

Morningside Monthly Meeting

Religious Society of Friends

Morningside Matters

MAY 2011

Helen Garay Toppins on-line editor (HGTpeace@optonline.net)

MMM Event Calendar

June 2 – Ministry & Counsel, 7:15 PM, at the home of Pamela Wood

June 5 – **MEETING FOR BUSINESS 1:00 PM**

June 4 – Morningside Retreat at Riverside Park, 10 AM to 3 PM. (details in newsletter)

June 12 – Meeting Fundraiser – Books, CDs, DVDs for sale at rise of Meeting (bring items to sell)

June 26 – M & C Breakfast at 9:15 AM, in the Riverside Cafe

July 3-9 – FGC Gathering in Grinnell Iowa (details in newsletter)

July 17-23 – NY Yearly Meeting Summer Sessions at Silver Bay (details in newsletter)

Downtown Outdoor Meeting for Worship

Every Thursday from May through September the Downtown Meeting gathers near the Labyrinth of Contemplation in the northwest corner of Battery Park. You are very welcome to come for some or all of the hour between 6 and 7 PM. You can find us north of Castle Clinton and west of the Korean War Memorial. It is a beautiful place to enjoy nature and stillness amid the city's noisy bustle. Check out our website: downtownmeetng.org. Any Questions call Sally Campbell at 646 489-4175.

A Reflection

Janet Carter jcarter123@verizon.net

After some twenty years of admiration for AVP, I am finally completing the three part training cycle at Powell House June 24-26th. It's taken this long! My thank you is for Kathy Wood who arranged for MMM to "do" the first weekend of AVP as a meeting. It took place at 15th Street sometime in the '90s and was a wonderfully moving experience. We seemed to look at each other differently afterward. Do others remember it that way?

Morningside Retreat

There is no charge for our meeting's retreat. However, Ministry & Counsel is asking us to **register in advance**. If you plan to attend please let us know by emailing HGTpeace@optonline.net We will have the retreat Rain or Shine. In case of rain our activities will be indoors.

Date: Saturday June 4, 10 AM to 3 PM

Location: Riverside Park Volunteer House

Transportation: #2, 3, or 1 train to 96th Street. Walk one block north to 97th. Walk west to Riverside Drive. There is an entrance to Riverside Park at 97th, go north until you see the Volunteer House on your right. It is just beyond the dog run which is also on your right. The Volunteer House is between 108 and 107 on the path close to Riverside Drive. Coming from the north, get off at 110, walk to 108 and enter the park.

Schedule:

10:00 AM – Gathering & Snacks at the Volunteer House
(Patricia Chernoff will let you in at the lower level - south entrance.)

10:20-11:00 AM – Meeting for Worship

11:00 AM – Noon: A walking meditation led by Vince Buscemi

Noon: Lunch – bring a drink and food for yourself and something to share.

1:00 to 3:00 PM Council of All Beings - led by Tom Goodridge
Come with a non-human being that you strongly identify with in mind.

**The god of dirt
came up to me many times and said
so many wise and delectable things,
I lay
on the grass listening
to his dog voice,
frog voice; now,
he said, and now,
and never once mentioned forever
from, One or Two Things**

Mary Oliver (Dream Work)

Testimony of Integrity in Business

Bart Dominus

Plainfield Rahway meeting will be holding a workshop run by Karen Tibbals on June 11th from 3 to 5 PM at the Plainfield Meeting house. The topic of her talk and the discussion, is an Exploration of Integrity in Business. Everyone is invited. For more information and logistical information contact Andrew (andrew.holz@gmail.com) or Karen (karenjtibbals@yahoo.com).

Torture in New York State Prisons?

There will be a program on torture in New York State prisons on Tuesday, June 21st at 7:00 PM, at Riverside Church in Room 9T. The program is free and open to the public. At press time the presenters are:

Mary Beth Pfeiffer, author of *Crazy in America: The Hidden Tragedy of the Criminalized Mentally Ill*, which grew out of reporting on the abuses of people with mental illness in New York State prisons.

Jack Beck who is involved with the Prison Visiting Project at the Correctional Association of New York. He will give us an overview of how solitary confinement is used in NY prisons as well as the administrative and legislative restrictions placed on its use.

For more info contact, Patricia Chernoff patriciachernoff@verizon.net

The New Jim Crow

Michelle Alexander, author of, "The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness" gave a keynote address at Riverside Church on May 21, 2011. Visit <http://www.newjimcrow.org> to see it on You Tube links. You may also visit <http://tinyurl.com/NY-NJC-PressConf> to see the press conference held that day. Visit <http://tinyurl.com/NY-MA-Lecture> to see Michelle Alexander's lecture and <http://tinyurl.com/NY-NJC-Panel> to see the panel discussion featuring an excellent range of experiences.

Read about Friends Peace Teams

Sally Campbell

The book *A Peace of Africa, Reflections on Life in the Great Lakes Region* by David Zarembka became a part of the Morningside Library when Val Liveoak came to speak about the work of Friends Peace Teams (FPT) on May 15th. She spoke movingly about the FPT work in Latin America, Indonesia and Africa. FTP is deeply based on individual Friends' leadings. Morningside has been supporting FTP financially for many years. FTP is doing the nitty gritty work of promoting peacemaking and community building with people living with violence and its consequences.

If you missed the after-meeting presentation, feel free to borrow the book, a terrific read, to find out more for yourself.

What we are Reading

Tita Beal

"I Shall Not Hate" by Dr. Izzeldin Abuelaish, a Palestinian doctor whose Gaza home was bombed, killing two of his daughters and his niece. He writes about the futility of violence and revenge; the need for people on warring sides to listen to each other and to get to know each other as human beings; and how to figure out ways to resolve their differences so they stop killing each other's children.

Friends General Conference Gathering “Meeting at the Center”

The 2011 Gathering will be from July 3–9 at Grinnell College in Grinnell, Iowa. The theme will be “Meeting at the Center.” The Gathering features Spirit-led programming for children, a dynamic high school program, and opportunities for Friends with common interests to gather. There will also be special opportunities for young adults. Choose from a wide variety of small, week-long workshops such as Quilting, Racism, Lobbying, Truth, Clerking, Bible, Eldership, and Dancing in the Light. You should register ASAP. Further information is available at www.fgcquaker.org/gathering or from FGC, 1216 Arch St. #2B, Philadelphia PA 19107; 215-561-1700.

New York Yearly Meeting Summer Sessions

Helen Garay Toppins, office@nyym.org

NYYM Summer Sessions will be held at Silver Bay YMCA of the Adirondacks on the shores of Lake George from July 17–23. The theme is “Peace with Earth: Transforming Our Communities.” Anne Mitchell, general secretary of Quaker Earthcare Witness, will be the keynote speaker. There will be worship sharing, a special symposium; an inter-generational Council of All Beings, and fellowship. Details and registration forms for Silver Bay are in the May Spark and online at www.nyym.org. Please register early.

Please Help Carry On the Work of Our Meeting

Pamela Wood

Contributions to the work of the Meeting are welcome. These go to pay our expenses (rent for example), our financial support of New York Yearly Meeting and our outreach to other organizations. They may be given to Bart Dominus, Pamela Wood or Charlene Ray at Meeting or you may request an envelope. Checks should be made out to Morningside Monthly Meeting. Contributions are tax deductible.

Keep those Cards Coming

Nancy Smith, the jailed 78-year old clerk of Hudson Monthly Meeting, is still serving a 6-month sentence for trespass for her actions at Ft. Benning, Georgia, to protest the School of the Americas. Please keep those cards, notes and letters coming. She also likes newspaper and magazine articles. Her address: Nancy H. Smith #94641-020, Danbury Federal Correctional Institution, Route 37, Danbury CT 06811. She LOVES hearing from Quakers.

Morningside Minutes Concerning the Aspects of the Parole Process and the Rights of Prisoners

At Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business on April 3, Morningside approved two Minutes brought to the Meeting for consideration by Peace and Social Concerns. The Minutes speak for themselves.

Minute in Support of the Safe and Fair Evaluation (S.A.F.E.) Parole Act A proposed amendment to New York State Executive Law §259-i

Approved at the Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business on April 3, 2011

Since the early Nineteenth Century, when they were instrumental in the establishment of the first American penitentiaries that aimed to rehabilitate offenders, members of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) have held a concern for the inequities of the justice system.

Many Quakers volunteer in New York State Correctional Facilities, attending Quaker Meetings within the prisons and as volunteers for the Alternatives to Violence Project. We have heard the despair caused by the arbitrary and unpredictable parole process. Men and women who have made great efforts to turn their lives around feel that their successes are given little weight by the parole boards, which may deny parole without giving any indication of what a person needs to do to gain parole, or merely cite the nature of the crime, which, of course, may not be changed.

At Morningside, our concern has been strengthened during the past few years as a number of Friends who were previously incarcerated have become regular attenders at our Meetings for Worship. Through them we have been made particularly aware of such injustices.

The **Safe and Fair Evaluation (S.A.F.E.) Parole Act**, which is proposed by the New York State Parole Reform Campaign (Prison Action Network), would make it the explicit purpose of the discretionary parole process to promote the successful and productive reentry and reintegration into society (as called for in Penal Law §1.05) by specifying procedures in order to eliminate the humiliations that often accompany parole hearings and the arbitrariness of the decision to grant or deny parole. The Meeting adds its endorsement to the NYS Parole Reform Support Letter, which is attached to this minute, and urges that the legislature take up the amendment. [To see the NYTS Parole Reform Support Letter, with Morningside among the signatories, along with supporting documents, go to www.morningsidemeeting.org.]

[Note that, as of May 15, State Senator Tom Duane has agreed to sponsor the Safe Parole Act, which now has a number—S5374.]

Minute in support of two amendments to New York State law relating to parole:

A03211: An Act to Amend the Executive Law, in relation to the composition of the state board of parole and parole hearing officers

AND

A02161 (S1284): An Act to Amend the Correction Law in relation to services for inmates of state correctional facilities upon their release therefrom

Approved at the Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business on April 3, 2011

Since the early Nineteenth Century, when they were instrumental in the establishment of the first American penitentiaries that aimed to rehabilitate offenders, members of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) have held a concern for the inequities of the justice system. Today Quakers volunteer in many New York State Correctional Facilities in Prison Worship groups and in the Alternatives to Violence Project.

At Morningside, our concern has been strengthened during the past few years as a number of Friends who were previously incarcerated have become regular attenders at our Meetings for Worship. Through them we have been made particularly aware of injustices associated with the granting of parole and of the fact that much more preparation for reentry following incarceration is needed. These amendments address aspects of these issues.

A03211: This Amendment requires that the membership of the state board of parole, and parole hearing officers, reflect the demographics of the state's inmate population. Currently the people determining the fate of prisoners are largely representative of the communities where the prisons are located (and hence tend to represent their interests), not the communities from which the prisoners come. Just as the prison population from New York City is now counted in the census as residents of that city, so the parole apparatus should reflect the same demographics.

A02161 (S1284): Currently, parolees are released with \$40, a bus ticket to the county they were imprisoned from—and no survival information about support groups, benefits, or housing. A02161 (Assembly) and S1284 (Senate) would remedy this situation by mandating that parolees receive information concerning the availability of medical, educational and other services, including alcohol and substance abuse treatment, and that arrangements be made for such services.

[Note: The principal sponsor A03211 Assemblyman Nick Perry. A02161 (S1284) is sponsored in the Assembly by Assemblyman Brian Kavanagh (A02161) and in the Senate by Senator Tom Duane (S1284). We are contacting the sponsors to find out how we can help move these measures, which have been languishing.]

Visit www.Morningsidemeeting.org for

May Meeting for Business minutes.