

ILLUSTRATION COURTESY OF BALTIMORE YEARLY MEETING

GUNPOWDER FRIENDS MEETING NEWS, Web Edition for May, 2022

STEWARDSHIP OF THE EARTH



QUERIES:

Do you seek to preserve the beauty and balance of God's world?

Do you seek to meet your needs in a sustainable way by preserving resources, enhancing the health of the earth, and by protecting the future?

Do we intentionally explore and live our conviction that there is that of God in all creation?

ADVICES:

Connect with the earth and all it holds as part of your spiritual development. As John Woolman was concerned about the injury man was doing to the Earth, be aware that we are stewards of a gift of God for future generations. Misuse of the Earth and the abundance it offers often leads to injustice and war. Some common present practices so violate our sense of stewardship that they seem to constitute a war on the Earth. We need to be constantly aware of how our actions affect the rest of the world. By not using more than we need and by sharing with others, we help ensure that the earth will continue to support everyone.

VOICES:

The produce of the earth is a gift from our gracious creator to the inhabitants, and to impoverish the earth now to support outward greatness appears to be an injury to the succeeding age.

-John Woolman, c. 1760

Sustainability as a concept has recently acquired new spiritual depth of meaning to include a resolve to live in harmony with biological and physical systems, and to work to create social systems

that can enable us to do that. It includes a sense of connectedness and an understanding of the utter dependence of human society within the intricate web of life; a passion for environmental justice and ecological ethics; an understanding of dynamic natural balances and processes; and a recognition of the limits to growth due to finite resources. Our concern for Sustainability recognizes our responsibility to future generations, to care for the Earth as our own home and the home of all that dwell herein. We seek a relationship between human beings and the Earth that is mutually enhancing.

-Quaker Earthcare Witness, 1998

All things are bound together. All things connect. Whatever befalls the earth, befalls also the children of the earth.

-Oren Lyons, Onon

NOTICE REGARDING THE VARIOUS FORMATS OF MEETINGS FOR WORSHIP

“Hybrid” worship means that Friends in the Meeting House worship room are connected to Friends worshipping via Zoom through a camera and audio link.

“Parallel” worship means that Friends are gathered for worship in the Meeting House worship room and simultaneously via Zoom, but they are not connected through a camera and audio link.

“In-person” worship means that Friends are gathered for worship in the Meeting House and that no Zoom worship link is open at that time.

“Zoom” worship means that Friends are gathered for worship through the Zoom link only.

All formats of Meeting for Worship are supported by Friends on the Ministry and Counsel committee.

NOTE that at Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business in May, Gunpowder Friends will discern the schedule for the format(s) of worship we will sustain as we move into the summer months. Hence, after May 10th, we are listing format as “TBD.” Look for the weekly clerk’s emails to learn the format for each week’s Meetings for Worship for the rest of the month!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Clerk’s Announcement

If you would like an email or a notice to go out to members and attenders of the Meeting, please send your request to GunpowderClerk@gmail.com.

First Saturday Drum Circle hosted by Gunpowder Friends Meeting, Saturday, May 6

Please feel free to join us, any/every 1st Saturday each month, from 3:30-5:00 PM. Bring a snack if you like, bring a drum or percussion instrument if you have one. No RSVP required, however if you’d like to borrow a drum (and there are plenty available, don’t be shy!) please RSVP to Julie Evonna at Julieevonna@gmail.com.

We extend an invitation to folks from the wider community that may like to join with us, too -- there is no need to be a Gunpowder attender. No experience required; all levels of drumming experience are welcomed. We drum for fun!

WORKING GROUP ON CHARITABLE CONTRIBUTIONS (WGCC)



The Working Group on Charitable Contributions (WGCC) is tasked with vetting all requests for financial contributions that come to Gunpowder Friends Meeting for consideration. The working group has developed a charitable contribution request form and a review process to aid in the discernment. At this time, the committee would like to remind all Gunpowder Friends that if you have a worthy cause or organization about which you are passionate and passionately involved and which you believe could benefit from financial assistance, please bring them to the committee's attention for consideration. You will be given a request form to fill out on behalf of the program or organization. The working group will then proceed to review the request upon submission. If you have any questions, please contact either: Rebecca.richards4912@gmail.com or claire@exit24.net.

WGSV Committee Meeting Announcement

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 Wednesday, May 11, 2022 from 7:00 to 8:00pm via Zoom. We will continue discernment around the monthly meeting's request for the WGSV to create a process for addressing the need for sound long term financial planning.

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.

Our second Long Term Financial Planning Retreat is just around the corner!

We're off to a great start! After our first retreat Friends commented on the "amazing story telling" the "trust in the room" and lifted up a deep "appreciation for all the material collected". Others spoke of their delight around the work in small groups and the sharing over delicious meals. What a wonderful opportunity to deepen our beloved community and to open the conversation around how we discern the use our financial resources.

Our second retreat will take place on **Friday, May 20th** and **Saturday, May 21st**. As we did for our April retreat, we will have the opportunity to gather at the meeting house at 6:00pm on Friday to share delicious sweet treats and good conversation before our program, led by our facilitator, Cindy Kroll beginning at 7:00pm. On Friday we will complete our work together at 9:00pm. On Saturday a catered breakfast will be served at 8:00am with the program starting at 9:00am and ending promptly at 3:00pm. Our lunch on Saturday will be catered and we will be provided enough time for a leisurely repast and deep conversation.

As we move ahead, we will do a brief review of the work we've already done and move into exercises designed to help us discern a set of key financial principles that we will use as we make decisions about using the funds that Gunpowder Meeting holds. Watch for weekly emails from the WGSV that will hold both reminders and readings to help us to prepare for our time together.

Please let Anita Langford (amlangfo@verizon.net) or Greta Kirk Mickey (greta.mickey@gmail.com) know if you're able to attend all or part of this retreat.

PRIORITIES RECOMMENDED TO FRIENDS COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL LEGISLATION (FCNL)

Below are listed the top seven priorities chosen from among the responses of twenty-nine members of Gunpowder Friends Meeting for FCNL's attention during the 2023-24 Congress. Their collection, collation and tallying is credited to Helen Berkeley's efforts and a Google app that listed the number of possible choices that could be made, calculated their rank order to identify the seven highest priorities chosen. Those were submitted prior to the April 19th due date. She also provided a link to view the all the choices submitted. Many thanks to Helen for her efforts and tech expertise.

Gunpowder Friends Meeting's Recommendations for FCNL Lobbying Priorities During the 2023-2024 Congress:

21 people selected "Promote sustainable, science-based solutions to the climate crisis and prioritize international cooperation to achieve global sustainability goals and protect vulnerable populations."

20 people selected "Support equitable access for all to participate in open, secure, and transparent political and electoral processes, protect the integrity of our democratic institutions and processes, and work to ensure honesty and accountability of elected and appointed officials."

17 people selected "Strengthen environmental protections and advance environmental justice, while recognizing the finite capacity of the earth and the need to protect human, animal and plant diversity."

13 people selected "Confront the paradigm of global militarism, demilitarize space, reduce military spending, limit the spread of conventional weapons, prevent armed interventions, repeal the Authorizations for Use of Military Force (AUMFs), and reassert Congress' oversight role."

12 people selected "Prioritize programs that meet basic needs including universal access to quality affordable healthcare, a necessity magnified by the COVID-19 pandemic."

11 people selected "Advocate for a justice system that is just and equitable, eliminates mass incarceration and police brutality, and establishes law-enforcement that is community-oriented and demilitarized."

9 people selected "Promote nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation."

(Other priorities were chosen by 8 or fewer people.)

On Elders and Eldering

Submitted by Greta Kirk-Mickey

Our Third month Forum was a conversation around Elders and Eldering facilitated by Rebecca Pickard and Greta Kirk Mickey. Friends present suggested that we write a newsletter article on the topic. With time being short, we offered a brief quote in our Fourth month newsletter with the promise of more to come. This article is the fulfillment of that promise.

Who is an elder? What does “eldering” mean? Why is it important? What does elderring look like? At our Third month forum Friends joined in a conversation around this sometimes mystifying topic. Mystifying because it is so deeply embedded in our relationship with Spirit. “The heart of the elderring experience – our awareness of God breaking through and discovering ourselves in a moment of alignment with the Spirit – is an indefinable, uncontrollable, and unpredictable mystery.” Margery Mears Larabee – *Spirit-Led Eldering; Integral to our Faith and Practice*, Pendle Hill pamphlet #392. Marge Larabee so spoke to our understanding of elderring that I will lean heavily on her words, mingled with our own throughout this article.

First, a bit about the history of the practice of elderring. William Penn said of elders “They were changed men themselves before they went about to change others.” Historically, Friends’ meetings identified a group of elders to guide them on matters of spiritual nurture, ministry and ministers, and disciplinary oversight. Today, the practice remains apparent in Friends who accompany, hold, and counsel in any number of ways; someone traveling in the ministry; in pastoral care; in supporting worship and business and so much more. The present-day practice of eldership is not one of authority but carries a foundational and supportive role.

The act of elderring, or a Friend serving as an elder is deeply imbued with Spirit. We discerned that an elder might carry many of these gifts:

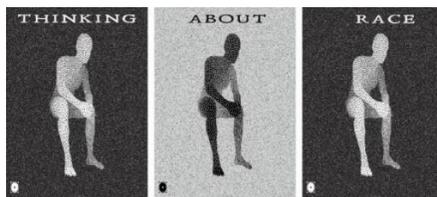
- Sensitivity to inner guidance and spiritual perception
- Deep listening (listening with the ear of the heart, hearing what’s underneath the words)
- Being egoless
- Holding in the Light
- Carrying the gifts of humility, compassion, wisdom, and empathy
- Upholding right relationship with Spirit
- Trust

These are but a few of the characteristics. Friends shared having received a gift of elderring from Friends of all ages and circumstances often as loving acts and deeply Spiritual exchanges.

Marge Larabee’s description of the elderring experience is beautifully written: “Effective intentional elderring usually requires a time commitment and a place apart. Any passing comment made immediately at the rise of the meeting for worship or a committee meeting or during an activity, regardless of the intention, is simply that – a comment that can be information and/or inspiring but incomplete – a nurturing nudge. The elderring function *in depth* requires, minimally, a deep and intimate exchange that includes finding out what the situation is like for the person being eldered, accepting and understanding that person’s condition, and having time for exploratory questions and comments, as well as presenting perspective that reflects a seasoned concern of the meeting community. This process would provide participants with an opportunity to engage each other, in person and in the Spirit.”

Why is Eldering important to us now, in today's Quaker community? Sometimes it's easier to define why Eldering is important by what happens in its absence because at its core, Eldering is about the cultivation of an awareness of that which is Unknowable and Unnamable. In Meetings without active Elders, friends may find it difficult to know who and where to test leadings. It may be difficult to find support for active work in the world or for life challenges. The spiritual underpinning of the Meeting itself may not be as evident.

At Gunpowder, we are blessed with many Elders in our midst.



Thinking About Race – (May 2022) *The Souls of Black Folk*

“Your country? How came it yours? Before the Pilgrims landed we were here. Here we have brought our three gifts and mingled them with yours: a gift of story and song—soft, stirring melody in an ill-harmonized and unmelodious land; the gift of sweat and brawn to beat back the wilderness, conquer the soil, and lay the foundations of this vast economic empire two hundred years earlier than your weak hands could have done it; the third, a gift of the Spirit. Around us the history of the land has centred for thrice a hundred years; out of the nation's heart we have called all that was best to throttle and subdue all that was worst; fire and blood, prayer and sacrifice, have billowed over this people, and they have found peace only in the altars of the God of Right. Nor has our gift of the Spirit been merely passive.

Actively we have woven ourselves with the very warp and woof of this nation,—we fought their battles, shared their sorrow, mingled our blood with theirs, and generation after generation have pleaded with a headstrong, careless people to despise not Justice, Mercy, and Truth, lest the nation be smitten with a curse. Our song, our toil, our cheer, and warning have been given to this nation in blood-brotherhood. Are not these gifts worth the giving? Is not this work and striving? Would America have been America without her Negro people?”

— W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 1903

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 first Saturday, 10am to 1pm, currently via Zoom. If you would like to attend, contact the clerk at david.etheridge@verizon.net.

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.