

# QUAKER NEWSLETTER

## GAINESVILLE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

<http://www.afn.org/~quakers/>

**Meeting Place:** 702 NW 38<sup>th</sup> St., Gainesville, Fla. 32607  
**Phone:** 352-372-1070

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**NEWSLETTER, SECOND MONTH, 2008**

**JEAN LARSON, CLERK**

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### **Queries and Advice for the Second Month: Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business**

**Query:** Queries: Are Meetings for Business held in the spirit of Meetings for Worship? *In decision making, do we promote a spirit of love, understanding and patience as we seek unity on an appropriate course of action?* Do we keep our remarks simple and speak only as the Spirit leads? *Are we able to unite in good grace with the Sense of the Meeting when our personal desires tend in another direction?* Do we maintain respect for others, however strongly our opinions may differ? *Are Meetings for Business seen as positive opportunities for testing and practicing our spiritual life?*

**Advice:** As members, attend the business meetings, and extend our support to the Meeting's affairs, so that the burden will not rest upon a few. In Meetings for Business, and in all duties connected with them, seek the leadings of the Light. Avoid undue persistence. As we release our attachment to our ideas, the Light may reveal solutions none of us has considered. Be willing to admit the possibility of being in error. Remember that the foundation of a lasting decision lies in the search for unity; that is, a corporate seeking of the Light in an atmosphere of love, trust and mutual forbearance. Attenders are warmly invited to attend and participate in Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business. Have a sense of when to continue to labor on or to lay aside an issue.

**Nothing in all creation is so like God as stillness.**  
**-- Meister Eckhart**

## MEETING NOTES AND PROGRAMS

**Hold in the Light:** Tak Hayakawa, Morrie Trimmer, George Newkirk, Phil Klein

**February's Quakerism 101 and Gleanings from January 101:** From our January "lecture" ("Quakerism 101," pp.31-36) and discussion: How do you "center down?" Douglas Steere, in "*Gleanings*," wrote "get Brother Ass, the body, properly tethered and out of the way." Some Friends find it helpful to cup hands downward while emptying the self of "busyness," and cup the hands upward when ready to receive God. Pray silently for thanksgiving, intercession, forgiveness, guidance, and strength. Meditate on a thought or image such as "love" or a candle flame. It is useful to be willing to be vulnerable, to listen to God and to each other, and to be open to the Spirit. Robert Barclay said (@1677) that neither words nor silence is most important, but "holy dependence of the mind upon God." Let yourself become a vessel for the Spirit and be "prayed through." Experience prayer that is not of your own volition.

How do you deal with distractions? Incorporate them into your worship. Let them fly by. Recognize that you can't fight them or willfully try to ignore them. Let in your own pain, anxiety, or restlessness. Accept it and feel it. Be honest. Ask for and wait for healing.

How do you know when to speak? Friends speak of "feeling called," "feeling led," of a "still, small voice," of divine "promptings." For many, there is a sense of burden, a feeling of having a responsibility laid on oneself. Thinking and feeling play important roles, but if they serve as the basis or impetus for ministry in Meeting for Worship, then the Meeting is less than it could be. Ministry is understood to be the Spirit speaking through whomever is ministering, what God has to share with the Meeting. Ministry is dependent most fundamentally on faithfulness to the leading of the Spirit, as best we can discern it. It has been the experience for many generations of Friends that God does speak to us, and it is possible to distinguish what God is trying to tell us from our own desires and thoughts. Many Friends experience physical symptoms such as sweaty palms, shaky hands, a knotted chest, pounding heart, etc. One Friend described being pulled out of his seat by the scruff of his neck.

What is a gathered Meeting? A gathered Meeting is one in which Friends feel a deep connectedness with each other and with God. It is also called a "covered Meeting." In such a Meeting there is a sense of unity in the Spirit and inner spiritual communion among those present. If we believe that there is one God who works in each of our lives, it is not so surprising that several people in a Meeting, and indeed the entire Meeting might be led in the same way.

What can be done to promote a "gathered" Meeting? Come to Meeting already "deep in the spirit of Worship" (Thomas Kelly, *The Eternal Promise*, pp. 82-83). Hold the group, or individuals in it, in the Light; in intercessory prayer (Kelly, p. 83). Spiritually embrace those present. Be willing to let go of yourself and your own private concerns and become part of the whole. Live into a life of worship, every day, in all situations (Kelly, p. 84)

On **Sunday, February 10**, all who are interested in pursuing this topic of Ministry and Worship are invited to attend a follow up discussion on these questions and points made at 9:15 in the meetinghouse library. As soon as we can start the coffee, open all the doors, and greet each other, we will settle into a worshipful silence to continue consideration of these questions from a personal perspective. Have you ever been in a "gathered" Meeting for Worship? What was the Meeting like? How would you describe such an experience of worship to someone who hasn't experienced it? Are there things Friends can do to help bring about a "gathered Meeting"? Do you pray? Are there ways that personal, private prayer can enrich the Quaker community and its Meeting for Worship? Do you see yourself as a "minister"? It is said that Friends abolished the laity, and we are all

ministers. How do you respond? Name several different form of “ministry” among Friends. Describe a time when you ministered, or were ministered to, in a positive way.

Experienced Friends as well as visitors and attenders can benefit from an examination of what it is we actually do in Meeting for Worship. Sharing is voluntary, but very helpful to us all. A notebook to record thoughts, questions, and insights is useful and encouraged. (*Connie Ray*)

**Meeting for Worship in Nature** meets 9:30 a.m. Follow the path around the south side of the retaining pond by the grassy parking area, and then south into the bower. Bring something upon which to sit.

**Movie Night:** *Amazing Grace* will be shown on Feb. 15 at 7 p.m. at the meetinghouse. All are welcome!

**Quaker Study Program: Quaker Study Program:** This year the Quaker Study Program will attempt to address the question, “How do Quakers Cope with Transitions?” Walter Morris will lead our opening discussion on Friday, February 29. There are many changes both inside and outside that are affecting our lives. The topic for discussion will be, “What is it about Quakerism that helps us face these changes?”

We meet at the home of Phil and Jeannie Buskirk in McIntosh. Potluck supper is at 6 p.m. or as soon thereafter as folks can assemble. Discussion follows. Newcomers and visitors are welcome. See the foyer bulletin board for directions, or ask someone. 352-591-0677 (*Connie Ray*)

**Celebrations of New Life!** The participants in the Celebration of Life festivities at the Gainesville Friends Meetinghouse last month want to thank the meeting for this sweet celebration. Tracy Jeshow commented that she felt surrounded by light. Tracy’s family is celebrating the recent birth (Jan 25, 2008) of their third child, 9-pound, 2-ounce infant boy Sebastian Pierce Jeshow Skidmore.





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BRING SOMEONE YOU LOVE...  
MUSIC CONCERT & SING-A-LONG

ANNIE & FRIENDS

February 16th at 8pm  
at the Quaker Meetinghouse 702 NW 38th Street

<b>Annie McPherson</b>	Bass, Vocals
<b>David Cook</b>	Guitar, Piano, LapSteel, Vocals
<b>Karl Miller</b>	Guitar, Vocals
<b>Ron Shorr</b>	Guitar
<b>Art Crummer</b>	Guitar, Vocals
<b>Laurie Jennings</b>	Percussion

*Donation at the door to support the  
Gainesville Friends Meeting Meetinghouse Fund*



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**New Yoga Session Begins:** Gary Arthur is offering a new ten-week session of yoga beginning on Feb. 4. Classes will now begin at 6 p.m. Please come a few minutes early in order to get your mat situated and begin promptly. Suggested donation is \$5 per class if you pay for the series, \$10 for walk-ins. Please don't let the cost prevent you from attending, as any donation will be kindly accepted. It's my privilege to share this experience. More info? Please email or call me at 224 5143. (*Gary Arthur*)

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**Stewardship and March 2 Forum:** Everyone is encouraged to participate in "threshing" (read, discuss, parse, correct, add, delete, edit, etc.) of a first draft of a proposed new testimony for Southeastern Yearly Meeting. We will gather at 12:30 p.m. or as soon thereafter as possible in the worship room. Below is the rationale for such a new testimony as has been discerned so far. Stewardship is a word used today meaning "taking care of (something)." Traditionally it has referred to taking care of finances responsibly.

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It has occurred to Friends in Gainesville Monthly Meeting that the time has come to remove Stewardship from its place as a subheading under Simplicity and make it a separate testimony. Friends have understood for some time now that one of the good things that happen when we live a life of simplicity is that we consume less of the earth's resources. Many now have come to an understanding that stewardship is more important than a resulting benefit from a life of simplicity. It is a matter of the gravest concern.

One way to imagine this concern is that living simply does not include recycling. If anything, it adds a slight burden. Our continuing revelation is that the natural world is God's creation. This means recognizing that we are not the pinnacle of creation, but a part of it.

Another way to look at the concern to have stewardship as a separate testimony is to imagine a life of simplicity that can still use up all available financial resources. With the present housing concerns, this is actually a necessity for many. If it is not, however, then a care for right sharing of economic resources is also a concern, as financial contributions to all organizations of the Religious Society of Friends are vital to witnessing our faith and testimonies, and providing needed service to the world. Our finances are like food to be shared with the hungry. Money is a resource which we do not

have the right to own and hoard for ourselves, but to share with others who are in need. Stewardship of our financial resources keeps us connected with the rest of humanity just as stewardship of the earth keeps us connected to God's creation.

In many monthly meetings, Earthcare Witness is a recognized standing committee. In Southeastern Yearly Meeting, Earthcare Witness has from time to time been a functioning committee. Surely we are beginning to "act as if" Stewardship is already a testimony. "And did I mention individual contributions?" asks our Clerk of Trustees. Surely individual donations to our organizations are recognized as part of what it means to be a member of the Religious Society of Friends, if they do not impose too much of a burden. A testimony to this effect is only a matter of stating what we already believe.

**Friends Peace Teams/African Great Lakes Initiative:** In the aftermath of the presidential elections in Kenya that international observers have declared rigged, the violence has affected at least 500,000 people with at least 500 people killed. Friends active in the Western Province, where most of the violence has taken place, have been delivering rice, salt, oil, corn, beans and Vaseline to the camps where tens of thousands are being sheltered. The Western Province of Kenya is home to 100,000 Friends, the largest concentration of Quakers in the World. Lumakanda Friends Church has been the center of relief activity in the area. Bristol Friends Meeting (England) contributed the equivalent of \$426 to help the effort to care for those who are displaced by the violence. A jar has been placed on the Peace and Social Concerns Table for the collection of contributions. The address is written on the jar so that, if you prefer, you can send your contribution directly to AGLI which has its headquarters in St. Louis. (*Connie Ray*)

## **WORSHIP/ WORSHIP SHARING GROUPS**

*By Sybil Ann Brennan*

The committee charged to select the facilitators and divide the participants at the 2007 at the Friends World Conference for Consultation's Triennial in Ireland, determined that there would be two facilitators and 15 people in each group. The term used for these groups was borrowed from the British use of "worship/worship sharing" from the recent exercises associated with Quaker Quest. The experience was unique for me!

The pool of volunteer facilitators must have been enormous for I heard of so many people who applied but were not chosen. That included the two

representatives that attended from Southeastern Yearly Meeting – Ellie Caldwell (Palm Beach) and Sybil Brennan (Gainesville). We were placed in two different groups as were most representatives, although both the Irish and the British, occasionally, found that there were two or three of them together in one group because there were so many representatives and observers from the British Isles. In addition, the Spanish-speaking groups had a number of Central Americans together, yet they were joined by other bi/tri-lingual Friends.

Our facilitators came from two different Quaker traditions, were of different ages, were a man and a woman, lived in different parts of the world, chose to sit side-by-side, and came with prepared

openings and closing personal experiences and remarks. They set a tenor that was welcoming, enthusiastic and even humorous; they added a richness, depth and thoughtfulness to the occasion.

In my overview of group experiences, with side-by-side location of the leadership, one might expect to retain the power of the group within the presenters. That did not happen! Instead the group felt safe, cared for and invited to participate.

I do not know how much time and energy was expended in forming the groups, but the range of age, beliefs and great variety of the sizes of the yearly meetings was reflected as a microcosm of the triennial participants. That was masterfully achieved in all the groups that I heard about and certainly in the one that I attended. This planning and the special sharing that emerged steadied our beings and even helped to establish roots and connections between individuals leading to a better understanding of others points of view as well as a warmer emotional tie than in any other triennial experience.

We met six times, and I eagerly anticipated the quiet, refreshing and learning closeness that was part of each session.

## PART 2

The term “worship/worship sharing” has grown out of the British Quaker Quest study program. Hempstead Monthly Meeting began an outreach project of publishing small pamphlets with twelve views on critical/basic Quaker topics such as twelve views of God, what worship means to me, reflections on the Peace testimony etc. These have continued to be published and a “study program” to discuss these topics in small worship groups, was contemporarily designed. The project called the

groups “worship/worship sharing,” reminding Quakers that each gathering of Friends is in worship and that worship sharing, in this context, is very broad – including discussions, reflections, continuing someone else’s ideas and requires listening, prayer, further questioning and seeking, rather than only silent receiving and/or processing. This modality, “worship/worship-sharing,” is very different from the worship sharing done, with or without topics, but often devoted to the question “where are you on your Spiritual Path?” And, even more different from the Claremont Dialogue, established in the middle of the last century, where no one responds verbally to an offering and comments are only individual expressions of personal, life experiences.

I believe each group worship sharing experience is unique for several reasons, including that no matter what the topic, query, or study may encompass we are clearly different people, sharing from our own walks-of-life and nudged in various ways and times by the presence of God or the Spirit. In fact, I have realized that I may answer a particular query differently at one time in my own life than I might at another meeting. That does not necessarily mean that I have changed my mind about a topic, but I might have; as I gain insights I also realize I may have more to share at one occasion than on another.

At the Ireland experience in August 2007, pauses between shared messages varied in length, as did the messages themselves, and I was reminded that each group worship-sharing experience is indeed unique. However, the modality used at this international meeting was also new to me. Perhaps it goes without saying, but confidentiality was also practiced, so although I can say we cried and laughed and sang and were silent – I cannot repeat messages. I can only bring home to you the flavor of the meaningful experience among Friends.

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**I have the immense joy of being human, a member of a race in which God himself became incarnate. As if the sorrows and stupidities of the human condition could overwhelm me, now that I realize what we all are. If only everybody could realize this! But it cannot be explained. There is no way of telling people that they are all walking around Shining like the Sun!**

**-- Thomas Merton**

## Around the Meetinghouse

By Jean Larson

January is a time when the lawn is growing slowly if it all. We had a hard freeze on January 2 that led to brown leaves on some of the ferns and completed the loss of leaves on the coral bean plants. The dotted horsemint in the children's yard had deeper colors as the weather grew colder but finally died back in the hard freeze.

Some plants are flourishing in the cooler weather. The iris in the front retention basin are prospering, and sticky Willy (*Galium aparine*) is growing in lots of places with its hairy, sticky leaves sprouting in whorls of 5-7 leaflets around its stems. Few of our plants flower in January, but the sticky Willy, a violet in the wetlands and a pea vine are blooming.

On January 26, we hosted a site for the 9th Annual Great Air Potato Roundup. We had around 60 people out picking up potatoes, including a group of students from the University of Florida led by Brad Thompson, some of the participants in the non-violent communication series led by Jeannie Buskirk, Erik Shuping's biology class from Gainesville High School (35 students) and representatives from Junior Girl Scout Troop 1002, as well as a scattering of other Quakers. Bill led

the biology students out in the woods where they joyful voices rang out.

As they have done for several years, the Morrisises were the central clearinghouse, signing people in and out, passing out tickets for tee shirts and the raffle, passing out gloves, maps to Morningside Nature Center, providing drinks of water from the sheltered area outside the main door to our meetinghouse and serving as a meeting point for people arriving and awaiting an opportunity to be shown a good place to pick up potatoes.

Bill and Brad helped to collect potatoes from the woods in a garbage can and in our garden cart and bring them back to the collection site, saving many steps by individuals carrying buckets of potatoes. One garbage can lost a wheel and our garden cart's tires went flat and then fell off, so there were some side costs to all the activity.

We collected an estimated five 64-gallon garbage carts worth of air potatoes and one such cart's worth of trash. Connie Ray took home some recyclables as well. We had a drizzly morning so those without raingear got wet so the turnout was delightfully larger than expected. We are grateful to all for the help that made the morning such a success.

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The great sea  
frees me, moves me,  
as a strong river carries a weed.  
Earth and her strong winds  
move me, take me away,  
and my soul is swept up in joy.

by *Uvavnuk* (19th C), an Iglulik Eskimo woman, translated from Danish  
by W. Worster from Knud Rasmussen's Report of the Fifth Thule

Expedition, 1921-1924, Vol 7.



## FEBRUARY 2008 GFM CALENDAR

All 1 <sup>st</sup> -Days	11 a.m.	Meeting for Worship, Gainesville Friends Meetinghouse, 702 NW 38 <sup>th</sup> St, Gainesville, Fla.
All 1 <sup>st</sup> -Days	11:15 a.m.	First-Day School
<b>Feb. 2</b>	<b>5:30 p.m.</b>	<b>Chinese food potluck and auction to benefit Pro Nica and Guatemala Scholarship fund</b>
Feb. 3	9:30 a.m.	Meetinghouse and Library committees
Feb. 3	Rise Meeting	Forum: Brad Thompson, Environmentalism
Feb. 5	11:45 a.m.	Friendly Lunch at Books, Inc.
Feb. 9	10 – 11:30 a.m.	Solutions to Violence: Fellowship, Three Fables by Franz Kafka. Led by Don Smith at Westminster Presbyterian
Feb. 10	9:15 a.m.	Quakerism 101
Feb. 10	12:45 p.m.	Meeting for Worship for Business
Feb. 13	7 – 8:30 p.m.	Nonviolent Communication Group
Feb. 15	7 p.m.	Movie Night: Amazing Grace
<b>Feb. 16</b>	<b>8 p.m.</b>	<b>“Bring Someone You Love”: Concert by Annie and Friends (<i>see newsletter</i>) Benefit for Meetinghouse Fund</b>
Feb. 17	9:30 a.m.	Meeting for Worship in Nature
Feb. 17	12:30 p.m.	Meeting Potluck – please bring a dish to share
Feb. 17	After potluck	Quaker EarthCare Witness Committee meeting
Feb. 23	10 – 11:30 a.m.	Solutions to Violence: Divisions, four poems, led by Don Smith at Westminster Presbyterian
Feb. 24	9:30 a.m.	Peace and Social Concerns Committee
Feb. 24	12:45 p.m.	Bible Study
March 2	9:30 a.m.	Library and Meetinghouse Committees
March 2	12:45 p.m.	Forum: Threshing: The Stewardship Testimony (Ministry and Nurture)

**Unless noted, meetings are at the GF Meetinghouse.**

### Saint Francis And The Sow

The bud  
stands for all things,  
even for those things that don't flower,  
for everything flowers, from within, of self-blessing;  
though sometimes it is necessary  
to reteach a thing its loveliness,  
to put a hand on its brow  
of the flower  
and retell it in words and in touch  
it is lovely  
until it flowers again from within, of self-blessing;  
as Saint Francis  
put his hand on the creased forehead  
of the sow, and told her in words and in touch

blessings of earth on the sow, and the sow  
began remembering all down her thick length,  
from the earthen snout all the way  
through the fodder and slops to the spiritual curl of  
the tail,  
from the hard spininess spiked out from the spine  
down through the great broken heart  
to the blue milken dreaminess spurting and  
shuddering  
from the fourteen teats into the fourteen mouths  
sucking and blowing  
beneath  
them:  
the long, perfect loveliness of sow.

- *Galway Kinnell*