



Welcome to the **March 2023 Web Edition** of the Gunpowder Newsletter. Some information has been redacted. To receive the full monthly Newsletter please feel free to inquire with Gunpowder's Clerk at gunpowderclerk@gmail.com.

Members and attenders may access newsletters and monthly minutes in the log in area of the website.

QUERIES:LISTENING

QUERIES:

What in my present life most distracts me from God?

What am I ready to release so that I can give my attention to what matters most?

How do 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 the ways in which we choose to use our community's resources reflect our most deeply held values?

How do we support one another in our search for a simpler life?



ADVICES:

How are we to honor the testimony of simplicity in our modern world? To many of us, our culture seems so "busy" and so complex, so full of disturbing news and distractions, that we are sometimes overwhelmed. Our time is often overcommitted, and our wants are manipulated to make us desire what we do not need. Our consumption of goods as a nation is out of control. In our world, the word "simplicity" may be quickly followed by guilt and then by a sense of frustration, or even despair. We need to think of simplicity not as an impossible demand, but an invitation to a more peaceful and fulfilling Spirit-led life.

Simplicity flows from a well-ordered life. 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.

The testimony of simplicity is like a bell that calls us to awareness of the Center. It challenges us to ask "what matters?" It reminds us that much of what worries us and stresses us is not all that important. It asks us to recognize the burdens we carry needlessly and 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. Simplicity is not about an antique form of dress or speech. It is a reminder that today, as surely as hundreds of years ago, we can choose to allow God to order our lives. It asks us to set aside time for prayer and spiritual discipline that open us to wisdom and guidance beyond our own. Today, as then, it refers to a life lit from within by the Inward Light, ordered by the Love that nourishes the core, and freed by the Spirit from bondage to the superficial.

VOICES:

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, before he died at the hands of the Nazis, said, "To be simple is to fix one's eye solely on the simple truth of God at a time when all concepts are being confused, distorted, and turned upside down."

Richard J. Foster, 1981

“

'Tis a gift to be simple,
'Tis a gift to be free
'Tis a gift to come down
where we ought to be
And when we find ourselves
in the place just right,
We will be in the valley
of Love and delight

”

Shaker Spiritual



ANNOUNCEMENTS



WGSV: NEXT MEETING

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, March 15th, 2023 at 7:00pm via Zoom**. We will continue to move forward the work of caring for our Mission, Vision and Values and Key Financial Principals as well as continuing to carry the leadings gleaned as part of our October 2020 Discerning our Way Forward gathering.

The WGSV's meetings are always open! If you'd like to learn more about our work or simply test the waters, please plan on joining us. Please contact Greta Kirk Mickey at greta.mickey@gmail.com or Anita Langford at amlangfo@verizon.net so that we can provide you with materials and the Zoom link.



UPCOMING FORUM

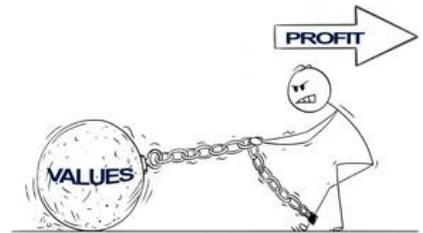
Sunday, March 12th Forum at rise of Meeting will be a conversation with Eston Griffin, Director of Business Development and Constituent Relations at **Friends Fiduciary** who will present information and field questions concerning our investments with them.

We have asked Friends Fiduciary to provide some basic information about Friends Fiduciary itself, about the funds that Gunpowder's money is invested in, to look at the performance of these investments, and to share with us what impact they are having in the world. In preparation for this forum, visiting these links may be helpful:

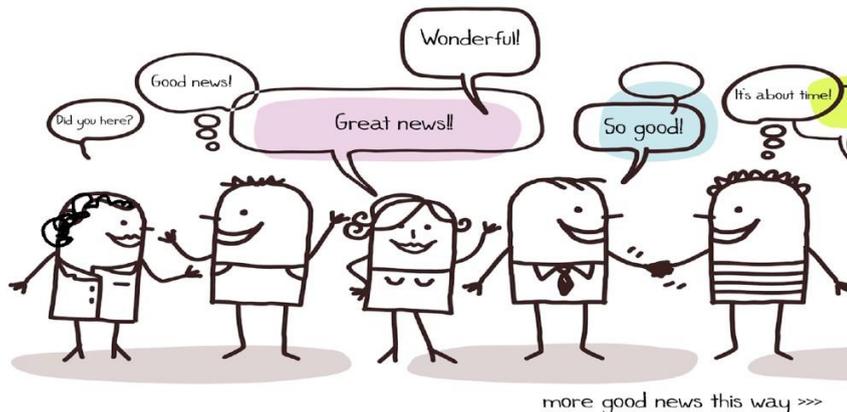
What are Friends Fiduciary's Quaker-values investment guidelines?
<https://friendsfiduciary.org/wp-content/uploads/Investment-GuidelinesJune-2020-FINAL.pdf>

How does Friends Fiduciary invest? <https://friendsfiduciary.org/how-we-invest/>

How is Friends Fiduciary involved in active management of investments?
<https://friendsfiduciary.org/news/>



Eston will be prepared to speak to these and other topics and to answer our broader questions as well. We look forward to seeing you all there. This forum is sponsored by the WGSV and Finance Committee.





WELCOME CONNOR WHITE

Saturday, March 4th from 10AM to Noon: All are invited to welcome and celebrate Connor White as a member of Gunpowder Friends Meeting at a Potluck Breakfast in his honor and to our good fortune! Come one, come all!

The Meeting House will open at 9:30 to set up. Helping hands always welcome.

WEDDING BELLS ARE RINGING FOR WENDY BALDER AND BILL EVANS



The marriage of Wendy and Bill will take place on **Saturday, April 1st, at 11AM at Gunpowder Meeting House.** Friends are welcome to attend and encouraged to participate as a sign of the community's love, support, and witness. As is Quaker tradition, all who are present will be asked to sign the wedding certificate after the Meeting for Marriage. Afterward, there will be a reception at the Meeting House with a catered lunch provided by Sarah Sherman, who has catered many other Gunpowder events. Come share in the joy of this very special day! And cheers to Wendy and Bill!

SUSAN RUDY REACHES NEW HEIGHTS!



In a not-for-the-feint-of-heart-curiosity-driven-pre-inspection inspection, Susan Rudy boldly went where no man, er...uh...person...dared to go before. Seen, gulp, two stories high – unaided – on an extension ladder, Susan cheerfully peered through the upper east door in her inspection of the Meeting House in preparation for upcoming maintenance and repair. Brave work, Susan! It is rumored Alan Schmaljohn was somewhere in the vicinity. Though this cannot be verified at this time.





PEACE AND JUSTICE

Deaths by gunfire per country, 2019
(most recent comparative statistics available)



New Zealand: 49



United Kingdom: 162



United States: 37,038



PROBLEM?
WHAT PROBLEM?

How many more? What will it take? If not now when? The time for questions is over.
The time for answers is now. Support and promote gun laws that protect all lives... not just some rights.
Call or write your elected officials today and tell them where you stand.



FEATURES

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Ad Hoc Committee on Agricultural Lease Renewal

As described in the January 2023 Newsletter, an ad hoc committee met to explore how to respond to Trustees' request for Meeting guidance not later than September 2023 on whether to allow automatic 2-year extension of the agricultural lease on the approximately 2.7 acres west of the burial ground. Friends quickly discerned that additional information, planning, and commitment will be needed before triggering action and costs in the spring of 2024. In discussion, there was a general sense that several possible futures for the land would be compatible with transition to and through a well-managed meadow, but that Friends would be well served by seeking outside expertise on the logistics and costs of such a commitment. Along with such information, Friends will be seeking to discern where the Meeting's energy and commitment lie, and whether to move briskly into land transition in 2024 or proceed more slowly. Beyond the matter of the lease and future vegetative cover (absent glyphosate, aka *Roundup*) are future Meeting discernments on a variety of possible uses including those voiced during our Visioning process. To obtain or contribute more information, please contact any of the current volunteers: Greta Kirk-Mickey, Jo Brown, Adair Clarke, Rebecca Richards, or Alan Schmaljohn.



Ministry & Counsel

Working Group on First Day School

A working group under the care of Ministry and Counsel has been organizing opportunities for our children and their families to gather for learning, for service, and for fellowship. They have also attended to the care of children who come to Meeting on First Days. To care for children who arrive on First Days, the working group has prepared activity bags including reading and materials for drawing and coloring. These bags are intended to be given to children and families at the start of the worship hour and for families to indicate whether they wish their children to stay in worship or to be accompanied by Gunpowder Friends to the First Day School rooms. To remain compliant with our Child Care Safety Policy, two adults (with background checks) must always be present with a child or children outside of the worship room. The working group now asks to be laid down and for the care of our children and youth to be taken up by the Meeting as a whole. M&C recommends that we lay down the working group and M&C asks that Friends who have completed background checks let us know of their willingness to serve families and children who arrive on First Days. M&C will also plan to resume intergenerational opportunities for fellowship throughout the year; we welcome a partnership with C&O in this work.

Meetings for Worship

We are grateful for the more than 30 Friends who gathered last First Day to share our experiences of Meetings for Worship. The sharing helped us to listen to our different perspectives and experiences and to hear how central worship is for all of us. In addition to hosting this gathering, we have continued to monitor the schedule and formats of Meetings for Worship each week. Friends who wish to worship without the presence of the technology bridge have continued to meet at 8:30 each First Day; on First Days at 10:00, Friends worshipping at home have joined Friends in the worship room through the technology bridge, and Friends who wish to be in a technology-free space have worshiped on the Meeting House porch (or west room), returning to the worship room for joys and sorrows and for announcements. On Tuesday evenings, a small group of Friends continue to meet at the Meeting House at 6:30 (without opening the technology





bridge); we expect that group will grow again as the weather warms and the worship moves to the west porch. We reflected on this schedule and the current times set aside for each worship format. We now recommend that Gunpowder Friends uphold the current schedule of Meetings for Worship each week, with the 10:00 a.m. worship hour accessible to Friends in the worship room or via the technology bridge. The other two meetings each week would remain unbridged. We are exploring whether a slightly later start to the 10:00 a.m. worship hour might better meet the needs of all Friends on First Days. The shift in the worship hour some years ago was made to accommodate the needs of our then large cohort of young people and their families who were involved in athletic or other extracurricular activities on Sunday afternoons. That change approved by Meeting did create some challenges for Friends, to which we've now largely adapted. Of course, any recommended change to the times of worship on First Day mornings would need to consider all of the other community activities that happen before and after worship hours (Bible Study, committee meetings, forums, business meeting, coffee social hour).

Upcoming Forums: February: consideration of revisions to BYM Faith and Practice. **March:** Friends Fiduciary presentation. **April:** Working Group on Racism. **May:** Spirit and Nature

Working Group on Charitable Contributions

Understanding GFM's Budgeted and Unbudgeted Charitable Contributions

The working of Gunpowder's charitable contributions seems to have become somewhat of an enigma. What's the difference between budgeted and unbudgeted? Who makes the decisions? How are they seasoned? These are some of the questions that rise. This article is an attempt to shed light on the processes that are in place for different kinds of charitable contributions.

The first thing to know is that all financial decisions including charitable contributions, budgeted or not, are approved (or not) by Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business. It is this body that approves our annual budget as well as any expenditures that rise beyond what is designated in our budget.

Budgeted Charitable Contributions

The budget is compiled by our Treasurer, in conjunction with the Finance Committee by gathering requests for funding from each committee and compiling them. Our usual procedure is for the budget to come to Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business for a first reading in November and for approval in December. Included in the budget is a line item designated "Charitable Contributions". That line item is currently under the care of the Working Group on Charitable Contributions. The meeting approves a total annual expenditure for this line item and the Working Group makes recommendations as to how those funds are to be allocated among designated recipients. Those recipients usually include FCNL, FUM, FGC, Local Fire departments, Food banks, etc. These are relatively standard charitable contributions.



Unbudgeted Charitable Contributions

Unbudgeted charitable contribution expenses are requests for funds that do not fall within any named budget line. As such, they are in no way connected to our budgeted Charitable Contributions. Examples of unbudgeted charitable contributions that Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business has approved are funds for the McKim summer lunch program, funds sent to Act for Transformation in the country of Georgia, funds approved to sustain the work of refugee resettlement, funds approved for Greta Kirk Mickey to travel to the country of Georgia to continue her peacemaking work and to support work in that country. None of these items were included in the Gunpowder budget. Each one was brought to Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business for our discernment. Each of these unbudgeted expenditures rose from a strong spiritual leading and were approved by Meeting for worship with a concern for Business. We affirm that it is appropriate for such leadings and requests for funds to be seasoned and tested with a committee prior to being brought to Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business and that, when time is not an issue, a request for funding of an unbudgeted contribution may be referred to the appropriate committee to be seasoned. We also affirm that when time is of the essence, Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business may take up the role of seasoning and approving any financial request at the time that request is received.



GRETA KIRK-MICKEY SUPPORT UPDATE

To Dear Friends Everywhere,

We commend to your loving care our beloved Friend, Greta Kirk Mickey. Greta carries a leading to work for peace within our families, our meetings and communities, our country and the world. Her leading emanates from her understanding that our Peace Testimony is deeply intertwined with all of our testimonies to create an immersive faith and way of being in the world.

Friends at Gunpowder Friends Meeting, Baltimore Yearly Meeting have met with Greta in clearness and find her leading to be clear and deeply Spirit led. Greta has shared with us the work she did while a member of New York Yearly Meeting as the yearly meeting's peace concerns coordinator. While carrying that work, she found clarity to move into peacemaking in the country of Georgia at the request of the Yearly Meeting. Through several trips to Georgia, Greta helped to gather and train a cohort of young Georgians who would sustain the work of the Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) in their country. Her work in community building and healing through AVP has served people in many other communities through Greta's faithfulness to this ministry.

We discern that Greta's leading once again carries her to work in Georgia and to use the Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) as a tool for healing and reconciliation. Her work also carries a call to faithfulness to Friends to live fully our intertwined testimonies and to serve communities in our own Yearly Meeting and neighboring communities. We look forward to walking with Greta as she listens and discerns where she is led in this ministry.

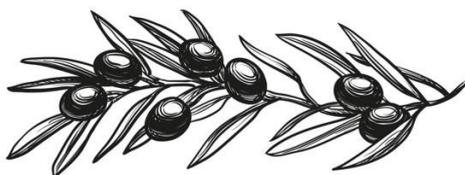
We entrust Greta and her ministry of peace into your loving care. Friends at Gunpowder Friends Meeting send love and light to all who will be connected with her through this ministry.

Peace and Blessings,

Adair Clarke, Clerk
On behalf of Gunpowder Friends Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

_____, 2023

Friends can read a first-hand account of Greta's peace work on the following page.



How It All Began by Greta Kirk-Mickey



In 2008, I was serving New York Yearly Meeting (NYYM) as Peace Concerns Coordinator. That year was also the year that Russia invaded the country of Georgia. NYYM reached out to Friends of the Tbilisi Friends Worship Group offering support and asking how NYYM could help. Their clerk, Mikheil Elizbarashvili “Misha” responded with gratitude and asked for help with refugee aid and in bringing conflict transformation skills to Georgia. The Yearly Meeting asked me to carry the relationship with Georgia and to explore what that relationship would look like. After much prayerful consideration I was strongly led to step into that work.

In 2009 I first traveled to Georgia. I worshipped with Tbilisi Friends and shared fellowship. We talked at length about the Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP). I explained the basic premise of AVP and my sense of how it would be helpful to them and to Georgians. Friends were excited by what they heard and we made plans for my return to Georgia to do AVP workshops and to begin to train Georgian facilitators.

In 2010 and 2011 I returned to Georgia for five weeks and three weeks respectively.

During that time, we ran AVP training workshops as well as back to back AVP workshops in the community and with organizations for Internally displaced People. With each workshop Georgian facilitators were trained so that a cadre of Georgian facilitators was raised up; ready and excited to continue the work.

Last year I was invited to speak about my experiences in Georgia at NYYM’s annual session as part of programmed worship around the peace testimony. During my preparations I was in contact with many of the facilitators that were trained during my time in Georgia. They shared with me how important AVP was for them and about the significant and ongoing positive effects of AVP for them and for the lives that they continue to touch. Misha also introduced me to Juergen Menzel and Alena Kemm of Act for Transformation – an organization working primarily in Germany and the Caucasus with an office in Tbilisi, Georgia. They all encouraged me to come to Georgia again to re-enliven AVP there. With their invitation, and in consultation with my support committee I am excited and delighted to be traveling to Georgia again in April of this year.



I want to lift up the importance of my support committee (Dave Fitz, Ruth Fitz, Rebecca Richards, Amy Schmaljohn). They have walked with me, challenged me, and encouraged me. When I created a piece of writing and shared it with them, they felt it was important and encouraged me to submit it for publication to both BYM and NYYM and also to Friends Journal. All of them accepted it for publication. When the invitation to travel to Georgia rose, they encouraged me to go. The Meeting has supported me financially and spiritually and by approving a letter of embracement. The letter of embracement will not be carried to Baltimore Yearly Meeting for their approval.

There simply are not enough words to express my gratitude as well as how humbled I feel. Many thanks to you all.

THINKING ABOUT RACE

In a World without Caste



In 2022, Baltimore Yearly Meeting undertook a “One-Book Project,” to read and discuss Isabel Wilkerson’s book *Caste*. With gratitude to those who planned and facilitated this project, as well as to those who attended the seven sessions, which ended in December, we share a quote from Wilkerson’s epilogue:

“In a world without caste, instead of a false swagger over our own tribe or family or ascribed community, we would look upon all of humanity with wonderment: the lithe beauty of an Ethiopian runner, the bravery of a Swedish girl determined to save the planet, the physics-defying aerobatics of an African-American Olympian, the brilliance of a composer of Puerto Rican

descent who can rap the history of the founding of America at 144 words a minute—all of these feats should fill us with astonishment at what the species is capable of and gratitude to be alive for this.”

Features, continued...

TINKER, TECHY, BRIDGEBUILDER, CHIEF

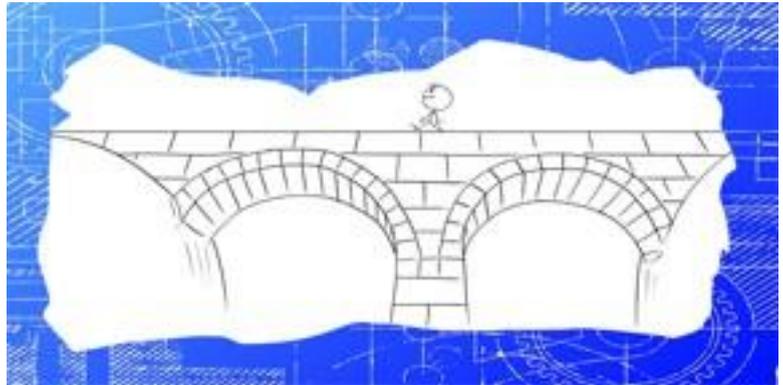
The assumption that Alan Schmaljohn enjoys his ministry as chief bridgebuilder between homebound Friends and Meeting House attenders was voiced somewhere near the end of Meeting for Worship recently. It is easy to adapt that assumption, so amiable and congenial is Alan as he goes about the weekly task. But accurate or not, one thing is certain: the role he has so willingly taken on is a big responsibility and no little work. It is a job that has required considerable dedication, patient trial and error, and dogged tenacity as the audiovisual components involved in the technology bridge are explored, installed, debugged, upgraded, and maintained.

"It's an ongoing experiment," Alan explained. "There's a learning curve to testing the camera and speaker systems involved. And there are better systems out there than what we're currently using. Our audio system is first rate but our video could use improvement." His hope is that any and all improvements serve to streamline the process, making it less obtrusive overall and making the bridge between home and Meeting House seamless. In the meantime, Alan puts considerable effort into maintaining and operating the current system. He uses his own laptop, which he transports to and from the Meeting House every week. He arrives at least 20 minutes early each First Day to set up, make sure camera and audio are in working order, and greet those who are joining in from home. Alan understands that not everyone in the community is comfortable with the presence of technology in Meeting for Worship, but he looks at it this way:

"I see it as another form of hospitality," Alan explained. "We're a welcoming people. This is a way to welcome those who might otherwise feel left out or left behind."

When asked if he felt isolated, operating from an outer room, he responded no.

"No. On the contrary, I feel I am fully present to all. Especially with the ear buds on. I can hear what everyone is called to say, whether they are home or in the Meeting room. By managing the bridge, I feel close to Friends at home, I feel supportive of them, and at the same time I feel in community with those at the Meeting House."



Thus, giving whole new meaning to the idea of connectivity. Thank you, Alan.

If you would like to assist Alan in his ministry of bridge maintenance, please contact Alan at: aschmalj@xecu.net

For more information on the subject, please read: [Did You Know? The Technology Bridge at Gunpowder](#)



Submissions for the newsletter can be sent to:
gfmnewseditor@gmail.com