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GUNPOWDER FRIENDS MEETING NEWS, Web Edition for September, 2022

SIMPLICITY



QUERIES:

- Am I aware that the ways in which I choose to use my time, my possessions, my money, and my energy reflect my most deeply held values?
- How do we support one another in our search for a simpler life?
- What am I ready to release so that I can give my attention to what matters most?
- What in my present life most distracts me from God?

ADVICES:

Simplicity flows from well-ordered living. It is less a matter of doing without, than a spiritual quality that simplifies our lives by putting first things first. A simple way of life, freely chosen, is a source of strength, joy, and comfort. Friends are advised to strive for simplicity in the use of our earnings and property, and in our style of living, choosing that which is simple and useful. This does not mean that life is to be poor and bare, destitute of joy and beauty. Each must determine, by the Light that is given, what promotes and what hinders the compelling search for inner peace that enables us to listen deeply to God.

The testimony of simplicity is like a bell that calls us to an awareness of the Center. It challenges us to ask "What matters?" It reminds us that much of what worries us and stress-es us is not important. It asks us to recognize the burdens we carry needlessly and to lay them down: our anxiety about our appearance, our struggle to afford what we do not need, comparisons between our lifestyle and the lifestyles of others, squabbles born of tension and stress, worries that leave us exhausted and unable to find time for what matters in our lives.

VOICES:

The ability to simplify means to eliminate the unnecessary so that the necessary may speak.

-Hans Hoffmann, 1952

I wish I might emphasize how a life becomes simplified when dominated by faith-fulness to a few concerns. Too many of us have too many irons in the fire. We get distracted by the intellectual claim to our interest in a thousand and one good things, and before we know it we are pulled and hauled breathlessly along by an over-burdened program of good committees and good undertakings.... [W]e learn to say No as well as Yes by attending to the guidance of inner responsibility. Quaker simplicity needs to be expressed not merely in dress and architecture and the height of tombstones but also in the structure of a relatively simplified and coordinated life-program of social responsibilities.

-Thomas R. Kelly, 1941

There is enough for everyone's need, but not for everyone's greed.

-Mohandas Gandhi, 1942

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*.

FROM MINISTRY and COUNSEL:

Interested in joining Spiritual Formation this year?

On Thursday, September 15th we'll gather at the Meeting House to resume our shared journey in Spiritual Formation. If you've never participated in Spiritual Formation, many of us can share our experiences of our monthly gatherings in "Large Group," an evening at the Meeting House when we share a meal and reflections on a brief reading. We're also each invited to join a small Spiritual Friendship group that meets at another time (chosen by the group members) to share our spiritual lives and journeys in a more intimate setting. In the Spring, we are invited to a weekend-long retreat with Friends from across Baltimore Yearly Meeting, thereby widening our circle of fellowship. Friends Virginia Schurman and Marshall Sutton brought Spiritual Formation to Gunpowder 22 years ago and we've continued faithfully since then, recognizing the many gifts of Spiritual nurture, friendship, and fellowship it offers us in community. If you're interested in participating this year, or want to learn more, contact Rebecca Richards (*rebecca.richards4912@gmail.com*) or Amy Schmaljohn (*amy@schmaljohn.com*).

Gunpowder's "One Book" for the year

For the third year, the Ministry and Counsel Committee is pleased to offer Gunpowder Friends a book that will guide and support some of our shared work and learning in the year ahead. In

partnership with the Spirit and Nature Working Group, we're pleased to offer Earth Prayers from Around the World as this year's book. We have purchased a copy for every Gunpowder household. We expect that many Friends will be able to pick up a copy of the book at the Meeting House, but if you'd like yours mailed, please contact Linda Davis (*lm.davis@verizon.net*) or Amy Schmaljohn (*amy@schmaljohn.com*) and we'll mail one to your home. At the September forum sponsored by the Spirit and Nature Working Group, we'll suggest how the book will support us in our deepening relationship to the physical place we call home: our sacred Meeting House and grounds.

Spirit and Nature Learning this Fall

Let's continue our journey of loving (and knowing) the home we share in northern Baltimore County with all of our relations! Starting in September, the Spirit and Nature Working Group will offer some pathways for our widening and deepening learning about our Meeting House and grounds—the sacred Earth on which we worship and work together. We'll host a series of forums this fall (September, October, and November). We're sharing with all Meeting households (thanks to Ministry and Counsel) a book that will accompany us through our learning and sharing: *Earth Prayers* (ed. Roberts and Amidon). We're inviting each of us to choose a "sit spot" on the Meeting House grounds and give our attention to what is happening in that sacred place. We'll record and share our observations through a map in the west room of the Meeting House. So join us for a fall of learning, sharing, dreaming, and visioning what it means to love and care this sacred place we call home.

Circle of Light – Volunteers Needed

What is the Circle of Light? It's an email "tree" that would allow Friends to share requests for being held in the Light and to provide this care for one another. This would function something like a prayer circle does in other churches. Greta Kirk Mickey will act as coordinator; receiving requests for being held in the Light and sharing those requests, via email, with those who wish to provide this care for Friends. If you would like to be part of the Circle of Light, please email Greta. The Circle of Light is under the care of Ministry and Council and affirmed by Care and Oversight.

From Shelly Slyker:

I hope you can join me for a **Feldenkrais Series of Awareness Through Movement Lessons: Finding Ease in Sitting** The dates are:

Wednesday September 28, October 5 & 12th from 7:00-8:15pm at the Gunpowder Meeting House

These seated lessons use small, gentle movements paired with awareness. The mind quiets and tensions release. In this safe space of playing small and slow, we can learn about our habitual patterns and new options for more ease in both body and mind. Quieting the noise of discomfort may help in your daily functional tasks including settling into worship. I invite you to attend one or all three sessions. Donations will be accepted each week to me for the Refugee Work, and a total of the donations will be reported to the community in October.

To register, please kindly email Shelly at *shellyslyker@gmail.com* and plan to wear comfortable clothing for the lessons.

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, September 7, 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

Update on our Long-Term Financial Planning process – September, 2022

With two retreats, listening sessions, and surveys behind us, we are nearing our goal. Our third and final retreat in our Spirit led Long Term Financial Planning series will seek to name Gunpowder Friends Key Financial Principles. These Key Financial Principles will serve as an adjunct to our Mission, Vision, and Values statement. Our Mission, Vision, and Values statement will work hand in hand with our Key Financial Principles to guide us in stewarding our financial resources.

At our first retreat Friends explored our spiritual relationship to our use of money both as individuals and as a Meeting. 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.

During our second retreat Friends worked with the question “How do you know?” Stories were shared of times when friends were clear that they had made the right, Spirit led financial decision and what that felt like. Friends looked at the themes that rose in our first retreat and talked about the importance of each. Hopes, dreams, and concerns were shared. A Friend lifted up his sense that “It’s not about the money!” The sharing mirrored the great trust and openness that exists and continues to bloom within our beloved community. Our facilitator, Cindy Kroll, has consistently taken us deep as we listen for the will of Spirit.

Over the summer we had two listening sessions which were well attended and fruitful and our survey was responded to. A small group of Friends has been working to create a draft of our Key Financial Principles based on the input provided during the retreats, listening sessions, and survey. The Key Financial Principles will be at the core of our work during this retreat.

We anticipate our third and final retreat will be a time of great rejoicing as we culminate this important work together! If you missed the first two sessions, don't miss the experience of this one! The final Long Term Financial Planning Retreat (It's not about the money!) will take place on **September 23rd and 24th**. We will gather on Friday evening, September 23rd at 6:00pm for a time of sharing and consuming delicious deserts together before we move into our program at 7:00pm. On Saturday September 24th we will come together at 8:00am to share a delicious catered breakfast and a time of fellowship before we move into our work at 9:00am. We'll break for a catered lunch around 11:30am and share an extended time of great food and fellowship before resuming our work which will culminate at 3:00pm.

Y'all come! If you were unable to attend either the first or second retreat, we encourage you to be part of the third retreat. If you can only come for part of the weekend, that's fine! It's not too early to let Anita Langford (amlangfo@verizon.net) or Greta Kirk Mickey (greta.mickey@gmail.com) know that you'll be with us. **Please do let us know even if you've attended the first two retreats** – the count will help us plan with our caterer. Thank you!

Right Sharing of World Resources: Collecting Stamps for Quaker Good Works

We are reinvigorating Gunpowder Meeting's stamp collecting project, first brought to us by Friend Sonia Blumenthal. See below for current guidelines. Please put your stamps in the designated box at the Meeting House. Questions? See LouAnne Smith.

History of the RSWR Stamp Program

Since 1996, the Quaker Missions Stamp Project has collected and sold used postage stamps and used the proceeds to fund Quaker organizations like RSWR. Brad Hathaway founded the project and was its steward until 2009, when Earl Walker took over the stamp ministry. From 2009-2017, Earl raised over \$11,000 for Right Sharing through the Quaker Missions Stamp Project. In 2017, Indianapolis First Friends Meeting became the new home for the stamp ministry. Amy Perry and Brad Jackson are the current co-coordinators.

Update as of December, 2021: The stamp program now accepts stamps of all issue dates and countries, both used and unused stamps, sheets of stamps, albums, boxed collections of stamps, envelopes, and postcards. Please note we are only able to process and sell stamps and not other collectibles (for example, greeting cards). In order for the stamps to be salable, please follow these guidelines:

Foreign stamps (excluding Canada):

If the stamp is still on the postcard or envelope, leave it on. There are collectors who like to receive a whole envelope or postcard with a foreign stamp. This is because of the markings and/or artwork that often are also present. Stamps already removed from the envelope or postcard are also welcome.

USA and Canada stamps:

If there is something special about the envelope, such as the words "First Day of Issue," or some artwork, or special words added by the Post Office, then send us the entire envelope. There are collectors who like to receive a whole envelope or postcard with these special markings. Examples below:

If there is no special marking, cut the stamp(s) off the envelope or postcard. Leave the perforations (wavy edges) on the stamps. Leave 1/4 inch to 1/8 inch around the stamp so the whole stamp is preserved, including the perforations. The perforations are part of the stamp. When there is more than one stamp and the stamps are close together, cut around the group as a unit.

If you have stamps already off the envelope that are grouped in some way (as might happen when sending in someone's stamp collection), leave them already grouped. This helps us in sorting.

Peelable stamps:

Please leave these on the envelope paper. If you try to peel them off of the paper, they stick to other stamps, and damage both.

Nonprofit and presorted mail stamps:

All stamps are acceptable, but we want to be financially effective. If you already have a group of stamps that includes a lot of nonprofit and/or presorted mail stamps, just leave them and send them to us. However, as you are assembling new shipments, we recommend you leave out the nonprofit ones and the presorted mail ones, so you are not paying postage for something of little value. The nonprofit stamps will have the words "NONPROFIT ORG" and the presorted mail stamps will have the word "PRESORTED" on them.



Thinking About Race – (September 2022) Tears We Cannot Stop

This month's column, with a passage from the book by Michael Eric Dyson, [Tears We Cannot Stop: A Sermon To White America](#), 2017 and 2021 was contributed by Tronette Anochie of Sandy Spring Friends meeting. She also contributed the response.

“America is in trouble, and a lot of that trouble - perhaps most of it - has to do with race. Everywhere we turn, there is discord and division, death and destruction. When we survey the land, we see a country full of suffering that we cannot fully understand, and a history that we can no longer deny. Slavery casts a long shadow across our lives. The spoils we reaped from forcing people to work without wages and treating them with grievous inhumanity continue to haunt us in a racial gulf that seems impossible to overcome. Black and white people don't merely have different experiences; we seem to occupy different universes, with worldviews that are fatally opposed to one another.”

Response by Tronette Anochie: Where do we go from here? The BYM Working Group on Racism, the Growing Diverse Leadership Committee, the Reparations Action Committee, and STRIDE are seeking the way forward out of darkness. But everyone is needed as we move towards the Light. A Friend who likes simple prayers asks, “What is mine to do?” Each person should be asking themselves this question and then listening to the Spirit within for direction, guidance, love, and action.

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, 10:00 am to 1:00 pm, 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.