

Smithfield



Friends

Newsletter February 2009
Smithfield Monthly Meeting of Friends
108 Smithfield Road Woonsocket, RI 02895

Vol.20

No.205

Parsonage: 401-762-5726

internet: www.smithfieldfriends.org

E-Mail: info@smithfieldfriends.org

Clerk: Glenda Byhouwer

Recording Clerk Connie Bair-Thompson

Pastor: Marnie Miller-Gutsell

Treasurer: Richard Frechette

Ministry&Counsel Rhoda Mowry

Newsletter: Randy Oftedahl

Web-friend: Randy Thompson

CALENDAR FOR February/March

EVERY SUNDAY

10:30 am: MEETING FOR WORSHIP
Child Care Available

LAST SUNDAY OF EACH MONTH: Unprogrammed Worship and Pot Luck Lunch

Other Events

Mondays, 7 PM beginning Feb 16—Bible Study at the parsonage

Sunday, March 1 Monthly Meeting for Business

Sunday, March 8 **NEWSLETTER DEADLINE FOR MARCH**

Thursdays, 7 PM, beginning March 5—Ecumenical Lenten Services

March 5—St. Mark's Lutheran Church, 871 Harris Ave.

March 12--Smithfield Friends Meeting

March 19—St. James Baptist Church, 340 S. Main St.

March 26—St. John's Episcopal Church, 49 Central St., Millville, MA

April 2—Holy Family Roman Catholic Church, 414 S. Main St.

Good Friday, April 10

11 AM--Service of Hymns and Prayers, St. Mark's Lutheran, 871 Harris Ave., followed by walk, carrying the Cross, to St. Paul's Roman Catholic Church, 222 St. Paul's St., Blackstone, MA, where lunch will be served.

Annual Tenebrae Service at Smithfield Meeting—Time TBA



February Birthdays:

Dorothy Bushnell, 2/1

Diane Gauthier, 2/16

Kathy Malin, 2/3

Kathy Sleeth, 2/27

Letter from Marnie

Dear Friends,

Most of you probably know of the non-profit organization *Habitat for Humanity*, that finds old but sound houses, rehabilitates them with volunteer labor, and turns them over to families of very modest means. The families are vetted carefully—they must have enough income to be able to care properly for the house, and they are expected to “pay” for it in part with “sweat equity,” working alongside the community volunteers. It’s a win/win situation. Families become homeowners, and declining neighborhoods get freshly rehabilitated housing. And volunteers get a lot of fun, exercise, and a lot of satisfaction.

The founder of Habitat died the other day—and no, it wasn’t Jimmy Carter—may he continue to flourish. He is certainly Habitat’s most famous volunteer and supporter, but he didn’t found the organization. The founder was a man named Millard Fuller, and you’re probably asking “Millard who???” It’s too bad he’s not better known, because he’s an extraordinary example not only of a man with a really good idea, but of a very spiritual man who developed a spiritually based idea, an idea rooted in community and in the Agape love that Jesus preached over and over again in his ministry on earth.



Millard Fuller was originally the owner and CEO of a very successful company which was earning him a great deal of money. It also took up a lot of his time—most of it, in fact—but he saw himself as doing this “for his family.” That is, until his wife pointed out to him that he hardly ever saw this family he was working so hard for, and if things didn’t change, he wouldn’t have a family, because she couldn’t live that way any longer.

He stopped and took stock, asking himself if there was a way he could put his undoubted business skills to work in some other way—a way that would benefit his family life and do some good in the world. *Habitat* was the result. In the process, he cut back his hours, and his pay—he reduced that to the equivalent of what an ordinary person with a middle class income might make. The rest went into the development and running of the *Habitat* organization, which he designed to operate on a sound financial footing. He also founded a community where he set up his headquarters, and named it Koinonia. Koinonia is a Greek word that means “fellowship,” “a close mutual relationship.”

The name was a reminder of the basic principles of Habitat—and of the earliest Christian communities, where “All whose faith had drawn them together held everything in common.” They were communities where all the resources were shared so that no one had to live in poverty while others had great wealth. (Acts 2:43-46) A radical idea then—and still radical.

Lent begins February 25th, traditionally a time for people to reflect on the self-discipline of giving up something for Lent. But suppose we used Lent as a time for community as well as individual reflection. Quaker communities have seldom tried holding everything in common, but Friends have always tried to look after their own, making sure that resources were shared in ways that ensured that all members had enough. In modern times many of us have tried to extend this ideal into the wider world, and to include the idea that both human resources and the resources of the earth need to be shared in more equitable and sustainable ways. Could we make our ultimate goal a whole culture of mutual sharing--“Koinonia”--so that no one has to live in poverty and loneliness and anxiety, but everyone has enough? **Enough.** Now there’s a radical idea.

Peace, Friends
Marnie

New Bible Study

The new Winter/Spring Bible Study will meet on **Mondays, starting February 16, 7 PM** at the parsonage. Last chance to sign up will be Sunday, February 15. We will be doing a continuation of the Parable Study we did in the fall, and begin with the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25 and Luke 19)



Lenten Thursday Series

The annual series of Lenten Vespers will begin on **March 5**, at St. Mark's Lutheran Church at 871 Harris Avenue. Smithfield has agreed to be the host the following Thursday, March 12. We have started a sign up sheet to **provide refreshments or help to set up or clean up**. Can you **help**? Please let Marnie know.

This is a wonderful series, and Friends who have visited other churches have found it an enriching experience. Providing a warm welcome here, as well as visiting other places of worship, are both nice ways to raise our own profile in the community—a quiet form of outreach.

See the **Calendar** for a complete schedule of services.

Woolman Hill Workshops

As announced in last month's Newsletter, Woolman Hill, New England's Quaker study and retreat center, is planning a wonderful series of winter-spring workshops. In addition to those described last month, a new one has been announced, coming up soon on Feb. 20-22, **Beggars to God: A Retreat of Song and Spirit**, led by Peter and Annie Blood-Patterson. See the Bulletin Board for fliers on others coming up, including one on March 20-22, on **Weaving the Testimonies into the Parent-Child Relationship**, led by Wellesley Friend Beth Collea, New England Yearly Meeting's Coordinator of Christian Education. Costs and registration information are also on the bulletin board.



Save your newspapers!

Suzanne Frechette has proposed a Meeting Cemetery improvement project - see the meeting for business minutes elsewhere in this newsletter. The proposed path will involve laying down of a **substantial** amount of newspaper covered by wood chips. So please save your newspapers (non-glossy sheets) between now and this summer (but please do not bring them to the meetinghouse yet).



DharmaWalk coming through Smithfield Meeting area

Seven Monks and Nuns from Nipponzan Myoboji Buddhist Order and the New England Peace Pagoda are about to begin a walk from Leverett, MA to Washington, D.C. in support of peace, passing through the Woonsocket area on **February 19**. They ask for food and floor space to sleep on, and Smithfield Friends are offering food and hospitality. Marcel and Ana said they will spend the night with our visitors. Pieter Byhouwer, Rhoda Mowry, Marnie Miller-Gutsell and Cindy Keene will provide food and Marcel St. Germain will act as coordinator for our efforts. For more information, contact Marnie at the parsonage, or any of the Friends listed above.



A SIMPLICITY CIRCLE UPDATE, SUGGESTED READING

The Simplicity Circle is not a lecture series or book group. Those interested in doing some reading in preparation, however, may wish to consider the words and thoughts of other proponents of Simplicity.

We will be drawing ideas, quotes and inspirations from several sources, but two resources found most helpful are: *Coming Back to Life*, by Joanna Macy and *Living More with Less* by Doris Janzen Longacre. (Study Guide is by Delores Hestand Friesen.)

Those planning to attend the Simplicity Circle may choose to peruse these books. *Living More With Less* focuses particularly on the Christian perspective on this theme and specific action steps to take. *Coming Back to Life* focuses very strongly on the environmental issues related to this theme, how our society has severed our ties with the natural world, the emotional pain that results from this alienation, and how we can work to re-connect and “come alive” again.

Another resource is the Alternatives for Simple Living organization; you may want to browse their web-page. It is inspiring to see how many publications are available that relate to the topic of simple living.

In her writings, Joanna Macy speaks of “The Great Turning,” a concept that has inspired many to take a more hopeful perspective on the future. She explains that many forces within our society are beginning to initiate a dramatic shift in worldview and values. Many people are sickened by the destruction, greed and injustice they see around them and are anxious to find a new way to approach social and environmental problems. She believes that this “turning” offers great hope for a more sustainable and just world in the future. The following is a quote from her book, *Coming Back to Life*: “...frankly, none of us possesses all the courage and intelligence, strength and endurance required for the great turning. And none of us needs to possess them, or dredge them up out of some private storehouse. All the resources we will need arise out of our interactions, as we commit ourselves to a common intent for our common fate.” (p. 55)

While Joanna is not a Quaker and does not feel it is necessary to practice a particular religious faith, Friends will immediately recognize familiar spiritual elements in the above quote, as well as in the following: “This phenomenon is similar to the religious concept of grace ... Whether restoring a garden or cooking in a soup kitchen, there is a sense sometimes of being supported by something beyond one’s individual sense, a sense of being ‘acted through.’”

She carries this concept further, applying it to those social activists who work hard on the behalf of others, sometimes risking their lives and/or safety in the process: “These people, whose numbers are countless, show us what can happen through us when we break free of the old hierarchical notions of power. Grace happens when we act with others on behalf of our world.” (p. 56)

I hope these thoughts will both inspire us and mobilize us toward change for the better. I know that I am personally deeply in need of this inspiration and encouragement. Please join us for the first Simplicity Circle meeting.

-Erica

Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business: February 1, 2009*

2009-9: Nominating Committee Report For Nominating Committee, Suzanne Frechette reported the following recommendations for committee and other duty assignments. Tami Ruprecht suggested that Outreach committee explore expanding its mission and structure to include spiritual outreach and inreach. Friends ask Outreach committee to decide how best to divide this work. Friends approved of these assignments, thanking the nominating committee for its work and recognizing how difficult that work can be.

Smithfield Monthly Meeting – 2009 Assignments

Presiding Clerk: Glenda Byhouwer

Recording Clerk: Connie Bair-Thompson

Treasurer: Richard Frechette

Librarians: Jeanne Kinney, Ann DeNevers

Newsletter: Randy Oftedahl (until this summer) Webmaster: Randy Thompson

Building and Grounds Committee: Ron Belliveau (convener); Cindy Keene; Richard Frechette; Suzanne Frechette, Ana St. Germain, Marcel St. Germain

Outreach and Special Events Committee: Connie Bair-Thompson, Diane Belliveau, Ron Belliveau, Pieter Byhouwer, Suzanne Frechette, Cindy Keene (convener), Zach Moseley, Tami Ruprecht, Cathy Sleeth, Ana St. Germain, Marcel St. Germain

Finance Committee: Richard Frechette (ex-officio, Treasurer), Rhoda Mowry, Tami Ruprecht (clerk), Randy Thompson

Peace and Social Concerns Committee: Liberty Goodwin, Philip Mayer (convener), Zach Moseley, Ana St. Germain, Marcel St. Germain

Ministry and Counsel Committee: Connie Bair-Thompson (2010 – 1st term), Glenda Byhouwer (ex-officio, Presiding Clerk), Pieter Byhouwer (ex-officio, recorded minister), Ann DeNevers (2011, 1st term), Paul Klinkman (2009, 1st term), Marnie Miller-Gutsell (ex-officio, Pastor, recorded minister), Rhoda Mowry (ex-officio, NEYM Ministry and Counsel Committee representative, convener)

Pastoral Advisory Committee: Pieter Byhouwer, Rhoda Mowry

Religious Education (Adult and Children): Pieter Byhouwer, Suzanne Frechette, Marnie Miller-Gutsell (convener), Ana St. Germain, Richard Frechette

2009-10: Ministry and Counsel Committee Report For Ministry and Counsel Committee, Rhoda Mowry reported the committee continues to meet regularly. The committee discussed and approved Erica Lerch's idea to start a Simplicity Circle beginning in March. Erica's current plan is to have a Simplicity Circle, in a worship sharing format, before meeting for worship. This type of gathering has been suggested by others and is partially in response to the current economic times and our testimonies. We would also like to open this to the wider community. More details on the Simplicity Circle is in last month's newsletter. Suzanne Frechette and Erica Lerch will be involved in organizing this meeting. Ministry and Counsel committee has also reactivated the Pastoral Advisory Committee and they have already begun to meet.

2009-11: Building and Grounds Committee Report For Building and Grounds committee, Ron Belliveau told us the new roof on the meetinghouse has been completed. He said we have an ongoing problem with the water pressure and some electrical problems. In the Spring, the committee will have a meeting to discuss installing a new floor for the meeting room and possibly change the bench arrangement. Suzanne Frechette told us she has looked into how to care for and improve the small cemetery on our property. She said that she has contacted someone she heard about on the Internet who has a relative buried there. With the help of Quaker Earthcare Witness, she said she has come to believe that the cemetery may not be intended to be well manicured and grassy like the larger one across the street. She made several suggestions on improvements that will allow the location to be more accessible, but also blending in well with its natural beauty. These might include a path and appropriate signs and grave markers. She said there is grant money that might be available to complete this project. Young Friends from Yearly Meeting sessions may also be able to do some of this work as a service project. Suzanne asked Friends to approve her continuing to work on this project. Friends are in support of this idea and encourage Suzanne to continue to look into it, including applying for a grant, and bring her findings to a future meeting for business. We would like to accomplish this without diverting money from the general budget.

2009-12 Martha Smith one hundredth birthday Friends wish to minute our joy about Martha Smith's upcoming one hundredth birthday on March 6th. We celebrate her time with us and send our love to her. This minute will be carried to Martha by Suzanne and Richard Frechette when they travel to Florida later this week.

2009-13: Finance Committee report For Finance Committee, Richard Frechette and Tami Ruprecht distributed a financial report for 2008 and budget for 2009. Our income for 2008 was \$29,118.65 and our expenses were

\$26,119.52 for a surplus of \$2,999.13. Richard happily noted that we had a surplus for the first time in many years, in large part because of some substantial year-end contributions and the success of our fundraising efforts. We don't know if this level of income is sustainable, however. The value of our investment portfolio has declined by almost \$39,000. Friends accept this report and a copy of it is attached to these minutes. Tami Ruprecht presented the budget for 2009, which is basically unchanged from last year. Richard Frechette indicated that the budget reflects a surplus only because the surplus from 2008 was carried over and not reinvested. Without this carryover, we would be budgeting a \$1675.00 deficit. Richard also noted that, for the last several years, our yearly meeting dues have been based on a policy of tithing (i.e. 10%) of our expected income, unlike many other Meetings which use a head count basis. Friends agreed to continue this. Friends approve the 2009 budget, and thank the Finance Committee for its work. *<newsletter editor note: the financial reports are included with the meetinghouse copy of the minutes, are posted in the meetinghouse. and can be obtained from the Treasurer>*

2009-14: Peace and Social Concerns Committee Report For Peace and Social Concerns committee, Marcel St. Germain reported that approximately seven Monks and Nuns from Nipponzan Myoboji Buddhist Order and the New England Peace Pagoda are about to begin a walk from Leverett, MA to Washington, D.C. in support of peace. They plan to be in our area on February 19. They ask for food and floor space to sleep on. Friends would like to offer food and hospitality. Marcel and Ana said they will spend the night with our visitors. Pieter Byhouwer, Rhoda Mowry, Marnie Miller-Gutsell and Cindy Keene will provide food and Marcel St. Germain will act as coordinator for our efforts. We will try to publicize this event in the Woonsocket Call, inviting the wider community to meet with the Monks and Nuns.

2009-15: Sound system Ron Belliveau reported that it will cost \$400 to purchase new speakers for the sound system. Friends approve this expenditure from the Smith fund and Ron said that he would reimburse the Smith fund for half of the total.

Respectfully Submitted, *Constance Bair-Thompson* Recording Clerk
**minutes were edited for this newsletter*

***Smithfield Monthly Meeting
of Friends
108 Smithfield Road
Woonsocket, RI 02895***