

Falmouth Quarterly Meeting

Hosted by Brunswick Friends Meeting at Curtis Memorial Library

April 27, 2024

How does Truth prosper among us?

Present:

Brunswick: Marian Dalton, Christine Holden (zoom), Molly Elmali, Tom Kelly, Colleen Crowley,

Durham: Craig Freshley, Sarah Sprogell, Leslie Manning, Bob Eaton, Wendy Schlotterbeck (co-clerk)

Portland: Sally and Alan Farneth, Heather Denkmire, Julie de Sherbinin, Maggie Fiori, Meg Klepack, Jay O'Hara, Tom Antonik, Paula Rossvall, Genna Ulrich, Maggie (Mags) Fehr, Fritz Weiss (co-clerk), Ann Dodd-Collins (recorder)

Southern Maine: regrets from Louise Sanborn

Windham: Juliann Moore and Janice Beatty (zoom)

Guest: Janet Hough, Cobscook (zoom)

Opening worship began with our singing "Julian of Norwich". We were reminded that the words *All shall be well again* is the beginning of a sentence attributed to Julian of Norwich: *All shall be well for there is a force of love moving through the universe that holds us fast and will never let us go*. We held Diana White, who is in hospice, in our prayers. Fritz shared her sense that she was being closely accompanied as she encountered the mystery.

Land acknowledgment:

Today, and every day, we walk on stolen land. We pray on stolen land.

We are meeting here where the sovereign people of the Wabanaki Confederacy, including the Maliseet, Mi'Maq, Penobscot, and Passamaquoddy, have lived for thousands of years. As Quakers, many of our ancestors, both by blood and by spirit, participated in the theft of this land, and the attempt to end Indigenous culture.

Today, we mourn the lives and ways of living that were taken. We honor the resilience and power of our Wabanaki neighbors.

As we continue to live and govern in ways that harm this land and its people, it is past time for reparations. For learning the truth. For listening. For taking action. This is our work to do.

State of Society Reports

Brunswick Friends Meeting

Marian Dalton reported that more people have been attending in the last 1-½ years with an average of 8-10 each Sunday and regular attenders that are seasonal.

The Brunswick Meeting started in 1981 and has always been very a-procedural although some of their members have connections in the wider Quaker world. They look forward to having visitors. A Brunswick College Interfaith Group had planned to include Brunswick Friends in a “Congregational Crawl” this spring but that has been postponed until fall.

Marian is treasurer of NEYM. She spoke of a former NEYM staff member who talked of her work as ad-ministry and that feels right to Marian. Numbers sing to her and tell her stories and her job is to translate those stories for people who do not hear the numbers sing. Both Marian and her spouse have gifts in financial work, translating numbers into service and action. Marian was asked if she has the support she needs to do her work. She said she has been asked that before and needs to think about it.

Marian and others have a concern about the lack of vocal ministry in meeting for worship but some attenders are happy with the way things are. The tension between vocal ministry and silence is not unique to Brunswick. It is work we can do together as a quarter.

Durham Friends Meeting

The State of Society report for Durham Friends was read by Wendy Schlotterbeck (Attachment # 1)

Portland Friends Meeting

The State of Society report from Portland Friends was read by Mags Fehr, Ministry and Counsel co-clerk (Attachment # 2)

Southern Maine Friends Meeting

Southern Maine is a small meeting which did not meet over the winter. We were asked to hold Louise Sandmeyer in prayer. Her husband came home from rehab on Friday. Fritz and Wendy will continue to try to meet with them.

Windham Friends Meeting

The State of Society report from Windham Friends was read by Fritz Weiss (Attachment # 3)

Due to technical difficulties we were not able to hear the report of Janice Beatty, pastor of Windham Monthly Meeting. We were asked to hold Janice, who has been carrying her ministry for 27 years, in the Light.

Reports of Ministry

Maggie Fiori left her position as Young Friends Coordinator at NEYM about a year ago and has been listening for if she is still called to ministry in a public way and how. She is discerning that although she is no longer working with teens, she is doing the same work with different people and in different mediums.

Maggie has always done art; it is a spiritual call and she cannot make art without listening to spirit. In making art about God, she talks to a lot of people – many unchurched, younger, and seeking – and says what she means without using Quaker language. She explains what she means by God by describing it as the love that

doesn't let you go, an open hand, an offering. She tries to describe this powerful transforming love and help others to feel it too. Her life revolves around being in community, being constantly reminded that being convinced by spirit is what we're about, and is why we are here and why we are here together.

Maggie shared a wood cut she had recently made of hands reaching towards the view with text: "*I consider what your hands have done, I spread out my hands to you, for to you I entrust my life*" and she shared the following poem:

*"God has me in a yoke. Like-
the yoke of a shirt, hands
on each of my shoulders and
thumbs around my neck.*

Warm.

*It yokes me to you
and I cry in the night
because I love you so much it
hurts.*

*And I may never run
tho I dream of such a free road.
No, I may never run
but to you, each one
the face of my beloved.*

Each one who will break my heart."

Heather Denkmire began by affirming that PFM is caring for her. She usually attends by zoom and appreciated the both/and of hybrid worship and noticing those on zoom who are so often forgotten.

Heather comes from an activist family which connected their faith with making the world a more just place. In the last 25 years she has been pulled to antiracism work, freeing herself to be in her body to be part of the greater world. As she has become more aware of having money, white supremacy, patterns of oppression, and of the resistance to changing these patterns, she has felt that there is no question that she's going to do antiracism work. People have offered support which led to a clearness committee and now a ministry care committee. Part of responding to her call is a willingness to "be the weirdo" (Resmaa Menakem). She doesn't want to be the center of attention but is receiving something that she wants to share. When she first came to PFM she wasn't ready to be in community but wanted her daughters to have that experience. Now she finds that the more she is able to be in real community the more she is finding other people who are also longing for that. She cannot do this work on her own, she needs God's help, and support to bring her whole self to do the things she can. She is hopeful and sometimes devastatingly hopeless.

Jay O'Hara Began by sharing the history of how he has felt God's leading. He transferred to Portland Friends with a named ministry and a request from his former

support committee that PFM have care of his ministry. His ministry, which began with concern for climate and with relationship to one another, has led to an opening relationship of understanding and letting go, of being faithful in the midst of risk. There was joy in that faithfulness.

Jay's ministry moved from being an outward witness of climate change to ways we support/depend on a radical dependence on God. During this period he would wake so hungry for God that he would skip breakfast to spend time with God before work. Coming to Portland he still felt a bit of that clarity, but since that time he's experienced it slipping away. A year ago he asked that his ministry care committee be laid down because he was no longer clear what his ministry is and whether it fit the PFM definition of ministry: public, persistent, life changing. His care committee was not clear that ministry should be laid down but it has also not been clear what Jay's ministry is or where it's going.

St. John of the Cross's *Dark Night of the Soul* describes the beginning, sensuous experience of spiritual matters, which is nourishing, feeding the hunger the spiritual seeker brings. It then describes the maturation of spiritual life as a weaning process where the sweetness of heavenly milk is withheld so that the spiritual seeker might find a devotion that goes beyond positive reinforcement, to a deeper and further strengthening beyond that warm sense of being held in God's love. This is where Jay is now, unsure yet trying to persist in the discomfort and sense of abandonment, praying for the experience of early Friends who experienced a sense of desolation and in which can arise the revelation and perhaps the reality of the new creation. Jay prays for restructuring in a way that will heal patterns of domination and control. In letting new creation speak through one's inward life we may bring it into the world as a pattern and example.

Craig Freshley addressed three questions. Is the work alive and how is it expressed? How is the work shaping my spiritual life? How is Meeting supporting me? He hadn't initially thought of his work as ministry even though Durham Meeting had named a care committee until he was asked to give a report.

Outside the meeting Craig is a professional meeting facilitator and carries his Quaker values into his work. He has written a book, *Together We Decide - Transforming Conflict into Collaboration*, and in all his talks and trainings he tries to help people move into a cooperative/collaborative stance. Craig tries to take Quaker spiritual principles into the mainstream world and tries to make a difference. He often brings messages to Durham Meeting, which are posted on his website. Many of his messages are about prayer. Craig draws on connection with his God within in his work. Lately his leading has been to encourage interpersonal interactions. He feels very supported by his Meeting, his care committee, and very blessed.

Craig closed with a prayer he has been writing and rewriting.

God, thank you for making the universe.

Thank you for making me a part of it.

Thank you for providing me with all that I need, and more.

You are the light upon me.

The heat within me

And the time that carries me along.

*I want to see clearly and act peacefully,
always ready to receive, give and forgive,
without expectations.*

*Help me with my faults.
Help me like me.*

[Craig's complete report is Attachment #4]

Leslie Manning began her report with a quote: *“Live adventurously. When choices arise, do you take the way that offers the fullest opportunity for the use of your gifts in the service of God and the community? Let your life speak. When decisions have to be made, are you ready to join with others in seeking clearness, asking for God’s guidance and offering counsel to one another? – Britain Yearly Meeting, Faith and Practice, 5th ed. Advices and Queries #27.*

Our responsibility is to care for the ministry, not the minister. The gifts are not given to us but through us and our trepidation and fear needs to be stilled. God does not call the equipped but equips those who are called. For years Leslie knew what she was not and never looked at what she was capable of doing. She was speaking personally and for many of us. This changed by being named and supported. She wonders how she got here but knows this is where she is supposed to be. Sometimes she feels more comfortable in FUM than locally because prophetic ministry is not a “done” thing in New England.

Leslie said it would be easy to cut off her Quaker roots and work with other faith groups but God won't let her. To be a disciple is to put God at the center of her life and let that be the place she is supposed to be. For years she worked with victims of violence, her entire career is working with those who are injured and harmed, but now she is being called to work with the perpetrators and sees that they are victims too, the wounded child. Her job is to love those who would harm her and to pray for those who persecute her. She can do this because she knows she is beloved by God. Let's act as if we believe the truth is true. We are all beloved of a beloved God, especially when we feel we least deserve it. Blessed be. May it be so.

Sally Farneth noted that she is “from away”. She is a Friend from Philadelphia who recently moved to Maine. She grew up in Philadelphia and believes in divine intervention. As young mothers she and her friends wanted to share stories of Quakers with their children. They didn't think the books they had gotten as children were in the right direction, so they created *Sparklers*, a resource for teaching children. It has since been revised with the name *Sparkling Still*. The value is in the wondering questions, for example, How/where do you see yourself in this story?

Sally is now working with Friends Peace Teams. The *Sparklers* authors were asked if they had book suggestions for children in Rwanda to help children learn to work together. Their work includes getting books into libraries that have messages, offering free books on the internet, helping teachers and children learn how to communicate,

leading workshops in Rwanda, and finding books. They've had to come up with creative ideas and think outside the box since classrooms have as many as 60 students and funding is limited. She has learned a lot.

A part of Sally's work, which she was asked to speak about, is the bilingual part of the program. At the beginning of the program they wanted to bring books to the seven libraries in Rwanda and printed books in English and in Kiswahili. Now books are printed bilingually, and available on a website (<http://tlcrwanda.org/our-program/libraries/>). Training students to use English is important because the government declared 10 years ago that English is the official language, but most parents speak French.

Sally has done this work for decades. She stated that reaching out to others is what Quakers do, so she didn't think of it as a ministry, it's just what she's always done.

Ann Dodd-Collins didn't know it at the time, but her ministry began seven years ago when she offered to be the Portland Friends coordinator for Greater Portland Family Promise. After PFM hosted families for the first time and she began volunteering at other churches, she realized God was saying, "You've been wondering what you're going to be doing for the rest of your life. This is it. You are supposed to be working with asylum seeking families that are arriving in Portland."

She knows that God has called her to work with asylum seekers, but God has not given her a road map. She now senses that her ministry may be evolving. There is an acute need for family shelters in southern Maine, for transitional housing, and for affordable housing. She doesn't yet know what her role is, if any, but she is holding the space, waiting, open to possibilities.

Portland Friends has walked this path with her from the beginning. She's made a lot of mistakes along the way and has learned a lot about forgiveness and grace and trust from the families and generosity from Portland Friends. She has never been able to find the words that truly express what this work means to her, how it has changed her life, opened her heart, and given her gifts beyond measure.

Elizabeth Szatkowski submitted her report in writing (Attachment # 5)

Martha Shelden submitted a written report on her spiritual journey which we are not distributing at this time. The report deserves our careful attention and we will read and reflect on it at a further gathering of Falmouth Quarter.

There were three recurring themes in those who spoke about their ministry:

- A sense that they could not do with work without God, that they are a beloved child of God
- A sense that accompaniment is necessary, that this work needs the support of others
- A sense that we are yoked. As the yoke of a shirt connects all the other parts of a shirt, a ministry needs to connect with God, with those who have care of their ministry, and with those who receive the ministry. As we take the yoke up we also find that the work also makes us whole.

Blank sheets of paper with the name of each person who spoke were available for attenders to make comments about what they heard. We were grateful for the stories that were shared.

Memorial minutes

Margaret Wentworth, read by Leslie Manning as part of her report on ministry (Attachment # 6)

Sue Wood, read by Sara Sprogell (Attachment # 7)

Charlotte Ann Curtis, read by Craig Fresley (Attachment # 8)

Helen Clarkson, read by Leslie Manning (Attachment # 9)

The four memorial minutes were Accepted and will be forwarded to New England Yearly Meeting.

Travel minute Portland Friends Meeting has issued a Travel Minute for Maggie Fiori, Genna Ulrich, and Jay O'Hara supporting their intention to visit other meetings in Maine, to listen, and to speak if led.

Falmouth Quarter ENDORSED their travel minute.

Bible Half Hour, Genna Ulrich

Genna will be offering the Bible Half Hours at NEYM Sessions this year. They shared their preparation and the shape that the messages they are preparing.

The time since 2019 has been a really deepening time for Genna in which experiences in worship led them to seek more spiritual companionship and to reach out to find more to feed them. Reaching out to Quaker writings, midweek worship, then wondering about what in our tradition is about, and wading into the "living stream" brought them back to the Bible and needing to be in a conversation across time as well and place and culture and diversity.

The Bible is that tradition that grounds us and Genna is feeling more and more clearly that if someone has waded into that stream [of living water] they can know the water by the water others feel. They have felt moved by the experience of being worked upon by God and in a loving way. The experience of being loved is so foundational and when experienced it makes them feel less afraid. With that comes a growth in freedom.

Genna has a committee of elders as they prepare to bring the Bible Half Hour. There is a sense that Genna may be offering a diagnosis of what is holding us back, and that the medicine is the experience of God. We have the best intentions but many of us have experienced the trauma of religion and we often allow weeds to choke the ministry, we choke the seeds that are beginning to sprout. We need to learn how to

welcome gifts of ministry, knowing we are loved. We need to celebrate each other's gifts. Some of the healing work is naming the gifts of service.

Genna is drawn to Bible stories of the disciples who are confused and still trying to figure out who is the best, then giving over to trust in God. IN particular, they shared the story of the rich young man who thinks he's checked all the boxes, but who is not willing to give up everything; that's too much. It's not about checking the boxes of faith but living the faith. Giving up everything is giving up the systems that lead to oppression; we actually have to give up something to experience the good news. Genna feels their preparation in the next few months is to do a lot more listening and is still finding out what this means in their life. Sometimes we have to listen to the bad news and there is fear of what this all means.

Minute regarding the War in Gaza

A Statement of Portland Friends Meeting regarding War in Gaza and a Minute from Durham Friends Meeting were read by Fritz Weiss (Attachments #10, 11)

It was noted that although Portland and Durham did not consult, their minutes were similar. It was also noted that NEYM published a Statement on Conflict in Israel-Palestine November 3, 2023.

(<https://neym.org/news/2023/11/statement-conflict-israel-palestine>)

Falmouth Quarter expressed gratitude for the faithfulness of those who wrote minutes and unites with their concerns.

Leslie Manning was asked to carry the two Minutes to the Israel/Palestine Working Group with the recommendation that a minute be brought to annual sessions.

It was proposed that Falmouth Quarter's summer meeting be held at Betsy Meunch's beach house in Georgetown. Betsy has invited the quarter for the second weekend in June (June 8 & 9). **Friends approved.**

During waiting worship before lunch, in response to the testimony of those who have a named ministry, we were reminded that the nature of humility is not being agreeable but taking up faithfully what God is calling us to do. Another Friend was struck by the openness of Friends to share their experience, the efforts of individuals, and the support behind them.

We ended our time together in worship listening to the words of the hymn,

“Here I Am, Lord”.

Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord?

I have heard you calling in the night.

I will go, Lord, if you lead me.

I will hold your people in my heart.

Respectfully submitted

Ann Dodd-Collins, recording clerk

4/27/24