

Atlanta Friends Meeting Newsletter

Atlanta Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends Quakers. All are welcome.



Meeting for Worship
Each First Day (Sunday)
10:00 - 11:00 a.m.
701 W. Howard Ave.
Decatur, GA 30030

November 2009

Query: "Do you respect that of God in everyone though it may be expressed in unfamiliar ways or be difficult to discern? Each of us has a particular experience of God and each must find the way to be true to it. When words are strange or disturbing to you, try to sense where they come from and what has nourished the lives of others. Listen patiently and seek the truth. Think it possible that you may be mistaken." *Advices and Queries of Britain Yearly Meeting Faith and Practice*

Building the Blessed Community

Over the next few months this editor hopes that members of the several committees responsible for the functions of the Meeting will write of their experiences serving on the committees. The functions of the committees themselves are described in the Atlanta Friends Meeting Handbook which can be found on the website atlanta.quaker.org; about us; scroll down to the handbook.

The Nominating Committee

The job description of the Nominating Committee can be found on the AFM web site. However, the spiritual grounding of the members in their discernment is not spelled out. Since I have been on the nominating committees of Atlanta Friends Meeting, Southern Appellation Yearly Meeting and Association and the Central Committee of Friends General Conference, I do have some experience in speaking to the function of its members.

As smaller meetings become larger, they should not use the business meeting as a committee-of-the-whole to discover people to fill various roles. Too often people who volunteer are not the most qualified while those more qualified are reticent to raise their voice. While I was with FGC, I discovered the document from Strawberry Creek Meeting in California delineating the spiritual process.

Mary Ann Downey summarized the observations of that meeting as queries: (1) Do

members of nominating committees seek to know the gifts and interests of all members and attenders, planning throughout the year how best to match the meeting's needs to those gifts? (2) Does the naming committee seek to represent the diversity and experience of the meeting when choosing the nominating committee? (3) Are members of the nominating committee well informed and current on what is required for each office and committee? (4) Do you provide the kind of training and nurturing that will furnish new leadership? (5) Are you careful to wait for discernment and direction by the Spirit before asking (F)friends to serve? Do you encourage those called to take time to discern if they are led to accept this call? (6) Are there committees or offices that are no longer needed? Are positions filled too often by the same few people?

At times I have experienced pressure for the committee to make quick decisions. This is the appropriate time to slow down, ask for silence to listen for the Spirit to speak. When asked to join and then be clerk of the Nominating Committee of FGC my reaction was, "Who, Me!" I hardly knew any of these "weighty Quakers." But it turned out to be a blessing, getting to know so many Quakers from across North America.

As meetings get larger there is a danger that cliques form which could continue the same people in ministry. Thus, Friends have found that a Naming Committee, appointed by the Clerk and approved by the Meeting can mitigate this appearance. A full article about this process is available at *Friends Journal* for December 1999.

Announcements

There will be a **Thanksgiving day** meeting for worship and potluck on Nov 26, 2009. Meeting for worship will begin at 11:00 and the potluck will be around noon.

Please come for all or part of the day, bring something to eat if you can, yourself if you can't. Any questions? Email Dwight @ Dwight.harriman@gmail.com or call him 404-226-1232.

Reminder: Elizabeth Andrews in Cartersville holds Home-bound Silent Listening Sunday mornings at 9 a.m. for those who are home-bound by necessity or choice. If you would like your name put into the basket to serve as "attending", e-mail Elizabeth at angels@treefamilyfoundation.com. and join her each Sunday morning in this "long distance" service.

The Quaker Connection is also available for writers, poets, artists, or entrepreneurs on Elizabeth's website www.treefamilyfoundation.com

Book Review

Black Hands, White Sails: The Story of African-American Whalers (1999) (152 pp.)
P.C. McKissack & F.L. McKissack,

This book tells the little-known story of the role African-Americans, both slave and free, played in the 19th-century New England whaling industry. During the "golden age" of whaling (1800-60), African-Americans comprised 25 percent of the whaling crews. And during the latter decades of the 19th century, over half of whaling crews were African-American.

Runaway slaves were eager to work on the whaling ships because it allowed them to escape their pursuing masters. And free blacks signed on as whalers because it provided them career opportunities. In general, there was less prejudice on board a whaling ship than on land.

The authors also tell two other related stories: 1) the significant role whalers, both black and white, played in the abolition movement, and 2) the interactions (mostly positive) the African-American whalers had with the many Quakers who were also involved in both the whaling industry and the abolition movement.

The book includes 23 archival photos and drawings and is very readable. I recommend it for both young people and adults. A copy is in the Meeting library.

Review contributed by Harry Lefever

Adult Religious Education Class for November

On November 1, John Stabler will offer the story of his spiritual journey to the class. For the rest of the month we will consider "Quaker Witness as Sacrament" by Daniel Snyder. He poses the question, "What happens when we understand prayer as a kind of "inward activism" and political witness to Friends testimonies as a kind of "outward prayer?" Christina Repoley led a workshop about this at the 2009 FGC Gathering and will lead us in our discussion of this concern. This is an invitation to engage with questions about Friends service as a Spirit-led experience. Join us to consider the ways in which we come to more deeply know and testify to God's Transforming Presence through our outward witness. Together we will explore what Rufus Jones calls Friends' "prophetic service" - past, present and future. Copies of Daniel Snyder's Pendle Hill pamphlet and other handouts are available from Bill Holland.

"The secret of Quakerism, if there is one, lies in the close and constant marriage between religious experience and social concern." D. Elton Trueblood

Clerk of the Meeting Steve Collins	Finance Paul Mangelsdorf	Religious education Mary Jahntz	Social Concerns Julia Parker Ewen John Adams
Assistant Clerk of the Mtg Georgia Lord	Administration Georgia Lord	Newsletter Editor Perry Treadwell	Office Coordinator Jonah McDonald
Recording Clerk Caroline Noyes	Care & Counsel Dwight Harriman	Young Friends Coordinator Lora Norlin	
Treasurer Meredith Reynolds	Ministry & Worship Suzan Kenworthy		

Adrienne Lowe began attending our meeting while a student at Agnes Scott College. In September of 2007 she became a student at Earlham School of Religion with the support of our meeting and SAYMA. She plans to finish her work there in May 2010 with an MA in Theology.

Spiritual Formation Essay Thomas J. Mullen Application

“I’m not religious...but I’m a very *spiritual* person.” Perhaps you’ve heard someone describe him or herself this way. I think this phrase appeals to many because it contains an implicit rejection of a rule-based religiosity that some find unnecessarily restrictive and condemning, while leaving room for one to seek communion with a higher power in a variety of creative, if not always structured, ways. While I am attracted to this sentiment to some extent, when I first came to ESR, I was just as uncomfortable describing myself as “spiritual” as I was saying I had spots! For though I had been attending Atlanta Friends Meeting and felt a strong theological affinity with liberal unprogrammed Quakers, I was estranged from a rich sense of personal spirituality because I let my head lead far more often than I allowed my heart. A combination of having been wounded as a youth in a Southern Baptist congregation and majoring in Western philosophy in college led me to elevate the rational and scientific at the expense of the spiritual. I did not, at the time of my application, have the tools to *integrate* the two, nor the frame of mind to even consider the question holistically. Ruled by a damaging dualism, I wrote about seeking transformation in my admissions essay while in truth I had no clue as to what shape that might take. Certainly I did not expect ESR to affect a radically liberating upheaval in the way I viewed self and world—and yet it has. With its combination of thoughtful faculty, challenging coursework, and beyond-the-classroom opportunities for spiritual enrichment, ESR’s community took this bruised, grudging seeker-intellectual and showed me how I could live most fully by finding a way to integrate my head and heart work. It has provided me with the framework and support in which I can both affirm myself as a rigorous intellectual and discover that I am a child of God.

My understanding of the Bible provides an excellent case study of personal spiritual maturation that would have been impossible apart from study at ESR. Before I came to learn here, I found the Bible anathema. I thought that in modern times it could only be harnessed for the powers of evil, chock-full as it was of the kind of heterosexism, patriarchy, war and violence that had been oppressing for centuries. And why not? As a young woman, I had stayed in an abusive relationship for years because I thought it was biblically-mandated, and feared the reproof of heaven if I escaped it. I was so resentful when I left my Southern Baptist, fundamentalist upbringing for college and feminism that I thought I would never return to the dreaded book that was such a weighty tool of my oppressor. (And this, in 2003!) Yet thanks to ESR, I have had the opportunity to look once more at the Bible, to take it a different kind of seriously and to ultimately derive strength from a liberating reading of it. Under the tutelage of Lonnie Valentine and Dan Ulrich at Bethany, I am able to put the literature into historical context while seeking those lessons and timeless truths that are still applicable today. I cannot read the Hebrew Scriptures without thinking of Nancy Bowen’s cross-stitchings that caution us to put things into context; further, it is a fact that I revere Jesus more than ever before as a result of studying the New Testament with Dan and Lonnie. Studying the Bible at ESR has helped me discover the irony, humor, and joy—the authentic emotions and concerns of the people who lived them authentically—in these ancient texts. I hope to use the exegetical tools I have acquired at ESR to help someone else—possibly also recovering from an oppressive encounter—see and use the text in liberating and life-affirming ways.

Perhaps surprisingly, ESR’s inclusive language policy has been extremely important to me personally. Before I came to school here, I had only recently been acquainted with the curious Quakers, who name God “Light” and “Spirit.” For the majority of my childhood, I understood God to be definitively male, absolutely watching from the clouds, and totally ready to send fire-bolts coursing through my wretched

body in the event I ever committed that mysterious “unpardonable” sin. Knowing that our institution pointedly eschewed masculine gender terminology for God made me feel supported as a woman, a person of faith, and as a learner, and it was the first step in helping me develop a new “model” of God. I suffered under my former Southern Baptist congregation's conception of God for so long that I eventually just decided that I would have to do without—the Christian faith and tradition was, tragically, irredeemable and unreformable. How delighted was I to find, at ESR, that this did not have to be so.

As I hope I have demonstrated, ESR's inspired faculty, creative curriculum, and the inclusive language policy have all been foundational to my spiritually-transformative experience here. Yet there is one aspect that I have not yet discussed: my change from the Masters of Divinity program to the Master of Arts and thesis-writing. I believe that the intensive coursework in the MA program last semester inaugurated the most rapid and foundational changes in my spiritual development. Taking Lonnie's “Liberation Theology” really showed me how the world could not afford to have me go on living in my head. There is just too much suffering and need in the world to which I am uniquely sensitive and capable to address with my spiritual gifts for me to remain uninvolved. Studying the Epistle of James in particular, in “Bible, Violence, and Non-Violence,” helped me see how much our modern empire is like that against which the early Christians fought so passionately. I came to craft a constructive theology of liberation in which God is love and people move towards their own *arête*/flourishing/salvation when they seek to care for one another. As a result of careful exegetical work in Dan's class on Matthew, I now personally try to live by Jesus' conception of salvation as described at 25: by seeking ways to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick and imprisoned, and so forth. It is a direct result of all my theological reflection last semester that I have become so involved in my community this semester, from volunteering at the Friends School to teaching First Day School and so on.

This semester I have essentially organized my life around working on my MA thesis and continuing my work in the community. I purposely do not have a part-time job because, even if I could find one in this economy, I have discerned that it is more important for my spiritual growth and development at this point to live on a subsistence level and connect with others through service than to try to make a little extra money for frivolities. I write that last word pointedly, as I have a strong sense of what I need to get by and while I ensure that these needs are met, I believe that it is my responsibility to try to spend any excess—in time, money, etc—taking care of the base needs of others. I am in the process of discovering, I think, that this is an excellent way to balance the needs and generosity of my heart with the demands of my coursework.

In closing, there is certainly the tendency to remark that I wish I had started taking advantage of certain opportunities—finding a meeting here in Richmond, becoming more involved in community events—sooner. But in truth, Spirit has been at work all along. The foundations had to be laid before certain other work could begin. Comparing where I am now to where I was when I started out, I cannot help but feel extraordinarily grateful to ESR for the radical transformation it has affected. By providing me with a community that challenges and supports me, I have come to see how to best integrate my heart's leadings with my mind's understanding to renew and make me whole. In college I was grateful to have but one professor who realized and taught that one cannot simply “turn off” one's spiritual side while being in the world. At ESR, I have blessedly come into a milieu that affirms this, and my spirit could not be sounder.

Adrienne N. Lowe

This month's **Friends Journal** contains a fine article about Frank Cummings and this Meeting's support of Suchitoto and El Sitio Cenicerto in El Salvador – “Two Quaker Families in Suchitoto.”

Your Editor apologizes for putting the September calendar in October in the printed copy which was corrected in the electronic copy. It's just a question of merging Jonah's calendar which takes the most amount of time in editing.

Atlanta Friends Meeting
Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business

Tenth Month 18, 2009

As Recorded Pending Approval

Ceal Wutka presented the query: “Do we respect the wide diversity among us in our lives and relationships? Do we refrain from making prejudicial judgments about the life journeys of others? Do we foster the spirit of mutual understanding and forgiveness which our discipleship asks of us? Do we remember that each one of us is unique, precious, a child of God?” (Faith & Practice, Britain Yearly Meeting)

In attendance were: Muireann Brennan, Mark Bryans, Mary Ann Downey, Julia Parker Ewen, Nina Gooch, Roland Heath, Elizabeth Lamb, Georgia Lord, Steve McLaughlin, Caroline Morris, Ronald Nuse, Meredith Reynolds, Bert Skellie, Karen Skellie, Mark Smith, John Stabler, Joan Thompson, Jim Tolmach, Myrna Trapp, Perry Treadwell, Pat Williams, Cecilia Wutka, Caroline Noyes (Recording Clerk), Steve Collins (Clerk). (24 Friends)

1. Approval of Minutes of Ninth Month Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business

Minute 20-10-01: Atlanta Friends Meeting approves the minutes of Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business of Ninth Month 2009 with corrections.

2. Treasurer’s Report: Meredith Reynolds reported that there has been \$82,780 raised through September 30 and expenses of \$98,743. Total income thus far in 2009 represents 58% of the budget. The deficit as of September 30 stands at \$15,963. Contributions remain higher than expected but three-quarters of the way through the year, contributions represent only 50% of the budget. Historically, at this point in the year, contributions represent 40% of the budget. There is still cash on hand thanks to reserves set aside in anticipation of deficits early in the year.

3. Administration Committee: Jim Tolmach presented the modifications to the job description for the Meeting Office Coordinator. Item 12 of the job description has been changed to read (changes are underlined): “Creates a monthly volunteer assignments calendar and notifies scheduled volunteers of their duties in a timely way.” The new phrasing will be published in the meeting handbook.

Minute 20-10-02: Atlanta Friends Meeting approves the revised Meeting Office Coordinator job description.

4. Nominating Committee: Roland Heath brought Christine Repoley forward for final approval as a member of Worship & Ministry.

Minute 20-10-03: Atlanta Friends Meeting approves Christine Repoley as a member of Ministry & Worship.

5. Ferguson Cabin Committee: Joan Thompson reported that the Ferguson Cabin Committee will host a bake sale fundraiser in Eleventh Month. Progress is being made on the site for the new washhouse. The new septic tank has been installed and grass has been planted. The site for the washhouse has been cleared and graded, and straw has been spread. No additional work on the site is planned until spring 2010.

6. Social Concerns: Julia Ewen reported that a workshop on monitoring State Legislators is planned for December 13, 2009. Representative Stephanie Stuckey Benfield will be speaking on the legislative

process and on environmental issues. This workshop is designed to help Friends learn how to effectively bring our Quaker perspective to the Legislature. In light of the economy's impact on various local and national social and religious organizations, Social Concerns members are encouraging Atlanta Friends Meeting to not cut back on the Meeting's budget for donations to wider Quaker organizations. John Adams, co-clerk of Social Concerns, is designing a survey to gain input from Friends about important focus points for the Meeting's peace and justice witness in 2010. At present there are only four active members of the Social Concerns Committee, and the Committee would benefit from greater involvement by more Friends.

7. Other items: Ceal Wutka reported that the Gathered Meeting Retreat will be held March 26 – 28, 2010 and the theme is "Tending our Spiritual Gardens." Mary Ann Downey will be the facilitator.

Perry Treadwell reported that the monthly newsletter will begin carrying brief articles highlighting various committees. Rather than focus on a strict description of the committees, Perry is looking for people willing to share their experiences serving on the various committees. Each month a different committee will be the focus, and write-ups of experiences should be approximately 500 words. Interested authors should submit the piece to Perry as part of an email, not as an attachment.

Bert Skellie reported that the El Sitio fund is used to help students in the region attend school. Currently, the El Sitio fund is empty, and contributions and pledges are welcome. Perry Treadwell pointed out that the current edition of Friends Journal contains an article on Frank Cumming's work with this outreach program.

Steve Collins reported that SAYMA Ministry & Nurture is requesting queries from Monthly Meetings on formulating State of the Meeting Reports that are due in April. Queries are due by the end of December. John Roberts has accepted the position of Friend in Residence. John is a birthright Quaker with a strong interest in Buddhism. He has a business background and a strong interest in working with the Meeting to discern the most appropriate ministry for him to follow. Currently living in Massachusetts, John will move as soon as is feasible.

Meeting ended with silent worship.

Respectfully Submitted,
Steve Collins, Clerk
Caroline Noyes, Recording Clerk

"[T]hat what we call 'God' is merely a symbol that points beyond itself to an indescribable transcendence, whose existence cannot be proved but is only intuited by means of spiritual exercises and a compassionate lifestyle." Karen Armstrong Her new book is *The Case for God*

Calendar for Eleventh Month, 2009

Area Meetings for Worship

Every First Day, 10:00 a.m.— In the Meeting Room and a small meeting in the Library.

Every First Day, 3 p.m. — Carrollton Friends Worship Group, St. Andrew United Methodist Youth Center, 1106 Maple St, Carrollton, lessell.bray@gmail.com or 770-830-8705.

Every 2nd and 4th First Day, 10:00 a.m. — Canton Friends Worship Group, 360 E. Marietta St, Canton, 12:00 p.m. Contact Marty Bray for more information: 770-830-8705 or lessell.bray@gmail.com

Every Fifth Day, 12:10 p.m.— First Thursdays at AFSC office, 189A Sams Street, Decatur, GA, 30030.,

Every other Thursday at East Lake Commons, 404-378-5883 or bertskellie@gmail.com.

Every Sixth Day, 8:45 a.m.— Friends School of Atlanta, 862 Columbia Drive, Decatur, GA 30030, 404-373-8746.

Mon-Fri Morning Worship, 8:30 – 9:00: In the library at Atlanta Friends Meetinghouse. Contact Jonah McDonald, 404-377-2474,afmquakers@hotmail.com

Weekly Events

Every First Day (Sunday)

9:00 Adult Religious Education

9:15 Singing, Classroom A/B

10:00 Meetings for Worship

Every Week Day (Monday – Friday)

8:30-9:00 Morning Silent Worship, Library

Every Second-Fifth Day (Monday-Thursday)

8:30-12:30 Smart Toddlers,

Nursery/playground

Every Third Day (Tuesday)

7:30pm Silent Meditation, Meeting Room

7:30pm Bible Study, Library

Every Fourth Day (Wednesday)

7:00-8:30 Mid-Week Semi-Programmed

Worship Mt. Rm

Other Events 11/1, First Day (Sunday) 10:00-

11:00 Worship followed by potluck

11:15-1:30 Green Friends, A/B

12:00-2:00 Vanessa Julye and Donna McDaniel
forum, Mt. Room

6:00-10:00 Couples Enrichment Group,

Library

11/4, Fourth Day (Wednesday)

7:00-9:30 Administration Committee, Library

11-5, Fifth Day (Thursday)

7:30-9:00 Meeting for Peace, Library 11-8, First

Day (Sunday)

11:30-1:30 Ministry and Worship, A/B

11:30-2:00 Care and Counsel, Jr. Teen Rm.

11:45-2:00 Finance, Library

11:45-2:00 Religious Ed, Nursery

11/9, Second Day (Monday)

7:00-10:00 Spiritual Nurture Group

11/11, Fourth Day (Wednesday)

7:00-9:30 ORAIARH, Library

11/12, Fifth Day (Thursday)

7:30-9:30 Social Concerns Meeting , Library

11/18, Fourth Day (Wednesday) Newcomers Dinner,
TBA

11/22, First Day (Sunday)

12:00-1:15 CUR-AFM: "Village of 100", Mt
Rm

11/23, Second Day (Monday)

7:00-10:00 Spiritual Nurture Group, Library

12/28 Thanksgiving

11:00 Worship followed by potluck

11/29, First Day (Sunday)

11:30-1:00 Meeting for Worship for SAYF
Retreat Planning, Sr High Room

Please confirm unique events by checking the
announcements sheets and or contacting the Meeting

Atlanta Friends Meeting
701 West Howard Avenue
Decatur, GA 30030-2902
Phone: 404-377-2474

ATLANTA FRIENDS MEETING

701 West Howard Avenue, Decatur, GA 30030

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Treasurer: Meredith Reynolds, 404-683-3096: afmtreasurer@yahoo.com

Newsletter Editor, 404-325-1504, perryt#bellsouth.net

Office: Hours M-W-F 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.; E-mail address: afmquakers@hotmail.com

NAMETAGS: If you would like to have a permanent nametag made, leave a request in one of the baskets on the front table. Indicate whether you prefer one that hangs around the neck or that pins. When Carol Gray has made one for you, it will be placed in the black file box on the greeting table.

If you would like to be included in the AFM database and receive the Newsletter by mail and/or appear in future AFM Directories, please send your name, address phone, e-mail address, etc to Nina Gooch by e-mail at ninagooch@gmail.com or by phone 404-371-9873. Please indicate if you want to be in the directory, receive the newsletter by mail, or both. This also applies to any change in existing database information, e.g. change of address.

To receive AFM newsletter notices via e-mail, simply send a blank e-mail to afmnewsletter-subscribe@yahogroups.com from the address where you want to receive the newsletter. You will receive a note back from Yahoo asking you to confirm your subscription; simply hit reply and you will be added to the list. There is no subscription fee for the newsletter.

To receive general announcements and participate in discussion, follow the same instructions only address the note to afmdiscussion-subscribe@yahogroups.com. To receive announcements relating directly to the life of the meeting, send the same note to afmannouncements-subscribe@yahogroups.com.

Contributions to the Atlanta Friends Meeting can be placed in the slot marked "Contributions" in the greeting area of the Meetinghouse, or mailed to the Treasurer at the above address. Thank you!

DEADLINE FOR 12TH Month newsletter: 11th Month 20
Readers are encouraged to submit letters, articles, poetry, calendar notices and anything else of interest to Friends. Items should be sent directly to: Perry Treadwell perryt@bellsouth.net 404-325-1504

This newsletter is a publication of the Atlanta Friends Meeting. Views expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Atlanta Friends Meeting