

Worcester Friends Meeting

Religious Society of Friends (Quaker)

901 Pleasant Street
Worcester, Mass 01602
(508) 754-3887

January, 2008



Queries

from **Faith and Practice**

Do you respect the worth of every human being as a child of God?
Do you uphold the right of all persons to justice and human dignity?
Do you endeavor to create political, social, and economic institutions which will sustain and enrich the life of all?
Do you fulfill all civic obligations which are not contrary to divine leadings?
Do you give spiritual and material support to those who suffer for conscience's sake?

Kenyan Friends

by **Phil Stone**

There are more Friends in Africa than anywhere else in the world, and many of them live in Kenya. The unrest triggered by the elections on December 27th has left more than 650 people dead and driven 250,000 from their homes. As is often the case, the most egregious acts of violence were perpetrated by the police, when they shot into crowds of unarmed people demonstrating in the streets against the election results.

To the extent that news about recent developments in Kenya reaches us through mainstream media, the conflict is often described as a conflict between members of different tribes.

In fact, the conflict is about injustice and inequality. News from Friends in Kenya is making its way to us by e-mail. Friends in Kenya are working hard in impossibly difficult circumstances to provide material aid to ... displaced people, and to use Quaker peace-making skills in their communities to end the violence and bring about non-violent social change.

On January 8, 2008, Friends Church (Quakers) in Kenya issued a letter addressed to President Mwai Kibaki and Raila Amolo Odinga. The complete text is available at the Meetinghouse in Worcester, or upon request. Excerpts from their letter follow:

Receive Greetings in the Name of Christ Jesus.

At this time, of pain, horror, sorrow, suffering, insecurity in our beloved country, We as Friends Church in Kenya, being a PEACE church, are deeply concerned for the safety of ALL Kenyans and friends visiting Kenya during this time of Political and Social Instability. May we start by referring to our Quaker values which have guided us over the past four centuries?

Quaker Peace Testimony

"We actively oppose all that leads to violence among people and nations.... Refusal to fight with weapons is not surrender. We are not passive when threatened by the greedy, the

cruel, the tyrant, and the unjust. We will struggle to remove the causes of impasse and confrontation by every means of non-violent resistance available. We must start with our own Hearts and Minds. Together, let us reject the clamor of fear and listen to the whisperings of hope. ...”

As Friends Church, our Goal is to have a Peaceful Society anchored in ... Truth, Righteousness and Justice (Ps.89v14).

Our basic Principles and Values that under-gird our concerns compel us to make this call to you, our political leaders. These include:-

Truth: Truth is critical to the establishment of legitimacy for the political class, that is, presidency and the opposition, if they are to enjoy the loyalty and respect of all Kenyans. This can only be achieved if the objective truth is that the Elections were “Free, Fair and Transparent”. ...

Peace and Justice: ...This battle is not about ethnicity per se, rather it is about economic injustice, and the youth across the board bear the brunt of it. ... There was hope and expectation that this nation would be steered towards a more democratic, united, just and prosperous society, where development would be experienced by **ALL** hardworking Kenyans. ***That hope was rekindled, with their participation in the just ended elections*** and the youth in particular saw the possibility of moving forward for the betterment of their lives. They feel “cheated”. They are expressing anger that the rich are getting richer, while the majority are living on less than one dollar a day. “A hungry person is an angry person”. Justice is what they long for.

Simplicity: Quakers believe in modesty, serving humanity in love and harmony. In Kenya, there are gross inequalities in terms of sharing the scarce opportunities and resources. ...

...The youth are desperate, angry and impatient. The ordinary Kenyan does not feel or see the effect of the purported 6.5% annual growth of the economy or the benefits of the foreign investors.

The unsatisfactory manner in which corruption cases (Anglo-leasing / Goldenberg scandals) have been handled are seen as unjust and discriminatory against the poor who get heavy sentences for petty theft, yet the greedy rich go scot-free. This impunity... **has fostered a deep-rooted anger that has exploded and must be addressed meaningfully, openly and fairly.**

Life is Sacred. ... As Quakers we value every person. We believe that “there is that of God in every person”. ...

...We renounce these senseless killings and urge the government to take responsibility and restrain the security forces from using violent means of handling the “demonstrators”. We urge all parties to give a listening ear to the people. Through their violence they are communicating a serious message. Please **listen** respectfully....

In conclusion, we as a Peace Church are committed to the process of national healing. Already we have institutions and programs in place such as: Alternatives to Violence Program (AVP); Trauma Healing; Change Agents for Peace International (CAPI); the Quaker Peace Network, all with the necessary skills, knowledge and experience to help bring about healing and transform relationships.

We call upon the wider Body of Christ and other faith based institutions to share in the restoration of a healthy, peaceful and just Society.

God bless Kenya.

On Behalf of Friends Church in Kenya
Midikira Churchill Kibisu
PRESIDING CLERK Friends Church (Quakers),
Nairobi Yearly Meeting

Clerk's Corner

by **Katie Green**

I was fortunate to spend my 65th birthday at the End of the Year Silent Retreat at Woolman Hill. These silent retreats at Woolman Hill had sounded interesting to me for several years, but I was not sure that I would like it. True, I had been to Buddhist retreats that involved sitting many hours a day, but conversation was plentiful during meals, and there was a talk each morning and evening.

This Quaker retreat would be very different. We would be silent from late Friday morning until lunch on Sunday.

Nicholas Roosevelt was the facilitator for this retreat. Friend Barbara Sullivan had told me that Nick was quite charismatic, and I chuckled. What difference would that make? It would be a *silent* retreat!

Of course it did make a difference. Nick was comfortable, friendly, and familiar with the Woolman Hill routine. Before the silence began Nick presented a short but informative history of Woolman Hill and "rules" were reviewed. Attendance at Meetings for Worship were optional, as were meals. There were the familiar and sensible reminders to sign up for two chores (meal set ups and/or clean ups), to choose a napkin and a cup for the weekend and keep them together on the shelves in the dining room. Woolman Hill functions much like a Quaker Monthly Meeting; each participant's contribution valued.

Nick facilitated a go-round in which everybody spoke about their past experiences with silent retreats and their expectations for this one. I felt like I was out of my comfort level. So many of the participants said they were there to deepen their spirituality. Me? I was there to escape work, family and the telephone. I had brought my journal, Peter Hessler's book, *Oracle Bones*, my knitting, and a sketch pad. Three days of not talking. Not having to respond to demands on my time....How self indulgent can I be? But was this a spiritual retreat? It was so comfortable! How can spirituality feel so good? I knit, sketched and read whenever I wanted to. And the library was so good, that I ended up reading several books about Quakerism.

Not speaking for three days might sound difficult, but it was blissfully pleasant. I felt that it was gift to myself. The relaxation and quiet community was nurturing, and it has certainly deepened my experience of Quaker worship. The retreat gave me time to myself, and with that uninterrupted time, the pain of living in these confusing times was lifted. My spirit was renewed. The retreat did, indeed, deepen my spirituality.

I ended it feeling like I wanted to spend the rest of my birthdays at Woolman Hill.

World Religion Symposium in Westborough

Quakers Invited to World Religion Symposium in Westborough Middle School

Middle school students at Mill Pond School in Westborough study world religions as part of their sixth grade curriculum. Teachers from Mill Pond School ask religious groups to participate in a day long event at their school: The World Religion Symposium. Last year Friends Betty and Brian Poynton represented Quakers and found the day to be rewarding. This year the anticipated date of the World Religion Symposium is Wednesday, March 5. Stephen Prothero, Chair of the Religious Studies Department at Boston University, author of *Religious Literacy*, has been asked to be this year's key note speaker.

Betty describes last year's event:

The students met in the assembly hall where there was a panel of representatives from Islam, Catholicism, B'Hai, Buddhism, Protestantism, Quakers, Judaism and others. Each representative made a short introduction about their religious beliefs. Representatives then went to classrooms and groups of students visited each classroom in turn for 20 minute sessions. This was a time when more background and deeper discussion was possible. Students' questions ranged from, "Are you connected to Quaker Oats?" to much deeper and thought provoking questions. We were really impressed with the level of questions asked. Lunch was provided giving the representatives a chance to chat among themselves.

The Poyntons felt that it was a very worthwhile experience for both students and representatives. They encourage others to participate this year. If you are interested in speaking to these young people Wednesday, March 5 in Westborough, please contact Katie Green, Clerk, at 978-464-5146.

Equal Exchange

Equal Exchange coffee and chocolate are sold in the dining room of the meetinghouse. Equal Exchange is a "fair trade" organization that pays a fair price to farmers for gourmet, certified organic products. The farming cooperatives are democratically run by the farmers. Equal Exchange also provides credit to the farmers to help them stay out of debt between harvests. The intention is to develop long-term trade relations based on trust and respect.

Thank you to Elliot Joslin for bringing Equal Exchange to the Worcester Friends, and thanks to Clarence Burley for continuing to oversee it.

A Blessing

by **Marge Piercy**

Bless what stirs in us compassion...what shows us our face in a stranger, who teaches us what we clutch shrivels, but what we gives goes off to the world carrying bread to people....Let us lift each other on our shoulders and carry each other along. Let holiness move in us. Let us pay attention to the small voice. Let us see the light in others and honor that light.

NEYM Ministry and Counsel - Minute of Commitment

NEYM Ministry and Counsel developed Queries for the Monthly Meetings, and we are asked to season and test these queries and to bring a minute to the Quarterly Meeting in April.

Queries from NEYM M&C same-gender marriage, committed relations, sexual ethics, and spirituality of sex.

1. Does my monthly meeting have a minute on same-gender marriage or relationships? If so, does it need to be updated or re-approved?
2. If not, can my monthly meeting begin the process to consider this issue?
3. Does my monthly meeting support the right of all adult couples to join in marriage and to enjoy all its full legal benefits?
4. Does our monthly meeting want to go on record as opposing any law or constitutional amendment that restricts the right of gay and lesbian couples to legally marry?
5. How is my meeting open, affirming and welcoming to people of all sexual orientations and genders?
6. How well does my meeting address the pain that is felt by the people who are affected at the deepest level of their identity and relationships by the homophobia in our community and society at large?
7. Has my monthly meeting engaged in conversations about the deepest meaning of family, marriage and committed relationships?
8. To what degree has my meeting explored what it means to have families, marriage, and committed relationships under its care.

The Smithfield Monthly Meeting of Friends shared the following Minute of Commitment in their December, 2007 Newsletter:

We commit ourselves as individuals and as a yearly meeting to work with one another in witnessing God's movement among us by doing the following:

- Engage in conversation about the deepest meanings of family, marriage and committed relationships and explore what it means to have all of these under the care of the meeting.
- Support the work of our M&C working party on Sexuality and Ethics. We need to articulate our sexual ethics and the spirituality of sex.
- Re-distribute NEYM Minute 2005-55, Connecticut Valley Quarter Minute in Support of Same Gender Marriages, and ask MM to season and test this issue and forward the results to their QMs in preparation for bringing them to YM Sessions in 2008 for discernment.

The Worcester friends meeting hopes to develop a minute of commitment as well.

Worship Sharing

Under the recommendation of our Monthly Meeting's Ministry and Counsel, a trial period of three worship sharing groups were scheduled, to be held at the meetinghouse on the fourth

Tuesdays of September, October, and November of 2007. Worship sharing group was held from 7 p.m. until 8 p.m. No worship sharing group was held in December, due to the holidays.

Friends and attenders who came to the worship sharing found the experience gave them both the opportunity to worship one evening a month and to become closer to one another in the spirit of Friends building community through a common experience.

Worship sharing will continue to be held on the fourth Tuesday of the month. Please join us on February 26 and March 25 at 7:00 PM. Potluck precedes at 6:00PM.

GI Rights Hotline Training

by **Barbara Sullivan**

The NE node of the hotline will have its 6th anniversary in April. We are looking for several more volunteers, and will be holding a training March 29th. Anyone who might be interested in training to be a volunteer on the GI Rights Hotline, please contact Barbara Sullivan at barbarasullivan900@msn.com or 508-835-4718.

Movies at the Meetinghouse

We hope Friends will join us and invite their friends to Movies at the Meetinghouse. A discussion enhanced by queries will follow each movie after we gather in a brief silence to we reflect on what we've seen and learned. Peace and Social Concerns/Outreach plans and organizes Movies at the Meetinghouse. This film series with its facilitated discussion and queries in the custom of Friends will contribute to building a community of Friends and will attract people who are not regular attenders to the Worcester Friends Meeting. The film series provides Friends an opportunity to discuss a variety of controversial topics in a way that allows us to explore our own spiritual response to them.

HAPPY FEET, a popular film for young children and adults, inaugurated the monthly series, Movies at the Meetinghouse on Friday, January 4. An appreciative group attended the film including six people from our neighbor church, St Lukes Episcopal. Pizza was provided and many people contributed snacks.

The movie was completely enjoyed by those present. A craft was created by Katie Green, and the children learned a short song about Penguins and had a penguin parade.

Friends who attended the film found that it provided opportunity for discussions: the use of dialects and accents in character portrayal, the character development of the hero (Mumbles), aspects of being viewed as "different", parental responses to having a "different" offspring, and the penguin's visions of god and heaven.

On Friday, February 1, the film will be **GOD GREW TIRED OF US: The Story of the Lost Boys of Sudan**. This film was the winner of both the Grand Jury Prize and the Audience Award at the 2006 Sundance Film Festival. **GOD GREW TIRED OF US** explores the indomitable spirit of three "Lost Boys" from the Sudan who leave their homeland, triumph over seemingly insurmountable adversities and move to America, where they build active and fulfilling new lives but remain deeply committed to helping the friends and family they have left behind.

Orphaned by a tumultuous civil war and traveling barefoot across the sub-Saharan desert, John Bul Dau, Daniel Abol Pach and Panther Blor were among the 25,000 "Lost Boys" (ages 3 to 13) who fled villages, formed surrogate families and sought refuge from famine, disease, wild animals and attacks from rebel soldiers. Named by a journalist after Peter Pan's posse of orphans who protected and provided for each other, the "Lost Boys" traveled together for five years and against all odds crossed into the UN's refugee camp in Kakuma, Kenya. A journey's end for some, it was only the beginning for John, Daniel and Panther, who along with 3800 other young survivors, were selected to re-settle in the United States.

Emerson - Third Sunday Worship Sharing

On Sunday, January 20, Dr. Alan D. Hodder, Professor of Comparative Religion at Hampshire College, led a discussion on "Emerson's Friendship with Friends". Dr. Hodder joined Worcester Friends for our Third Sunday Discussion, which is arranged by Ministry and counsel. Third Sunday Discussions begin at 9:30, before Meeting for Worship. Professor Hodder is the author of "Thoreau's Ecstatic Witness" and "Emerson's Rhetoric of Revelation: Nature, the Reader and the Apocalypse Within".

The following Tuesday, the monthly worship sharing group reflected and shared their thought on the following passage from Emerson's "Spiritual Laws", written in 1841.

A little consideration of what takes place all around us everyday would show us, that a higher law than that of our will regulates events; that our painful labors are unnecessary, and fruitless; that only in our easy, simple, spontaneous action are we strong, and by contenting ourselves with obedience we become divine. Belief and love, - a believing love will relieve us of a vast load of care. O my brothers, God exists. There is a soul at the centre of nature, and over the will of every man, so that none of us can wrong the universe. It has so infused its strong enchantment into nature, that we prosper when we accept its advice, and when we struggle to wound its creatures, our hands are glued to our sides, or they beat our own breasts. The whole course of things goes to teach us faith. We need only obey. There is guidance for each of us, and by lowly listening we shall hear the right word.

The group read and listened to the passage several times. They choose several sentences and shared their thoughts, listening deeply to one another. The worship sharing was meaningful to all present, and Friends were thankful for the experience.

The next Third Sunday Discussion will be on Feb 17, 2008. We will be discussing the state of society report. On March 16, Friends will be discussing the minute of commitment.

Upcoming Programs at Woolman Hill

by **Barbara Sullivan**

Feb. 1-3 *Deepening Your Relationship: A Couple Enrichment Retreat*

This weekend is for couples who want to deepen their relationship as a path to spiritual growth and nurture the sense of joy that comes from deeply connecting with each other. The retreat is for all couples in a committed relationship regardless of marital status or sexual orientation. The facilitators, Mary Kay Glazer and Mark Moss have been trained by the Couple Enrichment program of FGC and the Association for Couples in Marriage Enrichment. Rochester MM and NYYM support their ministry as released Friends.

www.woolmanhill.org

**Feb. 29-Mar. 2
*Transforming Conflict in Meetings***

Co-sponsored by NEYM Ministry & Counsel. In this spiritual and skills based weekend, we will spend time together exploring methods to positively address conflict and move toward restoring the wholeness we all wish in our Meetings. Joanna Komoska is from Peconic Bay MM of NEYM and helped form their Committee on Conflict Transformation; she is a certified mediator and couples therapist.

tel: 413-774-3431

March 28-30 *Being and Becoming Friends*

Co-sponsored by NEYM Ministry & Counsel. What is the purpose of the Quaker meeting in the 21st century? When we claim to be Quakers, what does that mean? We will explore the relevance in today's world of George Fox's vision of a great people to be gathered. Beckey Phipps, member of Fresh Pond MM and Laura Melly of Chestnut Hill (PA) MM are core teachers for School of the Spirit. Beckey clerks FGC's Traveling Ministries Committee, and Laura serves in teaching/nurture roles at Pendle Hill.

info@woolmanhill.org

December Business Meeting

Worcester Friends Meeting Meeting for Business December 7, 2007

Present: Whitney Mikkelsen, Mark Sullivan, Betty Poynton, Brian Poynton, Clarence Burley, Hermann Patt, Karen Sargent, Betty Jones, Michael True, Barbara Sullivan, Mary Ann Walker, Caroline Erskine, Paul Gallagher, Matt Shorten, assistant clerk.

- 01-12-09-07 Meeting began with a period of silence and a reading from Rufus Jones.
- 02-12-09-07 Whitney reported Ministry and Counsel; Brian and Betty Poynton attended a retreat of NEYM M&C that addressed the minute of commitment regarding sexuality that was raised at sessions. Our M&C discussed queries posed by NEYM M&C, and hopes to show one of the movies shown at that conference, and have a discussion in March. Friends ask that this matter be prioritized at the April business meeting, so that a report/minute can be taken to Quarterly Meeting.
- 03-12-09-07 Mark Sullivan gave the treasurer's report. He notes that the electric bills have decreased noticeably, but is not sure why. All of the bills have been paid. The annual meeting will be held in January when a full accounting of the year will be given (note, this was incorrectly noted in the minutes of Nov. 07, to be held this month). Friends accepted treasurer's report.
- 04-12-09-07 Karen Sargent reported that the trustees continue to work on the finances of the meeting. They continue to work on office space in the basement; Friends are donating time to work and furniture. The trustees request \$750 to purchase a basic computer to store meeting records that are currently on personnel computers, and a printer. Friends ask the computer experts in the meeting to explore the needs and options available; up to \$750 for the equipment is approved.
- 05-12-09-07 The house committee report was given by Mary Ann Walker. The roof repairs have been delayed by weather; Mr. Barnard says the rest of the roof is sound, and the porch repairs should be done in the Spring. Mary Ann is looking into getting the pocket doors repaired. The meeting approves taking up the rug in the meeting room as some people have tripped over the edges. Friends also ask that a runner for the hall be purchased.
- 06-12-09-07 Religious Ed. Has not been meeting; childcare is excellent. There will be no Christmas play this year due to low numbers of children; there will be singing, and stories next week at 9:30.
- 07-12-09-07 Matt Shorten notes that Scott and Clare Shaeffer-Duffy are sponsoring a speaker in honor of the anniversary of Human Rights Day, Dr Mazin Iramsiyeh on Tuesday, Dec 11 at 7 PM at the Worcester Library. *Happy Feet* will be shown January 4, at the meetinghouse. Clarence Burley contacted the Holden Landmark and St. Vincent's hospital patient's guide and asked that the meeting be added to the religious listing. The outreach committee is asked to follow up with this matter.
- 08-12-09-07 Betty Poynton asks that an honorarium of \$100 be sent to Allyson Randall for her workshop on *Lord Prepare me to be a Sanctuary*. Friends approve.
- 09-12-09-07 Mark Sullivan notes that the nominating committee has contacted members of committees re. The new annual meeting date, asking them if they would be willing to extend their service an additional 6 months to 1/09. Because it was originally thought this needed to be completed for December, this was done largely through e-mails which some Friends found offensive. The nominating committee apologizes for any bad feelings, as no disrespect was intended. All committee members will be contacted prior to the annual meeting in January.
- 10-12-09-07 The meeting was contacted by Wellesley meeting and asked to consider their minute against the expansion of gambling in Massachusetts. We do not have a copy of their minute available; Friends ask that minute be circulated to the meeting, and Peace and Social Concerns consider a proposed minute to bring to the February business meeting.

11-12-09-07 Opportunity having been given for questions and concerns, meeting closed with a period of silence, purposing to meet again first month, 13th, or at the call of the clerk.

Submitted in the Light,
Barbara Sullivan, recording clerk

Annual Business Meeting

Worcester Friends Meeting
Annual Meeting
January 13, 2008

Present: Whitney Mikkelsen, Fred Mikkelsen, Mark Sullivan, Phil Stone, Brenda Woodside, Betty Hoskins, Clarence Burley, Karen Sargent, Betty Jones, Mary Bennett, Barbara Sullivan, Katie Green, clerk.

01-01-13-08 Meeting began with a period of silence and a reading from *Queries on the Practice of Discernment in the Meeting*, from Quaker Books Press.

02-01-13-08 Mark Sullivan presented the proposed nominations for the coming year. Note: this is through the next annual meeting, Jan. 09. Friends approved. It's also noted that as the Worcester Ecumenical Council has been laid down, this representative has been removed from the list.

03-01-13-08 Clarence Burley read the annual report form Ministry and Counsel Committee.

04-01-13-08 Mark Sullivan, treasurer, presented the budget. The trustees asked the committees what they needed in the coming year; increased the amount they hoped to raise from Friends; and did not wish to use interest to fix the meeting house, but to replace savings. As this would leave a \$41000 deficit, Mark chose to not put interest toward savings, or fully fund committee requests, in order to present a balanced budget. He notes that in 2007, members/attenders were more generous than ever in their donations to the meeting. In order to address the needs of both maintaining the meeting, and meeting committee requests, a significant increase in giving will be needed. Friends approve the budget as presented.

05-01-13-08 Karen Sargent gave the report from the Trustees.

06-01-13-08 Mary Ann Walker presented the report from Building and Grounds Committee.

07-01-13-08 Mary Bennett gave the Peace & Social Concerns Committee report.

08-01-13-08 The Outreach committee report was given by Betty Hoskins. Note that Peace & Social Concerns and Outreach committees have been combined.

09-01-13-08 The Cemetery Committee report from Brian Poynton was read.

10-01-13-08 There was no Religious Education Committee report as the committee has not been active due to low attendance

11-01-13-08 Brenda Woodside presented the Library Committee report.

12-01-13-08 All committee reports were accepted by Friends.

13-01-13-08 Meeting ended with a moment of silence.

Submitted in the Light,
Barbara Sullivan, recording clerk

Pot-Luck Set-Up

by **Paul Gallagher**

2/3/2008	McKinstry	Deborah	508-347-7891	mckins511@aol.com
2/10/2008	Mikkelsen	Fred	508-887-1061	studio@digitalsprocket.com

2/17/2008	Mikkelsen	Whitney	508-887-1061	whitneygreen@excite.com
2/24/2008	Perry	Ellen	508-476-0169	ellenperry@charter.com
3/2/2008	Powell	Virginia	508-829-6874	eisbaerin@verizon.net
3/9/2008	Poynton	Brian	508-867-3581	bribet@toast.net
3/16/2008	Poynton	Elizabeth	508-867-3581	ejp4@honey.toast.net
3/23/2008	Roche	David	508-753-5137	droche.ma.ulternet.pop.rcn.com
3/30/2008	Sargent	Karen	978-874-2201	karenesargent@attglobal.net