice-only, get Amy's attention, do a side-chat, etc To reduce background noise (dogs, coughing, etc.) for everybody, you may want to mute until you have something to say.
- I found my laptop to be more full-featured than iPhone (i.e., I could see more mini-icons of participants).
- When done, "Leave meeting"
- *Be patient, this is an evolving experiment.*

We look forward to seeing many of you this Wednesday.



Please visit <https://www.fcnl.org> to follow and participate in the work FCNL is continuing to do during the COVID-19 pandemic. The site has a message from FCNL General Secretary, Diane Randall on staying engaged during this time, as well as calls to action on various topics. Please also contact Anna Brown of Gunpowder for information on advocacy letter writing during this time. Anna Brown: goodwood28@hotmail.com



HOW TO STOP FREAKING OUT AND TACKLE CLIMATE CHANGE

Here are 5 easy steps to stop freaking out about climate change and become part of the solution, pulled from recent New York Times article by author and environmentalist, Emma Marris:

- Step 1: Ditch the shame.
- Step 2: Focus on systems, not yourself.
- Step 3: Join an effective group.
- Step 4: Define your role.
- Step 5: Know what you are fighting for, not just what you are fighting against.

To read the complete article, click here:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/10/opinion/sunday/how-to-help-climate-change.html>



GUNPOWDER FRIENDS: 2019

Over the past year, Gunpowder Friends Meeting has fleshed out its visioning process, which began in 2018. During 2019, through a monthly Forum, three retreats, and listening sessions and surveys, we shared with one another our history and experiences, searching out our values, commitments, and wishes for our meeting. At the final retreat in October, the Ad hoc Committee on Visioning presented for consideration a Mission, Vision, and Values Statement as well as a map of our Meeting's current activities. The Meeting approved this statement in December.

On 12 First Month 2020, after the rise of Meeting for Worship, twenty-three Friends gathered for worship sharing about the spiritual state of Gunpowder Meeting. They were guided by queries developed by our Ministry and Counsel Committee, and based on those provided as suggestions by the Baltimore Yearly Meeting Committee on Ministry and Pastoral Care. On 15 First Month, seven Gunpowder Friends who live at the Broadmead continuing-care retirement community also came together for worship sharing around these queries. Age-appropriate versions of the queries were given to families with children and we received their responses during a First Day School sharing session and in writing.

The queries centered on nurturing healthy ministry of all kinds; affirming one another's gifts for ministry; answering our call to ministry, whether individual or collective; and making space in our worship and relationships for our inevitable fallibility and vulnerability. Many Friends responded that our visioning process became a source for affirming and deepening our worship and one another's gifts. As one reflected, "I think that the visioning work that has been done here is absolutely incredible, and I have great hope that if there are leadings for the Meeting to follow, that Spirit will open way for that to happen." Another Friend noted that she feels "spiritual hospitality. . . in all our activities and in Meeting for Worship." Assembled Friends shared the perception that hospitality, both spiritual and communal, characterizes Gunpowder Meeting. Whether through weighty discernment in our visioning work, deep sharing in our Spiritual Formation program, or lighthearted fellowship during our game nights and visits to a baseball game, we find ways to get to know one another as friends and as Friends.

Meeting for Worship is a deep source of spiritual hospitality. One Friend experiences worship as a space in which to balance "the being and doing sides of me," and as a space to find courage. While acknowledging theological diversity among ourselves, Gunpowder Friends experience worshipful silence as hospitable because we are seeking the Divine together. The hospitality of Meeting for Worship is grounded, as one Friend said, in "the community's intentional practice of knowing one another": the "common practice is to linger, to serve, to participate in places where we listen to one another. This is so foundational," he said, "that it drives the worship in that you tend to know what is on the hearts of other people.

Spiritual State of the Meeting, continued...

As much as we may experience spiritual hospitality in Meeting for Worship, a Friend nevertheless pointed out, “Where I think we fail a bit is to have the curiosity and compassion to engage with newcomers who may have a nailed-down sense of theology, to draw it out.” Another Friend noted that we experience and continue to nurture healthy vocal ministry; “as Friends we are all ministers . . . we need to call one another forth and support one another in living into the gifts that we have.”

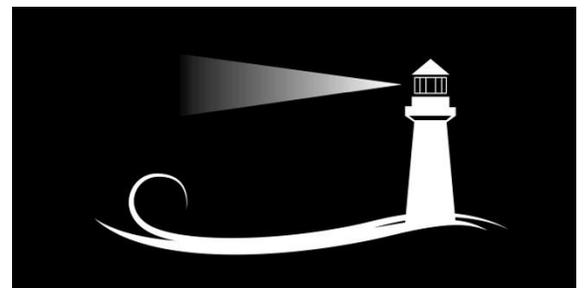
Grateful that BYM Faith and Practice Queries and Advices are printed in our monthly newsletter and occasionally read aloud before Meeting for Worship, a Friend suggested that additional focus on the Faith and Practice queries could deepen our witness to our Quaker testimonies and ensure that we lift up our Friends who are already deeply engaged in this witness.

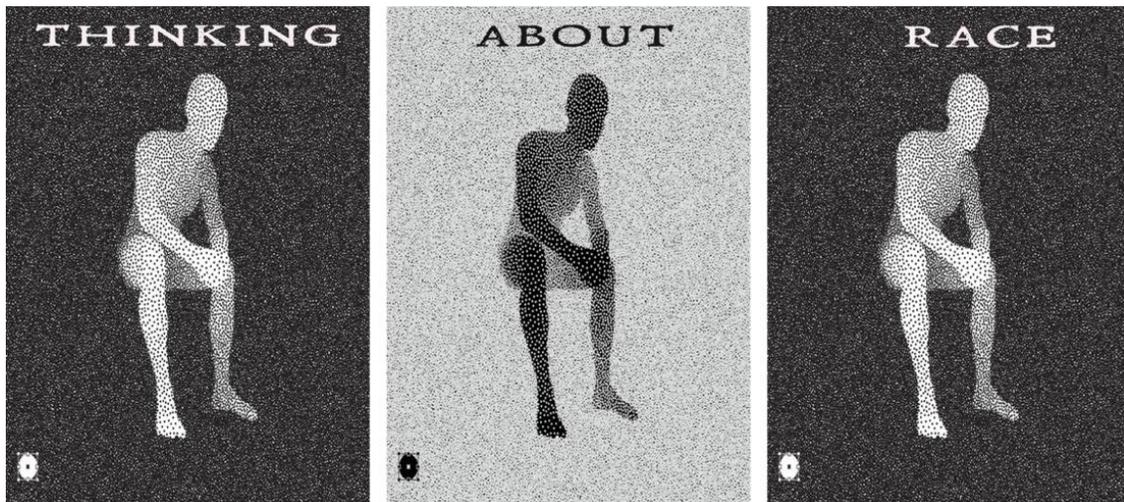
The Meeting strives to recognize one another’s gifts and ministries. Said one Friend, “We naturally do this with smiles, with hugs, with words of appreciation, with questions. And so people here have lots and lots of different ministries—making sure that there is water for people who walk or cycle past here, for example. The ministry of the beauty of nature through good stewardship. The ministry of caring for the burial grounds. And it goes on and on and on.” This extends to supporting our community members when they need to move on from work that they had engaged in. “I am thinking back to June when I resigned from [a] committee,” said a Friend, “and that was a vulnerable thing for me to do—to admit to myself and to my community that this work is not nurturing me. I was able to resign with a very great trust that it would be OK. That trust is totally true—it has been OK.”

Our Friends at Broadmead, because of their increasing sense of vulnerability and diminishment, may not take up gifts that they can claim. As one Broadmead Friend said, “I am constantly aware of how easy it is to be overcome with vulnerability and a lack of awareness of our own gifts . . . And that this is where I think Gunpowder Meeting has a real chance to move more in partnership with us here at Broadmead, possibly through worship on First Days, or through Spiritual Formation,” as well as the monthly Quaker lunch.

Indeed our final query asked how we find and experience the courage to create space for our human fallibility. “To be in a community where we are known and, nevertheless, loved is a blessing,” said a Friend, noting that both knowing and loving someone can sometimes be challenging. Another Friend confessed, “Sometimes the kindness and gentleness and patience of this Meeting is a little intimidating . . . I do fear that we create such an image of perfection that it might get in the way of our being our imperfect selves.” But acknowledging that Friends had received her “imperfect ways” with ardor, she reminds herself that someone “who is being kind and patient [with me] is probably struggling with the same things I am.” So we work at kindness and caring. One of our youngest Friends said, “I like having friends at Meeting. It makes me want to come to Meeting and helps me to learn to be caring about my friends.”

We trust that our reflections shared in developing this report, and during our visioning process throughout the year, will carry us forward. As a Friend put it, “Grounded in our mission, vision, and values, we can really sit with this question of what is ‘God’s big idea’ for us? What is the Divine calling us to be and do as a community? My hope is that we can carry this query into the next year and have the patience that discerning this might not come quickly.”





INCLUSIVE QUAKERS

"I adore silence. However, as a Black woman, I am aware that for Black, Indigenous, and communities of color (among other marginalized groups), silence has been a form of oppression that cuts us off from sharing our voice and agency and more. A reframe for those quiet meetings would require us to explore questions about speech and silence. How do we teach about vocal ministry? What messages about silence and speech do we send to seasoned Friends and newcomers.? How might silence inadvertently encourage greater distance among Friends? What is the right balance?

...Even as we gather for meeting for worship and offer Spirit-led vocal ministry, this too is within a broader societal context of structures, systems, and institutions that further oppression and racialization.

...A reframe for Quakers would be to take a deeper exploration of our good intentions. How do our intentions affect others, either intentionally or unintentionally? How might we look deeper at our intentions and align them with our actions? When might our intentions not align with our values? What do we do individually and as a corporate body when this happens? How might our good intentions further support our implicit bias?"

*From "How to Be an Inclusive Quaker: The Unwritten Norms of Speech and Silence" by Valerie Brown, in March 2020 **Friends Journal**, pp. 18- 20. Readers of **Friends Journal** may well have recently read these words. Along with the whole article, they are worth considering as Baltimore Yearly Meeting Friends strive to ensure that we are an anti-racist faith community.*

QUERY: How do I work to recognize and remove barriers individual people of color may encounter in becoming involved in our activities?

This column is prepared by the BYM Working Group on Racism (WGR) and sent to the designated liaison at each local Meeting. The BYM WGR meets most months on the third Saturday from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm. Locations vary to allow access to more Friends. If you would like to attend, on a regular or a drop-in basis, contact clerk David Etheridge, david.etheridge@verizon.net.



WORKING GROUP ON STEWARDING OUR VISION

In twelfth month, the working group on stewarding our vision (WGSV) was approved as an outgrowth of our visioning process. On March 31, 2020 the second meeting of the WGSV will be convened via Zoom at 4:30pm ending 6:00pm. The committee is currently working on its charge and discerning way forward. We invite all those interested in participating in this process to be part of the Zoom meeting. If you are not a member of the committee please let Greta Kirk Mickey (greta.mickey@gmail.com) know that you'd like to attend. Heather Sowers will be sending an email with the Zoom link information. The date and time of the committee's April meeting has not yet be determined. Please stay tuned. Anyone interested in participating is welcome.

Greta Kirk Mickey & Heather Sowers
Co-Clerks



FROM THE CLERK'S CORNER

As I shelter in place, I must note that the Zoom experiences I have had with Gunpowder Friends have all been a joy. To see and hear from Friends is a joy. To read what is shared from our time in virtual Meeting for Worship is a joy. To witness the gratification that Friends get from spending time with one another – albeit online - is a joy. Yes, the experience may be virtual... but the joy is real. And that gives me the most wonderful faith and hope. Holding you all in the Light.

Jennifer Robinson, Clerk

PS: I've included the following timely poem for those of you who may not yet have seen it:

PANDEMIC

What if you thought of it
as the Jews consider the Sabbath—
the most sacred of times?
Cease from travel.
Cease from buying and selling.
Give up, just for now,
on trying to make the world
different than it is.
Sing. Pray. Touch only those
to whom you commit your life.
Center down.
And when your body has become still,
reach out with your heart.
Know that we are connected
in ways that are terrifying and beautiful.
(You could hardly deny it now.)

Know that our lives
are in one another's hands.
(Surely, that has come clear.)
Do not reach out your hands.
Reach out your heart.
Reach out your words.
Reach out all the tendrils
of compassion that move, invisibly,
where we cannot touch.
Promise this world your love--
for better or for worse,
in sickness and in health,
so long as we all shall live.

Lynn Ungar 3/11/20





April – 4th Month

Wednesday, 4/1

7:00 PM - Gunpowder Friendship Night via Zoom

Sunday, 4/5

10:00 AM - Meeting for Worship via Zoom

11:15 AM - Letter-writing-in-place*

Wednesday, 4/8

7:00 PM - Gunpowder Friendship Night via Zoom

Saturday, 4/11

10 AM – Silent Retreat, simple lunch: **TENTATIVE**

Contact Anita Langford at 410-560-3595 for updates

Sunday, 4/12

10:00 AM - Meeting for Worship via Zoom

11:15 AM - Easter Sunday Forum for First Day School Families via Zoom*

Wednesday, 4/15

7:00 PM - Gunpowder Friendship Night via Zoom

Sunday, 4/19

10:00 AM - Meeting for Worship via Zoom

Wednesday, 4/22

7:00 PM - Gunpowder Friendship Night via Zoom

Thursday, 4/16

7:00 PM - Spiritual Formation via Zoom

Sunday, 4/19

10:00 AM - Meeting for Worship via Zoom

11:20 AM - Meeting for Business via Zoom

Wednesday, 4/22

7:00 PM - Gunpowder Friendship Night via Zoom

Sunday, 4/26

9:00 AM - Bible Study via Zoom

10:00 AM - Meeting for Worship via Zoom

11:20 AM - Richard Rohr Discussion Group via Zoom

Wednesday, 4/29

7:00 PM - Gunpowder Friendship Night via Zoom

May – 5th Month

Sunday, 5/3

10:00 AM - Meeting for Worship via Zoom

**See announcements and articles for further details*

The Web Edition of the Newsletter does not include minutes from Gunpowder's Meeting for Business. Personal Information has been redacted. The full newsletter, complete with minutes, is available at the Meetinghouse – attenders may also request the electronic or print edition.

Please feel free to inquire with Gunpowder's Clerk at gunpowderclerk@gmail.com.