

Germantown Monthly Meeting

of the Religious Society of Friends

47 West Coulter Street Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19144 (215) 951 2235

Spring Newsletter — April 2019

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First Day School Freedom Quilt
Created with the guidance of Lili Sharpless

Our Thanks

Many, many people helped to make this Newsletter possible, so our thanks go out to all of them. GMM First Day School Students, Gail Woodbury, Moira Duggan, Jonathan Rhoads, Rob Smith, Isaiah Price, Karen Lightner, John Norris Childs III, Lili Sharpless, Joanne Sharpless, Janet Kroll, and Carla Childs. Thanks to everyone who contributed by submitting or reading over the draft, we have so much more when we work together!
Laura Seeley, Editor

Past Events

Three Winter Gatherings were held this year: a wine and cheese event, an afternoon tea and a game night. Friends enjoyed fun and fellowship while having the opportunity to get to know one another better and visit each other's homes.

Upcoming Events

Join us for Adult Class on April 28th when James Davis will lead a discussion on *Friends Journal's* January 2019 article, *A Racially Diverse Society of Friends?* Print copies of *Friends Journal* will be available after Meeting while supplies last, see Joanne Sharpless for more information.

Save the Date! Our first ever Germantown Monthly Meeting Wissahickon Fun Day and Retreat will be on May 18th. Join us for an all day, multi-generational day of fun and fellowship, with a potluck picnic at Blue Bell Field, bike adventures, a kid-friendly art project, a hike, a birding expedition and a tour of historic sites. For more information or if you want to help out, talk to Candice Price.

A Day On — Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service at Germantown Friends School

Despite frigid weather, volunteers gathered on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day to cut out, sew and decorate hats scarves and neck warmers for distribution to people who need them. We all worked together to learn and practice different skills, and celebrated at the end with soup and bread. Donations were sent to the Ujima Peace Center, Wister townhomes and Holsey Temple. Photos by Joanne Sharpless.



Two neighbors and Jane Keenan model Kwanzaa showing off a neck warmer. the new hats and scarves.



Penny Keenan adding decorative beads.



Tim Smigelski and Marion Childs cut fringe for hats and scarves.



Ria Tice modeling a neck warmer.

February First Day School Thoughts

Responding to quotes from Martin Luther King, Jr.
With Josiah, Gabe, Finn, Levi and Harper
Photos by Carla Childs



First Day School students planting seeds and hoping for spring.

Life's most persistent and urgent question is, 'what are you doing for others?'

If you buy something, then you do something for somebody else cause you're giving some money to somebody else or a company.

* * *

We are not makers of history. We are made by history.

I just like the quote. History is important because there were many people before us. Without them, we wouldn't know what to do. We wouldn't know what to eat and drink and draw. We wouldn't really have a camera or a phone. I was studying the golden age of Islam and they made a camera. They invented a lot of things that we use today.

* * *

If you can't fly, then run, if you can't run, then walk, if you can't walk, then crawl, but whatever you do you have to keep moving forward.

I liked the quote. If you forget something, try to remember it. Keep pushing forward and never

give up. History keeps moving forward because we are making history, learning from the past and using what they taught us. We are always moving forward.

* * *

I have decided to stick with love. Hate is too great a burden to bear.

This quote makes sense and tells a lot. It brings out love and hate. You should always stick to love instead of hate because if you stick to hate, the world is never going to get better. You will never get what you want. If you don't forgive someone, then it's like sticking with hate, but if you decide to open your mind and say that's not true, you can move on. If too many of us decide to go with hate, then it doesn't really work. Hate and love are opposites, they don't mix. If you are a loving person, then try to help other people who are having a hard time.



Planting more seeds and thinking of the future.

"Your passions are not necessarily the truth you need to hear" - GW
** Worldly * Curious * Wise * Compassionate **

Who is... Gail Woodbury?

Gail Woodbury recalls nothing of her early life in Ohio, since her family left there before she turned two. "Home" became Newton, Massachusetts, just outside Boston, where Gail's upbringing was comfortably middle-class.

Chuck and Betty Woodbury were convinced Friends, but left the choice of membership to each of their children. Despite consistently attending Monthly Meeting as a child and adolescent, Gail didn't join until she was an adult. (Bonus points for anyone who can guess, without reading further, in what U.S. state she first became a member!)

Well before high school graduation, Gail's worldview began to expand, as did the war in Vietnam (into Laos and Cambodia) and public protests against the war. (Where was Vietnam, and why had that little country become a household word? What else about the world didn't she know?) Gail eschewed a traditional college education. "I couldn't stand the idea of four more years of the same kind of education" she'd been getting, even in Newton's top-rated schools.

Gail developed a keen interest in travel thanks to the Woodburys' summer trips to the Grand Canyon and other far-flung destinations. At their Monthly Meeting, she was exposed to pressing social issues at a young age. (As part of an anti racism program, white couples in the Meeting went to local realtors on the pretext of looking for housing. Then they compared notes with black couples who had gone to the same realtors and expressed the same housing needs – and were steered to certain neighborhoods.) Clearly, though, Gail's desire to truly experience the world beyond Newton had mostly to do with the war, and with parents who were actively concerned about social issues.

Learning "The Problems and Possibilities of Humanity"

Friends World College seemed like a good fit. The school offered experiential learning at study centers around the world, and exposure to urgent social issues. In the view of its first president, Dr. Morris Mitchell, students learned "the problems and possibilities of humanity." Students planned their own

curricula, mapped out their travels, learned world cultures by immersion, then wrote about their experiences. Before heading off to college after high school graduation, though, Gail spent the summer on a month-long Outward Bound canoeing program in the Quetico-Superior Boundary Waters, a wilderness between Canada and Minnesota, and working on an apple-picking crew.

Gail's first college placement was in Southern Appalachia, where she learned first-hand about rural poverty from local farmers. Next stop? San Francisco, where Gail worked with underprivileged black and Asian pre-school children in a Head Start program designed to promote school readiness. San Francisco in the early 1970s was itself a different culture: violent, chaotic and drug-ridden, it was anything but an idyllic place where "flower children" lived in harmony.

Kenya and India

Next was Kenya. While working at Friends International Center in Nairobi, Gail discovered her affinity for accounting, which she later studied in Philadelphia. A trip to the Rift Valley lakes to see the masses of pink flamingoes provided a welcome distraction. The biggest adventure, though, was climbing snow-capped Mt. Kilimanjaro with fellow students.

India was next. For a time, Gail worked in a village supervising the distribution of cattle fodder, a critical function in that drought-plagued area. She could do that because an Indian anthropologist was already living in that village who spoke excellent English. To a farmer who measured wealth solely by ownership of cattle and land, Gail recalls it was impossible to explain that her own father, a child psychologist, supported his family without benefit of a single cow! Gail's stay in India was enriched by friendships with both Muslim and Hindu families, who welcomed her into their homes for meals. Her dream of going to Nepal did not come true, though, because political instability made it too dangerous to travel there.

Next Stop, Japan

Too much change, too fast, left Gail in fragile condition upon arrival in Japan. To say that she eventually settled in, though, would be an understatement. Gail lived there a total of six and a half years and Japan became a major influence in her life. She spent two and a half years there with Friends World College. She studied the koto, a Japanese musical instrument, and practiced Japanese brush painting. Also of course the Japanese language and reading lots of books about Japan. She took up Aikido, which melds philosophy and religious beliefs with martial studies to make a perfect mental, spiritual and physical discipline.^[1] Her interest comes as no surprise, given Gail's spirituality and athleticism. Growing up, she'd played field hockey, basketball, volleyball, and gone whitewater canoeing with her father.

Returning home after two and a half years in Japan, Gail was dismayed to have difficulty acclimating. The concerns of like-aged Americans seemed trivial in light of the poverty and drought she had seen. Even a week-long whitewater rafting trip did not cure the malaise. She returned to Japan for four years to continue her training in Aikido, ultimately earning a second degree black belt. She taught English as a second language to support herself.

Despite Gail's affinity for Japan, her experiences in Kenya and India had the most influence on her worldview. Against the backdrop of a certain accepted level of poverty, she learned not only how those cultures worked, but about American and European supremacy and the effects of Western colonization.

Gail's Favorites

Magazine - The Economist

Drink - hot sake

Food - sushi

God does not exist to solve our problems. We are God's hands..."

- Gail Woodbury -

Back to the States

Back in the states, Gail studied at Pendle Hill for over a year; her time there overlapped her brother's who was on the maintenance staff. Still adventurous and not yet cured of wanderlust, she then took off for Alaska. There, ready to make the choice her parents had left to her, Gail became a member of the Religious Society of Friends. Not too long afterward, though, she left her Meeting and returned to Philadelphia, as Alaska offered little employment. Her plan to work with indigenous peoples required skills she simply didn't have.

Having decided she would like to work for Friends, Gail embarked on a career in the bookstore at Friend General Conference (before computers) and the administration and accounting at Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. After having and surviving breast cancer in middle age, she could no longer work full-time, and spent her remaining working years as Green Street Friends' part-time secretary.

Gail attended GMM for over a decade before transferring her membership from Alaska. She has served on the Care and Visiting, Worship and Ministry, Finance, and Office and Records committees. Gail has lived nearby on Winona Street for over thirty years in three different 3rd-story apartments, the first in our member Jim Hart's house.

Gail's father recently passed away at the age of 98; her mother predeceased him. Gail's three brothers live in Massachusetts, Ithaca, NY, and at Kendal in Maryland, respectively.

Gail's love of Japanese food and Asian culture persists. She enjoys visiting Asian art museums such as the Freer and Sackler Galleries in Washington, D.C., and is known to kick back a Sapporo beer or hot sake on occasion.

Note: Friends World College was founded by Quakers in 1965. Today known as LIU Global, it is a discrete educational entity of Long Island University. No longer formally affiliated with Quakers, LIU Global still emphasizes global learning and a culturally immersive curriculum. For information about this and similar programs, see https://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/01/education/edlife/extreme-study-abroad-the-world-is-their-campus.html?_r=1

^[1] A hallmark of Aikido is that the practitioner competes only with oneself, although there is an opponent. "To injure an opponent is to injure yourself. To control aggression without inflicting injury is the art of peace." - Morihei Ueshib

Progress on Fund Raising

By Jonathan Rhoads, Clerk
Fund Raising Committee

Friends practice our religion every day in our daily lives. We come to Meeting for Worship on this Sabbath to contemplate it, to enrich it. We gain strength and insight from our fellow members and attenders. Financial support of the Meeting and its programs is an integral part of membership. As members, we are collectively and individually responsible for contributing the funds for the Meeting to pay its bills, maintain its property and office, and carry on its programs. We are fortunate to have some endowment, and the annual draw on our endowment pays about half of our expenses. We are also fortunate to receive some funds from a charitable trust established by a former (now deceased) member.

The Meeting's Budget calls for raising \$105,000 in contributions this fiscal year, ending June 30th. We have approximately 350 adult members. If this burden were evenly distributed, it would be about \$300 per adult member. **As of the end of January we have received about \$43,500 from 62 households, or 40% of what will be needed by June 30th.** In most recent years we have not reached our fund raising budget. FY 2018 was an exception in which we went over thanks to the extraordinary generosity of a few individuals, some of which will not be repeated because they have passed on. In addition, some active members contributed handsomely. Last year, as in most years, half the membership did not contribute financially to the Meeting. Last year the median total contribution for the year per household was \$400, and the average was \$700.

Our fund raising efforts are mostly low key. Members receive two postcards a year, and there are some announcements after meeting and in the Bee. Nevertheless the Meeting requires financial support for all it does and the opportunities it affords its members. Your Fund Raising Committee asks you to support Germantown Meeting. Contributions may be made by check to Germantown Meeting at 47 West Coulter Street, or by credit card through the Yearly Meeting at www.pym.org. To paraphrase Winston Churchill: we make a living from what we get; we make a life from what we give.



The Meeting Cottage across from the Meeting House, seen at dusk.

Photo by Rob Smith

Property Committee Workday Working on the Committee Room Window Panels

By Rob Smith

On February 23, 2019 the Property Committee had our regular meeting in which we discussed our progress and new and ongoing projects. Afterwards we spent most of the day working to install plastic panels inside the six windows of the Committee Room. The panels are transparent and reduce the heat lost through the windows. Present were Tom Sharpless (clerk), Carla Childs, Bill Cozzens, Erich Enns, Phil Kane, Isaiah Price, Rob Smith, Lois Volta. Bill and Carla did most of the work, purchasing the panels and paint, then cutting and painting precisely measured wood strips.

Photos by Isaiah Price.



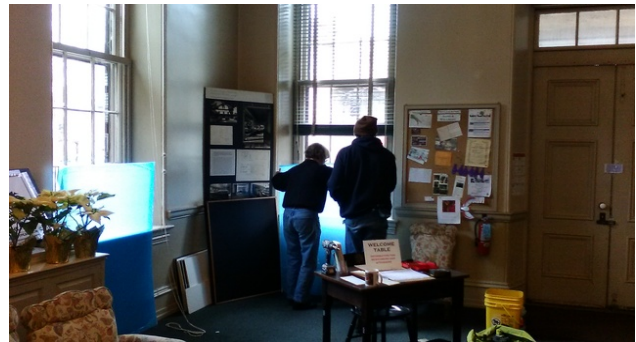
The welcome table in front of window panels that were later installed.



Carla, Phil and Erich fastening foam tape to the edges of the panels.



Erich and Carla carrying a panel to a window.



Erich and Carla installing the panel.



Each window had two panels, top and bottom. Before they were fastened, the blue plastic covering was removed.



Bill and Rob fasten a panel with screws into wood strips.

Faith and Practice & Pizza

By Karen Lightner



This year, Worship and Ministry is sponsoring a reading and discussion group for the new *Faith and Practice*, published by Philadelphia Yearly Meeting in the summer of 2018. *Faith and Practice* is “intended to be a guide, and not a rule, for our members, attenders and others who seek to understand how Friends in our yearly meeting express our faith in our lives, our communities and our organizations” (from the Foreword).

Sessions are being held on the first Sunday of the month, in the East Kindergarten, from noon to 1:15. We order several different pizza pies from Maker’s Pizza, just down Germantown Ave, and supplement with Amy’s vegan and gluten free pies, bought at Weaver’s Way Coop. We ask for a

\$5 donation to cover the cost of the pizza, although anyone for whom that would be difficult is encouraged to attend anyway. We pass the hat and ‘more if you can, less if you can’t’ has certainly worked.

We cover a chapter, or part of a long chapter each month. After allowing about 15 minutes for eating, someone from Worship and Ministry gives a brief overview of the chapter (for anyone who hasn’t read it) and then we go around the room and Friends share what stood out for them in that chapter.

In January we read the Foreword, Preface and Chapter 1 – Experience and Faith. The foreword and preface gave background to the book and its place in Quakerism. Chapter 1 talked about The Light Within, Meeting for Worship, preparation, vocal ministry, prayer, scripture, and discernment of the guidance of the Spirit. We began by Friends introducing themselves and saying a few words about what they hoped to get out of the sessions. Most of the Friends present were long time members and attenders, with a couple new people and one GFS parent. There were 20 people there in all. Then we went around the room again and Friends were invited to speak to the following queries: Did anything you read particularly speak to you? Did you learn anything new or feel something was clarified for you? There was rich sharing.

In February, we read the first part of Chapter 2 – Faith reflected in practice and daily life, the Community life section. This section covered concerns, leadings and testimonies; discernment, clearness and decision-making; Friends and education; and Friends witness in the world. That week the overview got a bit sidetracked by a spirited discussion about the terms sense of the meeting, unity, and consensus. A number of

Friends had different understandings of those terms from what *Faith and Practice* stated. It was good. There were 23 people there that day.

The schedule through June is as follows:

- April 7 – Chapter 3, Our Organization, Part A, Friends Meetings, pp.44-66
- May 5 – Chapter 3, Parts B-E, pp. 67-79
- June 2 – Chapter 4, Historical background, pp. 80-95



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This Spring we will decide whether to continue in the fall, and there seems to be enthusiasm for that. Copies of *Faith and Practice* are available in the Meeting office for \$12. For more information about the reading group, contact Karen Lightner. Philadelphia Yearly Meeting also has an online version of *Faith and Practice* available at: <https://www.pym.org/faith-and-practice/>

When and How to Speak

by John Norris Childs, III

This is an issue that concerns not just Friends (Members of Meeting), but all who attend meeting. Fundamental to the thinking of Quakers is the idea that the spirit of God (or whatever you feel called to call it) can speak to each of us, without an intermediary or interpretation by a third party. Even before the era of sound bytes and 140 word tweets there were those, my father among them, who preferred to listen to the voice of the spirit arising from within and speaking to them during silent waiting rather than listen to someone else telling them what the message of the day was and how to interpret and live it.

Certainly there were many, over the centuries and millennia before us who heard the voice of the spirit and communicated it to their fellow men and women, and the voices of those who spoke/wrote remain for us to hear, hear about and read today. I believe that the reason their words live on for our benefit and education is basically because, in addition to speaking to the issues and concerns of their time, they speak to our condition today.

The main tenet of the Friends of the mid 1600s was that voice of the spirit was accessible to, and could speak to everyone. That voice obviously speaks to different people in different ways, in different languages, tones, formats, colors and graphics, and the message conveyed may be personally relevant or something way out there and unintelligible like a weird dream. It may also be something of broader relevance and importance such as the messages conveyed to Moses, Abraham, Jesus, Mohammed, Buddha, Gandhi Martin Luther King and many others.

We come to meeting to sit in silence and wait and listen for the voice of the spirit to speak to us – and ideally to our condition. The question then arises, when is it appropriate to rise and share that voice with others. In considering this I, as others among Friends, have contemplated different things. First, in the olden days (my youth!), many of those who heard the voice and spoke it out loudly (or mumbling) spent their days in Byberry. Nowadays they may stand in shaggy clothes or suit and tie and shout it out on the corner of Broad and Erie. I remember growing up in our meeting that there was a man we fondly called “no neck” who sat across the aisle from us in the rear of the meeting house and who regularly rose and gave political messages particularly supporting Nixon. For

me a very serious question arises: What voice from within is speaking to those at Broad and Erie, or those interned in Friends Hospital? Not all voices of the spirit come from within however, and there may have been a recently delivered message that speaks to your condition and communicating that connection may be helpful to and supportive of others

So, when is it appropriate to rise and share a message that the voice of the spirit or the voice of God has shared with us? This is an issue that all Friends Meetings contend with on a regular basis. I believe there are some basic rules: 1. Don't prepare your message at home and bring it as a speech to deliver, 2. Don't rise and debate a previous speaker, 3. Do not use ministry as a political platform.

For me the best guide is my first experience speaking in this meeting. I believe I was in 8th or 9th grade and it was a beautiful spring day. I don't remember if it was a Thursday school meeting or a Sunday meeting, though I think it was the former. I was looking out the window at the newly leafing trees and all of a sudden I had this feeling that I had to get up and speak. I have no recollection what it was I spoke about but I distinctly remember feeling my heart pounding and speeding up in my chest, so there was no choice. This has occurred periodically, though infrequently, in the succeeding years, but it is still my best guide, even though I often have non-heart pounding thoughts that I think merit communication.

Is reading as part of a message OK? Certainly in George Fox's time it was, as probably everybody carried a Bible into meeting with them. Nowadays few people do that, but if you are one of those people and are someone who uses the Bible, Torah or Koran to connect to the spirit I feel that reading an inspiring section (NOT a whole chapter) would be perfectly acceptable.

Regarding timing, if you have met and heard the spirit as you walked from your car to the door, then speaking after meeting has settled in is fine. It is felt by most that allowing a period of silence after one

attender speaks before rising to share your link to the light is most appropriate. Though most are prepared for meeting to end after 60 minutes and some inwardly groan when someone rises to speak at minute 58 or 59, I think there is no question, now or in 1676, that if the spirit moves you, you must rise and share.

Preparation: some people are natural ad lib talkers; and they easily rise when prompted by the spirit and speak with that voice. I am not such a person. When I feel the move to speak I inwardly rehearse my message and when I feel clear I rise and speak, sometimes ad libbing if the inner light is still prompting me. It is important to remember that the inner light not only shines, and the voice of the spirit not only speaks to us during meeting for worship but also before and after meeting and at all times - if we keep our "eyes and ears" open and watch and listen.

There is a group of about a dozen 8th graders from our neighborhood school (none of them Friends) who regularly sit around a pond in my woods in silence for 30-40 minutes. To the best of my knowledge they do not speak, but afterwards they have written what they have seen and heard and passed that on to me. And it is eminently clear that the voice of the spirit has visited them during these sessions. So you don't have to be indoctrinated from kindergarten on at 31 West Coulter St. to have this experience.

Finally, HOW TO SPEAK. We have a large meeting house and we have a congregation of attenders many of whom are approaching or past that magical fifth decade and whose spouses, at least, feel they need support of their hearing apparatus. Since we do not have a podium or a microphone it is important, especially if this message is one that made your heart pound, that you not look down when speaking, that you not rush or mumble and that you speak in a loud, slow and clear voice.

The Second Annual Germantown Monthly Meeting Art Show

Photos by Rob Smith — Art Show put together by Candice Price

The opening Reception was on Saturday, March 23rd with featured artists Toni Sharp, Candice Price, Jim Hart, Ruth Seeley, Vienna Enos, Julie Fortenberry, Don Fortenberry, Annie Fortenberry, Peter Samuel, Karen Lightner, Rebecca Hoenig, Jondhi Harrell, Tom Sharpless, Lili Sharpless, and wood carvings by Norris Childs. Music at the opening featured Tom Sharpless, Dan Jones, Alex McPhedran, Isaiah Price and Vienna Enos. Food provided and arranged by Nancy Price and Moira Duggan. The lights were sparkly, the art was beautiful, the conversation interesting and the food delicious. We hope that you had a chance to enjoy, but if you were unable to attend, here are some photos of the event.



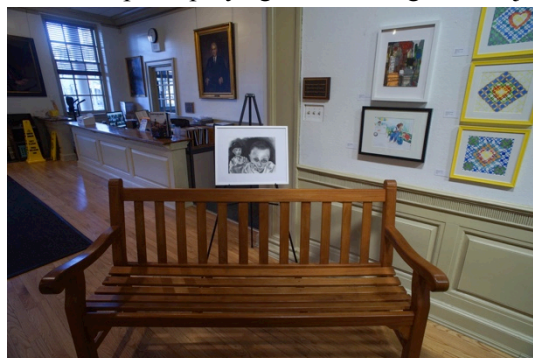
The exhibit seen from the back, through the lights.



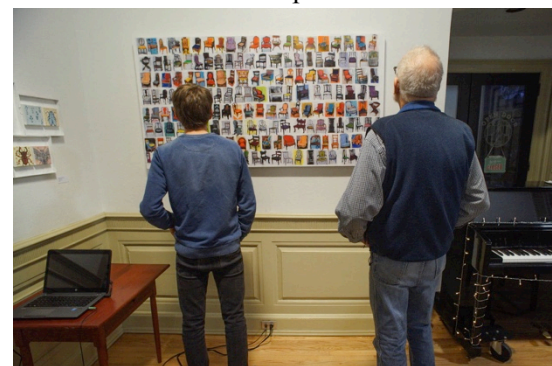
Tom Sharpless plays guitar while guests enjoy the exhibit.



Alex McPhedran on the piano.



The artwork and the room await the visitors.



Admiring artwork by Peter Samuel.



A quilt by Toni Sharp surrounded by other works of art.

