



Welcome to the **May 2025 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](mailto:gunpowderclerk@gmail.com).

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

## 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](mailto:GunpowderClerk@gmail.com).

### **MAY FORUM – Life and Death, Death and Dying May 18<sup>th</sup> 2025, 11:30am-1:00pm**

"On that day, you will know that you are in me and I am in you." John 14:20

Life and death are one in the same thing. It is only our love of the one and our fear of the other which blinds us to this reality and keeps us locked in our small selves and endless dramas. To be free to receive the great love we have been promised, we must learn to reckon with our mortality.

In his book, *Immortal Diamond*, Richards Rohr explores the spiritual search for our True Self. He writes,

*Some form of death -- psychological, spiritual, relational or physical -- is the only way we will loosen our ties to our small separate False Self. Only then does it return in a new shape, which I am calling the Risen Christ, or the soul, or the True Self."*

In this forum we will explore the idea of considering death as a spiritual practice.

### **MAY REQUESTS for The North County Food Pantry**

**PASTA!!** -- Dry boxed pasta, pasta sauce, kids canned pasta, mac & cheese please.

### **From NOMINATING COMMITTEE**

*"We don't get together to do the work; we do the work so we can get together."* --Charlie Davis

There are lots of ways to serve our Meeting, and many Friends find that participation in the work of the Meeting is enriching for the individual as well as for the community. And some would say that building and supporting our Meeting right now is one way we can make the world a better place. Are you wondering how your leadings, skills, and experience might match the Meeting's needs? We invite you to speak with any member of Nominating Committee to explore opportunities and to find your niche.

Wendy Balder, Tina Beneman, Ruth Fitz, Marilyn Rothstein, and LouAnne Smith

**SPIRITUAL FORMATION** recently read portions of *Quaker Strongholds* by British Friend Caroline Stephen (1834-1909).

Here is an excerpt from Chapter VI "Our Calling" (paragraph 186):

"In our days faith is challenged at every point and at every turn, with a freedom and a violence which was unknown fifty years ago. All that can be shaken is being shaken, to its very foundations. My own firm belief is that, though full of danger, this is on the whole a natural, a necessary, and, in the main, a beneficial process. Throw a large load of fuel on a clear fire, and for a time it may seem doubtful whether it is not extinguished; but if the flame be strong enough, it will rise again through the smoke and dust, and burn the stronger for what it has mastered. And so assuredly will faith in whatever is truly eternal rise above all present confusions and darkenings of counsel, and burn with fresh power in those hearts which have steadfastly cleaved to truth, be its requirements what they may."

The full text of *Quaker Strongholds* (1890) is available

at <https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/61802/pg61802-images.html#c3>

**KAYAK Available.** Jon Acton has a kayak berthed at the Loch Raven Reservoir. It is a two seater. Friends are invited to use it, for fishing or paddling. Please call Jon to get details of the location and to ensure it is available, at: jonacton@gmail.com.

#### **FOURTH Zoom Social**

The Care and Oversight Committee will be hosting an informal zoom social for anyone who wants some relaxed midweek social time, on **Tuesday, May 13, at 4 pm**, using the regular Meeting worship zoom link.

#### **AN INVITATION TO LEARN CENTERING PRAYER**

Have you heard about Centering Prayer and wondered what it is? Would you be interested in developing a simple spiritual practice, or adding a new practice to one you are already doing? Would you be interested in learning a way to help you center more deeply in Meeting for Worship?

A session of Centering Prayer takes 20 minutes and can be done alone or in a group. Its roots are in the Christian contemplative tradition, and it has been brought forward most recently by Father Thomas Keating and his "disciple" Cynthia Bourgeault. It is completely non-sectarian and is becoming a popular spiritual practice due to its simplicity and power. It is a cross between meditation and prayer and can be a wonderful tool for centering in Meeting for Worship.

Please consider joining me for an online workshop on Centering Prayer on Thursday May 8 from 7-8 pm, OR Saturday May 10 from 9-10 am. (Come both times if you want!)

Please RSVP via email to me, Janet Abrams, at [jmabrams1@gmail.com](mailto:jmabrams1@gmail.com) if you are interested in attending one or both workshops. I will make sure you get the Zoom link. If you have any questions, you can email or call me at 443-980-1615.

#### **MEETING FOR WORSHIP AND REMEMBRANCE** May 26<sup>th</sup>, 11 am

Friends are invited to join Gunpowder Monthly Meeting's annual Memorial Day Meeting for Worship and Remembrance, this year's date being May 26<sup>th</sup>. We gather at 11 a.m. for Meeting for Worship. This is both a recent (21<sup>st</sup> year) and a reclaimed tradition, one intended to remember all who lived, served, enriched our lives in love, and are held in our hearts; more expansive than the national tradition that formally began in 1868, it includes but is not limited to remembrance of those who died in military service to our nation's command. We gather in sacred remembrance, share messages as we are led, and include an opportunity to silently place flowers in the burial ground at headstones and memorial bench. The latter is in the tradition of Decoration Day, a practice to honor those present in burial, ashes, or simply in present memory. If you like, bring some flowers from your garden to honor our Friends in the

burial ground; there are always enough for all to participate. If you like, bring something to share for our potluck picnic: there is always enough for all to enjoy.

## **Gunpowder Friends Meeting Spiritual State of the Meeting Report, 2024**

**We are strong. We live in hope. We remain open to the Light.**

At a worship-sharing meeting on the Spiritual State of the Meeting, January 18, 2025, Gunpowder Friends considered the following queries, responses to which are quoted throughout the report.

**What are the specific ways in which our spirits have been nurtured? Are there aspects of nurture missing?**

**Do we encounter limits in our practice of the Beloved Community ideal?  
As we work for peace, are we nourished by peace and justice within and among us?**

Gunpowder Friends often describe our Meeting as a "family" in a beautiful spiritual "home." Many feel its warm embrace, the open flow of spiritual life, the beauty of our meetinghouse and the surrounding countryside, and a deepening sense of Beloved Community here. "Gunpowder is so much a family for me. . . the experience here is that of being embraced by friend with open arms and it is a sense that we as humans all yearn for, that sense of belonging."

By continuously holding ourselves open to Spirit/the Light/God/the Creator we are able to hold "the paradox of the presence of love amid the chaos" in our country today, while also tending to grief and worry in our Meeting. "I think our highest aim as spiritual beings is to seek, continually, our connection with the source that gives us life, what calls us to love, what gives us vision and hope and life. And this I think Gunpowder does spectacularly well. We stay open to Spirit."

This openness has helped us cope with serious challenges. Shortly after the 2024 election, we held a special meeting for worship-sharing, and another on January 20, 2025, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday and Inauguration Day, and at these inflection points felt a transcendent outpouring of Spirit, love, and hope. "What I found here was a remarkably open community — one that honored the flow of Spirit." "Meeting for Worship is a great gift of nurture and I know that this is true for others as evidenced by so many faithful attenders and so many newcomers who feel the pull of nurture and hospitality in our community." We continue to see young adults attend and join our Meeting, promising its future.

The Meeting nurtures us specifically through the depth of our Meetings for Worship, both in the profound silence, and in the moving messages. Silent retreats, a drumming circle, Spiritual Formation program, monthly Forums, monthly singing before worship, our collaborations with the McKim Center, and our One Book program all foster a robust, creative, nourishing spiritual life at Gunpowder. This year we read Kazu Haga, Healing Resistance, together, and it continues to shape our understanding both of Kingian nonviolence as peace testimony, and of our own Beloved Community at Gunpowder as a microcosm. We plan to continue in this vein.

Our physical home atop an unusual geological formation of solid granite is a source of beauty and joy that calls us outside ourselves and into worship together. Worship on the porch remains an option chosen by some year-round. "The connection with spirit through Nature has always been a vital part of my spiritual journey, and I think the way this Meeting has maintained this place as a beacon is a gift to our community and to the larger community."

"A lot has changed over the years . . . but one thing has remained the same: that openness to the flow of Spirit." "This made me think of hospitality as nurture; we make it a point to open all of our activities to the wider world." Particularly in times of crisis, our familial sensibility holds us together: "I want to add that I have been the recipient of the outpouring of help and support when I needed it. I also continue to find joy and gratitude in offering some service to the Meeting."

Our recent grappling with the challenges of "hybrid" technology-assisted worship has been painful for some. We continue to hold healing space for Friends who remain unsettled about the presence of The Bridge (our vernacular name for Zoom) in worship and the process by which we came to this decision. Over time we experimented creatively with zoom-free early morning worship and outdoor and evening meetings for worship. We softened the appearance of the video screen using a theatrical scrim and experimented with a variety of options for tech free worship. We listened deeply to one another's concerns. Finally, in March 2024, we chose to keep the Bridge connecting us to Friends who cannot, regularly or occasionally, for various reasons of health, mobility, weather, travel, or scheduling, worship in person every Sunday at 10am. We usually have 10 to 15 Friends who use the Bridge to join Meeting for Worship, who express very deep gratitude for it. Several Friends have chosen to worship elsewhere, and we feel their absence.

Friends who were present during this time of discernment reflected, "[W]e have experienced a particularly difficult journey with Zoom because of our ideals — because we have listened and listened hard and we were so reluctant to make a choice that would exclude or wound someone." "I feel the warmth, I feel that if I am absent I am missed, and that when I return I am welcomed."

We also feel the loss of families with children some related to post-Covid realities and some due to the "aging out" of a large cohort of young Friends. We have made changes to expand our welcome to them by setting up a children's corner in the Meeting Room and by devoting four Sundays in the coming year to Family Centered Worship using Faith and Play and other programming.

We know that compassionate care is needed to embrace all of these Friends. Paradoxically, our loss and discomfort at these post-Covid changes have deepened our understanding of just how much we cherish this beloved community, this Light within and among us.

"The gift is that when I am in this Meeting for Worship, I am reminded again that I am of God and that there is this treasure inside me. In no other place does this happen [for me] than in this Meeting. [W]hen . . . the conflict began about whether we would keep the bridge open, something else happened. I made friends with conflict and learned that struggle isn't something to be afraid of. Someone said it is important to learn to be with what is, and to be open to be with what is."