

ILLUSTRATION COURTESY OF BALTIMORE YEARLY MEETING

GUNPOWDER FRIENDS MEETING NEWS, Web Edition for July, 2021

DIVERSITY



QUERIES:

- Does your vision of a just society include people living their lives without fear of discrimination based on who they are, what they believe, and whom they love?
- Do I seek out and listen to perspectives that promote equal access, inclusion, and welcome for people of all cultures and backgrounds?
- How do we work toward creating a community of different people, rather than being a community that just lets different people in?

ADVISES:

In our discussions of spiritual and theological diversity, we are perhaps too quick to search for commonalities, for that which transcends the differences between us. To love genuinely is not to care for people despite their individual peculiarities, nor to ignore those peculiarities, but to care for the person wholly, in full light of those blessed peculiarities.

VOICES:

Each of us inevitable,
Each of us limitless—each of us with his or her right upon the earth,
Each of us allow'd the eternal purports of the earth,
Each of us here as divinely as any is here.

-Walt Whitman

The only way to treat people with dignity and justice is to recognize that racism has a profound negative effect upon our lives, and therefore noticing color helps to counteract that effect. Instead of

being color neutral we need to notice much more acutely and insightfully exactly the difference that color makes in the way people are treated.

-Paul Kivel, 2002

By getting beyond our differences, we dare to believe that we can bring about a Kingdom of God on earth, where we transcend our differences, not ignoring our disagreements, but finding a way to go through them and beyond our fears. We recognize that this is not easy work, but have faith that this is our work, and it is work that we cannot rightly lay down.

-Friends for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender & Queer Concerns (FLGBTQC) 2007

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female; for you all are one in Christ Jesus.

-Galatians 3:28 (ESV)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

FROM MINISTRY & COUNSEL:

Exploring Formats for Meeting for Worship as Pandemic Restrictions Lift

We continue to experiment with evolving ways to conduct Meeting for Worship in our emerging-post-Covid-pandemic world. Members of Ministry and Counsel need to hear from you about your experiences with our experiments in various formats this summer, from hybrid to “parallel” to totally “in person” on Sundays and totally “Zooming” for mid-week worship on Wednesdays (and other formats yet to be discovered). We hope to find unity on our standard practice for Meetings for Worship by the end of August, so stay tuned and stay connected. Send your thoughts, ideas, responses, and experiences to the Ministry and Counsel co-clerks Rebecca “Rep” Pickard (deathquaker@gmail.com) or Amy Schmaljohn (amy@schmaljohn.com).

From the Mckim-Gunpowder Partnership Working Group

Get Connected: McKim Community Association Summer Activities at Gunpowder

On June 25th, we welcomed the teaching/coaching/leadership staff of the McKim Community Association to our Meeting House to get to know one another as we prepare to host McKim’s summer camp at Gunpowder on July 21st, 22nd, and 23rd. On each of these three days, McKim’s summer campers will be with us from 10:30 a.m. until around 2:30 p.m. The McKim-Gunpowder Partnership Working Group will be planning the programming for these three days, and we welcome Gunpowder Friends to get involved. There will be opportunities for leading learning sessions, preparing and serving lunch, supporting outdoor activities, jointly celebrating our 200th anniversaries (McKim’s charter was issued by the Maryland General Assembly in 2021 and Gunpowder moved to Priceville Road in 2021), and just generally being together. If you’re interested in being present on or supporting these days, please contact the working group liaison, Amy Schmaljohn, at amy@schmaljohn.com.

Prison Pen Pal Opportunity:

If you would like to be a Prison Pen Pal, contact John List at iahr.jlist@gmail.com. John is from the Interfaith Action for Human Rights, <https://www.intervaihtactionhr.org>. Most of the prisoners who are looking for pen pals through IAHR are those convicted of felonies in DC. People convicted of felonies in DC are sent to one of the 122 Federal facilities operated by the Bureau of Prisons across the US. Because of this, many of them are very far away from family members and receive no visitors. *Tracy Haidar*

FROM CARE AND OVERSIGHT:

From Care and Oversight Committee: All of us hit rough patches along life's path. Please remember that if you feel the need for Light and prayer, the Gunpowder community wants to help. At your request, the Clerk can send an email so that Gunpowder Friends know to hold you in the Light, and if you have practical needs, Care and Oversight can coordinate support.

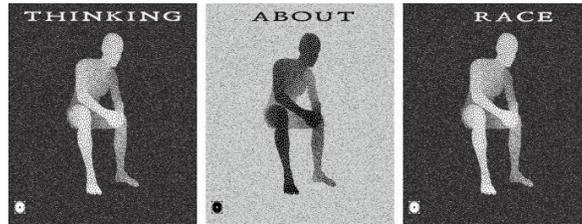
Also, the Monday email can be a place for sharing a joy, concern or sorrow that you would like the whole community to hold in the Light. This is a way to maintain our community connections -- especially over the summer months when Friends may be traveling.

What will our first First Day Coffee Socials look like in the coming months? Hospitality Committee (who has traditionally hosted this) and Care & Oversight (who has hosted the Zoom version) are considering how we can be hospitable during this time of transition. Stay tuned!

Dear Friends,

The Working Group on Stewarding our Vision is charged with naming and supporting future Meeting aspirations. The next meeting of the WGSV committee will be held on Tuesday, July 13, 2021, 4:30-6:00pm via Zoom. We will continue discernment around the leading that arose at the 10/17/20 Discerning Our Way Forward retreat "to combine the uniqueness of our physical setting with radical hospitality and spiritual nurture" as it pertains to our property. We will also begin to discern a process for addressing the need for sound long term financial planning for the Meeting as requested by Monthly Meeting on 6/20/21.

Friends are most welcome to join us. If you plan to attend please contact Greta Kirk-Mickey at greta.mickey@gmail.com or Anita Langford at amlangfo@verizon.net



THOUGHTS ON RACE

Summer, 2021

“Yet, beloved, there remains, after all, the blackness that is prophecy, the blackness that is inexplicable hope in the face of savage hopelessness. The great black prophet and mystic Howard Thurman says it best.

At the time when the slaves in America were without any excuse for hope and they could see nothing before them but the long interminable cotton rows and the fierce sun and the lash of the overseer, what did they do? They declared that God was not through. They said, “We cannot be prisoners of this event. We must not scale down the horizon of our hopes and our dreams and our yearnings to the level of the event of our lives.” So they lived through their tragic moment until at last they came out on the other side, saluting the fulfillment of their hope and their faith.

Beloved, if the enslaved could nurture, on the vine of their desperate deficiency of democracy, the spiritual and moral fruit that fed our civilization, then surely we can name and resist demagoguery; we can protest, and somehow defeat the forces that threaten the soul of our nation.”

From: Tears We Cannot Stop: A Sermon to White America, by Michael Eric Dyson

Dyson is an ordained minister, author, and Professor of Sociology at Georgetown University. This book was published in 2017. This section is taken near the end, p. 222-23.

Editor’s note: *The following essay was submitted by Rebecca Richards*

Our May 2021 Newsletter used a quote from John Lewis on his “Race Matters” page. In the spirit of “writing our own article” here is my effort to set the Lewis quote in a context:

Our faith teaches us that we have been given a seed, that seed is Truth, that seed is Love, that seed is seeing “that of God” in one another and in all of creation. It is with that seed, and its fruit, that we are made ready to confront the incredibly complex injustice of racism. It might seem, at times, that certain phrases or “labels” give us a useful window into that complexity, a way to see something, or at least signal our support for change. Words like “white fragility” or “anti-racist” or “white ally,” ideas like Critical Race Theory and diversity education may give me a “handle” on the problem, but don’t actually “let my life speak.”

Quakers have a principle of “plain speech” which might guide our witness. It takes time and courage to actually look at my own experience and seek to find the right words for the measure of truth I have been

given. And it takes humility to know that my vision will never be the complete picture. I have read much of the popular literature which defines and seeks to promote racial justice. And I admit to being initially attracted to the framework offered. But then I witnessed that language being used – in Quaker circles – to shame and blame good people whose anti-racism work was belittled for being naïve or insufficiently aggressive.

The one truth I can consistently and unequivocally hold is that God is Love. As Martin Luther King, Jr. said, “Hate will never overcome hate, only love can do that.” I have heard it said by some in today’s struggle struggles for justice that such talk of love is weak, too “simple.” I would counter that in my life the hardest thing I ever did was to learn to love those who denied me love. But I have not had to hold love toward those who actually beat me unconscious as did George Fox or John Lewis. This is why I do not discount their witness to love as “simple.”

Near the close of his book, “Across That Bridge,” John Lewis states:

“All our work, all our struggle, all our days add up to one purpose: to reconcile ourselves to the truth, and finally accept once and for all that we are one people, one family, the human family, that we are all emanations of one divine source and that source is Love.”

...

Know that the truth always leads to love, and the perpetuation of peace. Its products are never bitterness and strife. Clothe yourself in the work of love, in the revolutionary work of nonviolent resistance against evil. Anchor the eternity of love in your own soul and embed this planet with goodness. Release the need to hate, to harbor division, and the enticement of revenge. Release all bitterness. Hold only love, only peace in your heart, knowing that the battle of good to overcome evil is already won.”

In my own life I have struggled to understand those whose love I depended upon who said or acted in hateful ways – whether towards me or towards others. While not physically beaten, the wounds were deep, painful. This struggle ultimately led me to forgiveness, to an understanding that it is only by seeing with the heart can I pierce the fog of human failings. I fail. You fail. Failure does not make us bad, it makes us human.

When it comes to the effort to eliminate racism, shame, blame, taking sides will only lead, as Quakers say, to the “occasions for war” among us. And there are too many fine institutions, including some very fine Quaker ones, which are at this moment battlefields littered with the wounded of “racial justice warriors”. Having said that, I and we cannot ignore that black and brown bodies daily bear the cost of our ongoing inability to solve what W. E. B. DuBois a whole century ago called the “problem of the color line.” It does not seem to me that the solution to that “problem” lies with policy, even though we all know well enough that policies need to be changed.

It is a matter of the Heart. It is failure in this way to label ourselves or others as “fragile,” or “woke,” or even “racist” and “anti-racist.” We must meet each one where that one is. I must seek the seed of love within myself that can see the seed within the other. Only love helps me accept my failures, learning from them a better path. Only love allows me to stay in relationship when I have been hurt and try again. As Dr. King said, “Only love can do that.”

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.