

11th Month

MIDCOAST MONTHLY MEETING
 OF THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS
 Damariscotta, Maine
NEWSLETTER

November 2009



A lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" Jesus said to him, "'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."

-- Matthew 22:35-40 [KJV]

By loving your neighbor, by having care for your neighbor, you are traveling on a journey. Where are you journeying, except to the Lord God, whom we must love with all our heart and all our soul and all our mind? We have not yet reached the Lord, but our neighbor is with us already. So support your neighbor, who is traveling with you, so that you may reach him with whom you long to dwell.

--St. Augustine

October

Saturday October 31 9:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m. "Quaker Quest," Durham Meeting [See last newsletter for details]

November

Sunday November 1 Rise of Meeting Potluck Lunch/Work Hour followed by Quakerism 101

Saturday November 7 8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m. Quarterly Meeting, Belfast

Sunday November 15 Rise of Meeting Monthly Meeting for Business

*Look inside for more information regarding these items.

~Calendar events are held at the meetinghouse, unless otherwise noted.~

Sunday Meeting for Worship is held at the meetinghouse, 77 Belvedere Rd., Damariscotta, 10:00 a.m.
 Meetinghouse phone: 207-563-3757. Directions: Take US Route 1 to Damariscotta and turn onto Belvedere Rd.
 (left if coming from the south, right if coming from the north—Miles Home Health Care building on the corner).
 The meetinghouse is the second building on the right, .2 mile from the corner.

Moving? Changing your e-mail address? Don't forget to let us know. Please remember that when you receive the newsletter by e-mail, you save the Meeting money and you lighten our workload. To receive the newsletter by e-mail, kindly send a request to Diane Kirkman at diane_kirkman@hotmail.com. Thanks!

For newsletters, important links, & a current calendar, visit our website: www.midcoastfriendsmeeting.org.

Highlights

Monthly Meeting for Business–October 18, 2009

Minutes of the September meeting for business were approved.

Loving concern was expressed for **Jean Crawford** as she faces a surgical procedure.

Janet Beerits wrote to express her appreciation for the memorial meeting held for **Henry Beerits**.

Rowen and Willow Rowntree have applied for membership in Midcoast Meeting.

State of the Meeting Reports have been sent to Quarterly and Yearly Meetings

Finance Committee has set a goal of \$14,500 for the budget in the coming year. Pledges so far have been made to cover roughly \$11,000. Rental income has been \$750 out of \$1,200 expected for the year.

Meetinghouse & Grounds--Mowing and raking has been completed. The memorial stone for George Sparks was set in place with family members present. No agreement was reached in a discussion regarding a small additional fee that might be asked when memorial stones are installed in the future. This idea was laid over for further seasoning.

Peace Center--Friends were reminded that a consultation gathering will be held in the meetinghouse on Monday, October 19, with representatives from churches in the area to discuss possible joint projects focused upon peace and social justice issues.

Hospitality--Two groups of “Friendly Eights” have been formed.

Gifts & Leadings--An exploratory session will be held at the rise of meeting on Sunday, October 25, to seek discernment as to which tasks and roles are essential to the well-being of the Meeting. Substantial refreshments will be provided.

New Business--The Damariscotta/Newcastle Clergy Group is being revived. It was approved for Rachel McGuinness to attend the next session of this group

As an expression of appreciation and support a suitable plant will be presented to **Jean Harris** and another to **Jean Crawford**.

After discussion, it was decided not to have the meeting attempt to draft a “Letter to the Editor” to urge a “No” vote on Proposition One so as to support Marriage Equality. Individual members were encouraged to send letters.

The **next meeting for business will take place Sunday November 15**, at the rise of meeting for worship. All are welcome. Please bring a bag lunch. The entire pending minutes of the October session are available at the Meeting website www.midcoastfriendsmeeting.org and on the bulletin board at the meetinghouse.

State of the Meeting Report for Midcoast Monthly Meeting 2007-08

Midcoast Monthly Meeting has been experiencing transitions during the past few years that are affecting the overall tone and functioning of the Meeting. Like many others, our Meeting has lost members to infirmity and death. We have also had some key members leave the Meeting and this region of Maine to reside in retirement communities. During this time, several new attendees and members from other Meetings have begun attending worship, including two families with small children. These individuals and families have begun

somewhat regular attendance at Meeting for Worship and Business Meetings and are serving on the committees of the Meeting. Overall, this has resulted in steady, sometimes vibrant, and most often, deep and thoughtful worship in our Meetings for Worship, and--at the same time--a sense of loss for the wisdom, knowledge, and experience of those who have passed on or moved away.

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State of the Meeting Report (Continued)

We have been fortunate to have excellent service on our Finance Committee, and we have operated in prudent allowed for activities to take place that are at the heart of the Meeting.

Ministry & Counsel is one of our committees that has experienced the greatest instability because of decline of members, the difficulty of recruiting new members, and the reluctance of any one member to assume the clerkship of the committee. The committee members report low attendance in the winter and that the administrative expectations for committee members can be “an overburden.” Nevertheless, the committee members have demonstrated coherence and focus by organizing and presenting a number of highly regarded programs on peace and religious issues as part of an effort to reach out to the wider regional community.

In 2007, Ministry & Counsel’s members had leadings to sponsor events and offered two workshops related to sustainability, a day-long workshop on the Quaker Testimonies, and an evening workshop on torture, as well as films and a poetry performance. In July 2008, the committee also presented a panel of Quakers to speak on “Living Quakerism: Now and in the Future,” and in Fall 2008 they presented a course in Quakerism 101.

More than a year ago, some members of Ministry & Counsel advised the Meeting that the care of members required special attention and that creating a new Pastoral Care Committee might make it possible to meet these responsibilities more fully. Subsequently, a Pastoral Care Committee was established in 2007. The committee met at various members' homes throughout 2008 in what they describe as “a state of caring, shared responsibility, and confidentiality.” Members contacted Friends who were going through difficulties, kept in touch with members who were shut in or lived distances from the Meeting, and sent cards at the times of loss. The general feeling of the Monthly Meeting is that this committee is satisfying a great need in the Meeting, and there is a general thanks for the work of its members.

The Meeting has been fortunate to have had great support and a calling by some members to found a Peace Center. The effort started with a task force and the appointment of a steering committee, but in the past year the Monthly Meeting agreed that it should become a full committee of the Meeting. The Peace Center supported the Meeting’s installation of solar panels to demonstrate concern for future generations and to connect the Meeting’s spiritual life with members’ concerns for the

environment. The center then presented a workshop on Quaker simplicity and the environment, open to groups in the community. Meetinghouse & Grounds Committee oversaw the solar panel installation, low-level parking-lot lighting, and energy-efficient hot-water system. It also spruced up the plantings and parking lot during work hour activities.

The Peace & Social Concerns Committee has not met for some time now and currently lacks leadership. Some members feel the Peace Center has made it redundant.

The Religious Education Committee has held programs for the small number of children who attend the Meeting. The size of the group on First Days ranges from one to eight, and from four to twelve years old. Even though there has been some unpredictability about the size and frequency of attendance, the program has proceeded, and there are now a number of children who attend irregularly. The committee was pleased to be able to use the legacy from Charlotte Ritter to purchase a lovely swing and play set which has been most appreciated and used by the children. The Committee hopes to continue from October though June with programming each year.

The Hospitality Committee has been very consistent about providing simple foods for the members after each Meeting for Worship. In addition, the Meeting has hosted potlucks once a month. “Friendly Eight” groups met in people's homes regularly through the year.

The Gifts & Leadings Committee is charged with the process of finding good matches between the skills and gifts of our individual members and the needs and tasks that need to be met to sustain our religious community. It has enabled the Meeting committees to function pretty well. The Monthly Newsletter is a marvelous asset for their work.

Many of the new people who have attended Midcoast Monthly Meeting have expressed gratefulness for the peaceful and compassionate roots of the Friends’ tradition and manner. Other new attendees have not always found comfort in the Meeting, and especially younger attendees have not always found the Meeting responsive to their needs, interests, or concerns. It is our sincere hope to maintain a place and way of life offering concern, tolerance, new ideas, solace, respect and love to all who may find their way to be part of our community.

Approved at Monthly Meeting for Business October 18, 2009, for submission to Quarterly and Yearly Meetings. Karen L. Cadbury and Deborah P. Haviland, Co-Clerks (see: www.midcoastfriendsmeeting.org for more).

ADVICES

Social Responsibility-- Friends are called, as followers of Christ, to help establish the Kingdom of God on Earth. Let us strengthen a sense of kinship with everyone. Let that sense of kinship inspire us in our efforts to build a social order free of violence and oppression, in which no person's development is thwarted by poverty and the lack of health care, education, or freedom. Friends are advised to minister to those in need but also to seek to know the facts and the causes of social and economic ills and to work for the removal of those ills. Let us cherish every human being and encourage efforts to overcome all forms of prejudice.

What Makes BHFH Quaker? Part One: The Transformative Experience

By Holly Baldwin

Do you know the story of Samuel Bownas? He was a 17th-century Friend who describes the moment he realized that the true Quaker experience requires more than just showing up: "One First-day, being at meeting, a young woman named Anne Wilson . . . with a great zeal pointed her finger at me uttering these words with much power: 'A traditional Quaker, thou comest to meeting as thou went from it, and goes from it as thou came to it but art no better for thy coming; what wilt thou do in the end?'"

What do Samuel and Anne have to teach us at Beacon Hill Friends House and in our other communities? Do we let our communities transform us? Their lesson is at the heart of my understanding of the Quaker experience. As Friends we bring the Light to shine in on our lives, on our hearts, and reveal Truth to us, sometimes compelling us to make large or small transformative changes in our lives. We pay attention to the Light in our Meetings for Worship, and also as we go about our daily lives. As Friends we are opened to transformation by loving and trusting our community and its members. This essential part of the Quaker experience is one of the benefits of belonging in any true community, and is an essential part of life at Beacon Hill Friends House.

Transformation is not something that happens on the first day we come to BHFH; it happens more gradually as we open ourselves up to the process. Like stones in a river or along the ocean, the tides and currents bump us up against one another. Little by little, our rough edges are worn smooth and beautiful, and part of a whole riverbed of similarly worn stones, each with their own unique shapes and colors. This transformation smoothes and polishes us in community in the small ways we surrender a bit of ourselves as we join the larger community. Sharing a bedroom, abiding by stricter (or looser!) cleaning standards, and committing two Sunday evenings a month for house meeting are all ways that we give up a little bit of our individuality to join something that is greater than us as individuals--just as we do as Friends, when we surrender to God's will and change our lives accordingly, rather than relying on our rational minds to make the decisions in our lives.

Why do we choose to surrender our individual comfort? We make these sacrifices because we choose the rewards that membership in community gives us. We love the sense of belonging and the shared laughter and comfort that come from eating, playing, working, and struggling together. In struggle, we have to take risks, we inevitably make mistakes. And when we are met with love, even in our imperfection, our trust and love for the community grows. We know that we are all in it together, and we all have the love of the community in our hearts. So we see that transformation in community requires more than showing up; it means choosing to participate, taking risks, and bringing an open heart. Instead of leaving the community the way we came to it, with an open heart we can learn the lessons we are here to learn and make the changes that the community experience offers us.

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What Makes BHFH Quaker? (Continued)

When we live in community the way we do at BHFH, we have many opportunities for transformation. We learn to communicate more honestly with the people around us, going to the hard places we might prefer to ignore. When you live with 20 people, you can't help but notice others' shortcomings—and ultimately our own. In order to be good "housies," we must continually modify our own natural patterns to become better housemates, smoother stones in the river.

As a housemate, landlord, and supervisor, I have lots of opportunities to witness residents' transformation--and almost as many chances for my own chance to grow through my mistakes and struggles. Here is one such rock-polishing kind of experience. One time I was filling in for the kitchen manager, and made a surprisingly laborious feast. Completely wiped out after too many hours in the kitchen, I slipped away and left the dish crew with more to clean up than was fair--without checking in. I remember feeling justified—and guilty—as I slipped away. The next morning I was gently and firmly told that although my dinner was very appreciated, I had left the dish crew a big burden. This "eldering" (to use the Quaker term) continues to remind me of the ripple effects that we--I--cause by leaving our (my) own responsibilities for others to pick up.

It is helpful to me as I work with residents who struggle with meeting their responsibilities, to know that even as the director, I too struggle. When it is my job to "nag," I am able to do so in part as someone who struggles on the same path. It helps me to balance frustration with empathy, to respond with love rather than anger. We all have our challenges living in community, and we must help each other stay accountable to the commitment we made to be here. In this way we bump up against one another, smoothing out each other's rough patches, gently and firmly.

To be sure, the day Anne Wilson held Samuel Bownas accountable for his faithfulness was one day he left the Meeting different than he came to it. He was open enough to hear truth in her accusation and received it in good faith, knowing that she cared about his spiritual health and that he was able to live up to the standard she was setting. Similarly, we choose to live in community at BHFH because it offers us the opportunity to grow in ourselves and our community--in Samuel Bownas's words--to be better for having come here.

Holly Baldwin, Director of Beacon Hill Friends House in Boston (www.bhfh.org), is a former (and beloved) member of Midcoast Friends Meeting.

QUERIES

Social Responsibility--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?



Be patterns, be examples in all countries, places, islands, nations, wherever you come; that your carriage and life may preach among all sorts of people, and to them. Then you will come to walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in every one; whereby in them ye may be a blessing, and make the witness of God in them to bless you. Then to the Lord God you will be a sweet savour and a blessing.

--George Fox