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UPCOMING EVENTS

Sept. 1: Help make breakfast for our vulnerable neighbors. Convene at 6:15 am at **So Others Might Eat**. For more information, contact Tim Schleicher at timothy.c.schleicher@gmail.com

Sept. 3: **Labor Day**, office is closed.

Sept. 5: Help make sandwiches for the **Grate Patrol** to take to our vulnerable neighbors, starting at 5:00 pm. For more information, contact Alan W. Field" alanwfield@gmail.com or Louisa Terrell, louisa.terrell@gmail.com

September 16: The Sanctuary Taskforce will hold a **bake/craft/silent auction sale** in support of the Capital Area Immigrant Rights Coalitions, which works with local detainees and asylum seekers. Can you donate a homemade baked good or craft item? Could you offer a weekend at a vacation home, or a catered meal, or a handmade-to-order sweater, or something else for the silent auction? Please contact the office, admin@quakersdc.org

Sept. 14 – 16: FMW has rented **Camp Catoctin** the weekend of September 14-16. Please join us for a relaxing, rustic day, or two, or three, of hiking, lounging/playing by the lagoon, potluck meals and fellowship. The attached flyer provides details; the sign up for meals + meal clean-up is here: <https://tinyurl.com/Catocin2018fall> . The cost is \$20 per adult per night for over-nighters and \$10 per day per adult for day-trippers. Please reach out to me with any questions. I hope to see you in the woods! Anita 307-399-4238

September 14 – 16 – **Spiritual Formation Program Fall Retreat, Shepherd's Spring Retreat Center (Sharpsburg, MD)** You are invited to join Friends from across Baltimore Yearly Meeting for the Fall Spiritual Formation Retreat at the beautiful Shepherd's Spring Retreat Center. To find out more about the retreat and the Spiritual Formation Program, go to the BYM

website at www.bym-rsf.org/events/spiritform/. For more information and to join others from FMW who plan to attend, please contact John Bluedorn at johnbluedorn@gmail.com.

Sept. 21-23: Young Friends Conference, Homewood Friends Meeting (Baltimore, MD) Young Friends should plan to begin arriving at 7:00 pm on Friday. For information, check the Young Friends website (www.bym-rsf.org/what_we_do/yfs/yfcon.html) or contact Jocelyn Dowling. (301-774-7663) Remember that the deadline to register at the discounted rate and be guaranteed a slot is two weeks before the conference (September 7). Any one registering after that date may be placed on a waiting list.

Sept. 28-30: Opequon Quaker Camp 40th and 20th Reunion, Opequon Quaker Camp (Brucetown, VA) This summer marks the 40th year since the first summer of Camp Opequon on the Pigeon Property. And we will be entering the 20th Year of the Opequon Quaker Arts Camp!! JOIN US FOR THIS HISTORIC CELEBRATION! For a weekend of reminiscing, singing around the campfire, camp activities, great camp food, and catching up with old friends. All camp alumni from both versions of BYM Camps at Opequon are encouraged to come and BYM Camps alumni and friends of BYM Camps are also welcome. To get on the list or to support planning, email opequonreunion@bym-rsf.org (This event is not aimed at current campers.) Cost to attend is \$45.00 for the weekend or \$10.00 per meal. Go to www.bym-rsf.org/events/yevents/oqcalumni.html for more information and registration.

Sept. 29: Workshop: Listening to the Bible, presented by Joy Newhart. Using Bible stories as fodder for role play, we will practice deep listening and reflecting skills. Workshops will be held on Saturdays from 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm. Please arrive a few minutes early to register. We request a \$20.00 donation for each workshop. Coffee, tea, and snacks will be available throughout. For more information, contact Marsha Holliday, hollidaymsd@yahoo.com

October 7: World Quaker Day Join the Quaker family around the world in worship and celebration! FWCC invites you to join Quakers around the world on 7 October for **World Quaker Day**, in its 5th year. The theme, *Crossing Cultures, Sharing Stories* draws us into our shared experience of worship, celebrating our wonderful diversity of expression. Church to church, meeting to meeting, country to country, and section to section, we feel the power of God collecting us into a faithful family. We welcome **all** expressions of Quaker worship! How will you celebrate World Quaker Day? Ideas about how to work with the theme can be found on [the website](#). Whatever you do as a worshiping community, we hope you will share this with others through FWCC. It can be very simple – a description, a poem, a short video from a mobile phone, a few photos – we will post them on this web site so that you can see what other churches and meetings were doing on the same day. We welcome your participation in World Quaker Day. We are grateful for all you bring to the Quaker world.

Thinking About Race – Witnessing Whiteness by Shelly Tochluk

“As part of the dominant racial group in the United States, white people have generally not been either inspired or forced to question the ways that race has shaped our attitudes, beliefs, and actions. This limits our freedom. We don’t recognize our patterns, and therefore we are unable to decide whether or not these patterns are beneficial for our lives and relationships. Allowing a new vision to challenge ideas developed over the course of our lives is therefore a move toward personal liberation.” (pp. 113-114)

“Let me restate more clearly, the purpose of becoming better witnesses of whiteness is not to ingratiate ourselves with people of color. This is not about being redeemed or validated. Instead, people need to be clear that when we can witness whiteness present in our surroundings, we let people know that we can be a part of conversations that most white people generally avoid, defend against, or deny. We take a step forward in our individual and collective healing process

by being more available for deep, honest dialogue. We enjoy a measure of freedom previously unavailable; we choose how to relate to our whiteness.” (pp 137-138).

From **Witnessing Whiteness: The Need to Talk About Race and How To Do It**, by Shelly Tochluk, 2010. Tochluk, a researcher, counselor and teacher, trains educators to work with the diverse Los Angeles school population as an associate professor of education at Mount St. Mary’s College.

This column is prepared by the BYM Working Group on Racism (WGR) and sent to the designated liaison at each local Meeting. The BYM WGR meets most months on the third Saturday from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm. Locations vary to allow access to more Friends. If you would like to attend, on a regular or a drop-in basis, contact clerk David Etheridge, david.etheridge@verizon.net.

SANCTUARY TASKFORCE NEWS

The Taskforce has been busy giving steady provision of support to detainees and asylum seekers this summer. We signed on to a letter sent by the DMV Sanctuary group to Mayor Muriel Bowser regarding the recent raids conducted by Immigration & Customs Enforcement (ICE) in D.C. – at least five raids resulting in the detention of at least a dozen of the city’s residents took place in July in this, our “Sanctuary City.” We’re exploring other ways to work with the Mayor’s office to strengthen their commitment to Sanctuary.

Three members of the taskforce have been visiting detainees in the Howard County Detention Center for the past several months—the most reliable volunteer visitors there, apparently. In May, they saw signs that the County had changed their policy for these visits. Previously, the visits had been face-to-face (separated by glass); now, the visitors were expected to conduct these visits only by video, and had to pay \$7.50 for the privilege. An exception was made for the Quakers, who were allowed to continue meeting face-to-face, which made our members feel somewhat awkward.

By then, we’d gotten to know a number of the family members and other regular visitors. In speaking with them, we heard their sorrow and frustration with the new policy—feedback that they feared to give to the detention center, lest they be seen as complainers and have their visits shut off. We’d also had a few pleasant interactions with the director of the facility, so we sent him a friendly note asking him to explain the new policy and indicating that we’d heard a lot of frustration with it. He scheduled a phone conference with us, and claimed that the policy had not, in fact, been changed at all—only expanded to include this new option, which he thought would make visits easier since the family members wouldn’t have to travel to the detention center. Nothing in paper or verbal communication had previously indicated that they could keep doing face-to-face meetings, however. We thanked him and said we would certainly let family members know that they could continue to do the face-to-face visits. He asked that the information be spread through the inmates, and apparently made good on that commitment—family members are dribbling back in and holding such meetings. A victory!

In mid-September, we plan to hold a fabulous fundraiser bake/craft/silent auction sale to benefit **Capital Area Immigrant Rights Coalition**. A member of their staff will talk with us about their work with local detainees and asylum seekers. Can you donate a homemade baked good or craft item? Could you offer a weekend at a vacation home, or a catered meal, or a handmade-to-order sweater, or something else for the silent auction? Please contact the office, admin@quakersdc.org Then, on **September 16**, please bring cash, check or credit card and take home something wonderful.

RANDOM HAPPENINGS

In late July 2018, I started to receive a leading regarding the upcoming “Unite the Right” rally, scheduled for the second Sunday in August. This rally was organized by Jason Kessler, one of the co-organizers of an event in Charlottesville in 2017 which attracted white nationalists, white supremacists, neo-Nazis and many others to that town, and resulted in the hospitalization of 30 activists and the murder of another. Jason Kessler wanted to come to DC to protest what he sees as the abuses of his civil rights and oppression of white people by Liberals, the media, and others. The National Park Service had approved his application to hold the rally at Lafayette Square, in front of the White House. Numerous groups of counter-protesters had also applied for permits to be there at the same time to express alternative viewpoints. It looked like the makings of a hornet’s nest, and scared the bejeezus out of me. And yet, here was this leading...

I ran it passed a couple of trusted Friends, who for the most part, while not actually asking me if I was out of my mind, indicated that it needed more seasoning. I prayed. I came to feel that Friends needed to be there, holding a Meeting for Worship in the park—both as a place to express our values by living them, and to hold the space as a place of peace in the midst of a tense and fraught situation.

This isn’t a new idea. Friends have often held public meetings for worship, particularly in support of social justice issues. Friends did this during the Vietnam War, sitting on the sidewalk in front of the White House. With the Earth Quaker Action Team, FMW Friends entered various PNC banks in Pennsylvania and DC to protest their support of mountain top removal by sitting in silence. And during the Occupy Wall Street period, our Meeting helped to lead a few meetings for worship in their occupation of McPherson Square. I wondered—was it time to do it again?



So I sent an email to our Peace and Social Concerns committee, to our Meeting’s listserv, and to the clerk of Baltimore Yearly Meeting’s Peace & Social Concerns committee, saying I was feeling led to do this thing. The BYM clerk suggested I hold an interest group at Annual Sessions to further test the leading. And I held a meeting at FMW on the last Sunday in July.

Friends were supportive at FMW, though things quickly devolved into a hilarious discussion about what color t-shirts we should wear to help the police distinguish our group, settling at last on good Quaker gray. We decided on using a working group to think through logistics. Steve Chase, Barbara Briggs, Gene Throwe and I leaned in. It looked like a go.

The interest group at Annual Sessions, however, was discouraging. As one gently put it, “I don’t see asking Quakers to sit in worship in the middle of a group of screaming racists to be a recipe for success.” She had a point. I came away thinking this idea was probably nuts, and dangerous besides. How irresponsible was I being? How naïve? And yet, here was this leading...

At that interest group, a member of Charlottesville Friends Meeting spoke eloquently about her Meeting’s actions on that horrible weekend. They’d worked with an interfaith group that was holding services in a public park, and taken their turn by holding a meeting for worship there

(they went after the Buddhists). She said it helped the Meeting to identify and stand up more strongly for their values, and served as a connecting point for them in the wider Charlottesville interfaith community.

I kept thinking that Quakers have a gift, a real gift to give to the world. It's our style of worship, which is open to all, and opening for all. It felt right that we should use this gift in this way. So I put out the call to area Meetings, with specific invitations to folks I'd run into at Annual Sessions. Katie Breslin helped to put it on social media.

We then discovered that several others communities of faith were planning actions that day, most of them far away from Lafayette Park. We decided that, in addition to our action at Lafayette, we would send some folks to the action at Freedom Plaza. There, a wonderful expression of diversity and equality was being organized mainly by communities of color and Jewish groups, with other allies. Barbara Briggs headed up that effort, and I dug around, trying to find folks who would go with her. I kept hoping that one or two people would head off with her, and if we were *really* lucky, maybe we could get 10 or even 15 people to come with us to Lafayette.

Praying about this, it came to me very strongly—*very* strongly, I can't emphasize this enough, it felt like a direct message-- that I was responsible only for catching the leading; I was not in charge of the response. My only job was the follow the leading.

Erin Murphy stepped up to create a list of what to bring/not to bring. Charlie and Susan Bien went to Costco and bought water and granola bars. J.E. McNeil volunteered to give us a training on how to deal with being hassled, and to stay at the Meeting House and hold us in the Light. Martha Solt got roped in to help make soup for tired protesters. Friends stepped up—I started to get calls from people coming from as far as Roanoke, Virginia and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

On the day of the rally, I went to Meeting with my heart in my throat, and spent most of worship time trying to keep my heart open and clear. Usually having a leading leaves me with a sense of peace and warm energy; this one didn't. I was scared, but still quite, quite certain that this was a real leading and needed to be followed. At rise of Meeting, we made one last announcement. Then a slew of people descended, wanting Love Thy Neighbor pins and directions, ready to roll. Barbara scooped up 17 people and took off for Freedom Plaza, carrying our Quakers for Equality banner. A few of us went to lunch and then came back to chop veggies and make soup.



Just before 3 pm, folks started streaming into the Meeting House, wearing their good Quaker gray and ready to participate. Everyone buddied up, exchanging phone numbers. We kept putting out chairs, and printing more "buddy sheets" for friends to fill out. By the end, the Assembly Room

was jammed. Even more people waited for us down at Lafayette Square, where Barbara and her group had moved. J.E. gave her excellent training, cutting it short when we heard that the Unite the Right rally folks decided to show up an hour early.

We took off, holding our Love Thy Neighbor/No Exceptions banner, going past all the bars and stores on Connecticut Avenue (where we were cheered and toasted) toward the hovering helicopters and noisy crowd. As we approached, a group of black-clad, black-flagged people were marching and shouting obscenities. I assumed they were the alt-right. Turns out, it was Antifa, who are supposedly with the Progressives.

The park had been divided, with a sad, small group of 30 to 50 white nationalists huddled in the southeast corner and literally thousands of counter-protesters occupying the northern half. We wandered in, sat down, and started our worship, as some Friends held our banners. Soon, we became this island of calm in the midst of anger. People took pictures and asked questions. Some sidled over and stood nearby; some sat down with us and went into the nourishing silence. An African American woman came over to hug us, telling us over and over that we just need more love. Thunder rumbled, and a gentle rain started to fall. Friends prayed. It was so, so beautiful.



Finally, we felt that the Meeting was ready to close. We shook hands, and sang all the verses to *Amazing Grace*. People around us joined in. It was glorious.

In all, we had more than 80 people there from at least six Meetings. We showed up on people's Facebook pages and Twitter accounts, with one person calling us "the most peaceful protest at the park." We got tons of likes—a significant number from folks in the alt right (go figure). In some ways, it felt like the most evangelical thing I've ever done.

We floated off, some on to other things and some back to the Meeting for some soup and a gentle debrief. The folks from Philadelphia and Roanoke had a 3 hour drive to get home, so we didn't stay too long. Everyone pitched in with the clean-up. Betsy Bramon and Tom Yonker took over the kitchen, leaving it sparkling.

It was still light out when we left. And it was Light within.

- Debby