



**Newsletter of the  
United Society of Friends Women  
of New England Yearly Meeting  
September, 2011**



FROM YOUR PRESIDENTE \* (Spanish for Presiding clerk)

What is your true leading in ministry at this time?

This newsletter shares a couple of women's different leadings in different forms of ministry. How do we determine what is a true leading, and what is just our own desires?

At the dramatic presentation of the four historic women at yearly meeting sessions, I realized that one of the most interesting things I learned from Sybil Jones was not shared. That was how she determined whether her call to travel was a true leading from God.

After traveling in ministry in the south under concern for slaves and slave owners, Sybil Jones felt a calling to go minister in Liberia to encourage the free slaves who had returned to Africa. However, since she was a mother of five children aged 16 to 1, she had doubts and didn't tell anyone about it. When she was visiting her father as he was ill and about to die, her father asked her if she had ever thought of service in a distant land? She confessed and he placed his hands on her and proceeded in a fervent prayer for her protection. About a month later, her brother was suddenly ill and about to die. He said, "Dear sister, if you feel called to distant lands across the ocean, go and tell of the Saviour's love for all. If you happen to die in service, you can join me in our eternal home." Sybil slept and ate little, while looking for authority to make sure this was a calling. Having already traveled a lot in ministry in North America, the elder Benjamin Seebohm came to her mind as one who might be helpful in discerning. She knew he was likely some place in America traveling in gospel ministry, but had no idea where. The next Sunday, she felt ill and not sure she was up to going to her local meeting for worship, but went. The first person she met at the door of the meetinghouse was Benjamin Seebohm! His ministry that morning "so exactly described my feelings of service, that I was sure our Lord had sent him to call me forth." I then shared with my husband, and later asked my two eldest children, who both said, "Yes, go mother". Then it was taken to our local meeting and a solemn awe pervaded the assembly. At monthly, quarterly, and at yearly meeting sessions in Newport, we were committed to holy keeping when in distant lands and rich heavenly blessings were implored on our children for whom Jesus' sake we had to leave behind.

What kind of leadings have you felt to minister in your home area or in distant lands?

Marian Baker, Weare Meeting

**FINDING PEACE IN CHAOS**

After ten years of living and teaching at The Meeting School, including teaching Peace Studies, I am leaving this fall, packing up and moving to western Massachusetts. I think I'm like most people, finding it very stressful to move. It is a challenge to maintain 'inner peace' in the midst of sorting through belongings, choosing what to keep and what to give or throw away, trying to remember many details and saying goodbye to a place I've called home for a decade.

One of the great advantages of this move is that I'll be living with long-time Quaker friends and will have the opportunity to become part of a wonderful meeting and an exciting town. I am also taking some time this fall and winter to travel in the ministry, visiting other meetings, churches, interfaith groups and Quaker organizations.

While The Meeting School is in transition (see the TMS website for details), there's a group of people living and gathering here to explore Quaker intentional community. I've been blessed to be connected with this group and to worship with them every day while here. It has been a huge help to start the day in worship and, if I choose, to attend evening worship also. Each morning I begin with a time of gratitude for all the day has to offer. Spiritually fortified, I can face packing, calling the phone company and all the other tasks I have to do. As I pack up boxes of books and sort through folders of papers, I'm constantly reminded of the things that have been important to me over the years here. Books like my faithful old copy of John Woolman's journal go in the pile of those I will definitely keep. Others will go

into the Meeting book sale (raising funds for those who are traveling to Cuba) and some I will pull out to give to specific friends. Sorting through piles of photos lets me 'visit' with many old friends and former students. The past week has been especially moving with all the stories on the radio about 9/11, remembering that day.

I try to take some time each day to be in prayer by myself, to read devotions of some sort, to walk in a field or sit under a tree. Being part of a faith community is a way to practice peace in every moment. I remind myself that any community can be a faith community if two or three people choose to make it that.

'There is that near thee that will guide thee. Wait, oh, wait for it and be sure to keep it.'

Isaac Pennington

Peace be with you all.

Sheila Garrett, Peace Secretary

### **LOOKING BACK**

Our historian, Clarabel Marstaller asked Cathy Mulhern to write about one of the active USFW women who recently passed away. Shirley and Beatrice Douglas were the first recipients of the special USFW pillows created by NEYM USFW to honor our elders.

Shirley Leslie died May 3, 2011. Many of you knew her and loved her over the years of her active membership in New England USFW. Shirley was a birthright Quaker, born to Rolfe and Mildred Richardson, who were members of the Gonic, NH Friends Meeting. Shirley grew up in Gonic, went to high school in Rochester, and then to college at Friends University in Kansas. After college she returned to New England, and in 1946 she married Edward Leslie. Together they raised three children. They lived in Dover, New Hampshire for thirty years, and were instrumental in the re-opening of the Dover Friends Meeting, after it had been mainly quiescent for a generation. In the 50's, 60's and 70's, Shirley spent much of her abundant energy on Dover Meeting, especially its First Day School. In 1981, she and Eddie moved back to Gonic, and from then on, they were mainstays of that Meeting. Shirley was also active in Yearly Meeting for many years. Shirley's Quaker faith held great significance for her. She was a wonderfully outgoing person, but she had reserves of deep quiet. On her last evening, several Friends came to the Hospice for a meeting for worship at her bedside. After about twenty minutes of silence, Shirley spoke. She told of the influence of Thomas Kelly on her life. She had met Tom Kelly, and studied his writings at a workshop when she was young. This stayed with her to the end. Those of us who were with her that evening will never forget the holiness of those moments. We'll miss Shirley Leslie's warm presence---the twinkle in her eye, her kind words for each person, her giving nature. She was a truly faithful friend, and Friend

Catherine Mulhern, Dover Mtg

### **HONORING AND LEARNING ABOUT AND FROM OUR ELDERS**

On Sunday at NEYM sessions, as part of the celebration of our 350th year, USFW put on a play that was well received by all ages. The children included it in their epistle as one of the highlights of the yearly meeting for them. Jonathan Vogel Borne, when giving the usual statistics of who attended the sessions included "four dead women"! There will be a repeat performance at Dover Quarterly Meeting to be held at N. Sandwich, NH Meeting on Sunday, 30th of October.

For those who missed it, here is a glimpse of it.. Dorothy Grannell introduced to us four important historical Quaker women: The eldest woman visitor was Elizabeth Hooten (acted by Minga Claggett Borne from



Cambridge Meeting). She expressed surprise that we sang Happy Birthday, as in her time Friends did not celebrate holidays, as they did not consider one day any more holy than another. She came from England and was a Baptist who (as a woman) was not allowed to preach. George Fox came to her home when she was a seeker and she was the first Quaker woman minister, part of the valiant sixty. She traveled to New England several times after age 60 and had to bear beatings when in New England in Dover, Cambridge, as well as being chased into wilderness where she spent the night in the presence of wolves. She traveled to NEYM sessions at Newport with George Fox and also to Barbados. Unfortunately she died of fever in Jamaica and was buried there.

Then Prudence Crandall (acted by



Emma Lippincott from Monadnock Mtg), shared her challenges as the woman from Connecticut who started the first school for blacks. She suffered many persecutions from the townspeople and at one point had the school set on fire. She had to close the school and was forced out of town. She left and married and spent the rest of her life in the Midwest. Later Connecticut realized their error and honored her work.

Sybil Jones arrived with her worn suitcase from Ramallah (acted by Marian Baker)



She was credited as the founder of Ramallah Girls School. When she was in Syria, a young Palestinian girl came to ask her to start it, but due to her poor health, it was actually her husband Eli who completed the development of the school. She was recorded as a gospel minister in China, Maine the year she married Eli. She traveled extensively under concern for the splits of Friends into different branches in America, for the souls of both slaves and slave holders, for the violence of the civil war giving spiritual encouragement for over 30,000 wounded veterans, and for the need for temperance. She spent years traveling and sharing God's love in Ireland, France, England. yet when her doctors told her to go home or south due to illness, she went to Norway, she trusted the Lord so much!

Special thanks to Skip Schiel for these wonderful photos.



Maria Mitchell with her telescope in hand was played by Anna Barnett from Portland, Meeting. Maria grew up in a strong Friends family on Nantucket and was taught science by her father. She was the first woman astronomer and first American to discover a comet. She later had doubts about the strict Quakerism of the time and joined the Unitarian church. In later life she taught young women at Vassar and encouraged them as women to be firsts in their own fields of interest.

#### SUMMARY OF MINUTES OF SUMMER MEETING

Our business meeting was held during Tuesday committee time at NEYM in Springfield, RI. On August 20th, 2011.

Attendees were from Acton, Durham, Gonic, Portland, Weare, and Winthrop meetings:

Anne Armstrong shared the Treasurer's Report. Our budget will need to be approved at the fall meeting. There has been a request that an annual reminder be sent once a year when the dues are due.

Committee Fair at YM sessions was well attended. A number of individuals signed up to receive the newsletter electronically. Christopher McCandless did the best on the quiz about USFW! Our play done at sessions on Sunday was well received. There may be interest in doing the performance again in New Hampshire. Clerk, Marian Baker asked that scripts be sent to her in case other people would have to take over the different roles. We were especially pleased to have younger women participating so fully. Thanks to Dorothy Grannell who moderated and to our actresses.

Meetings for NE USFW for 2011-2012.

We will hold our October meeting on the 2nd or 16th at either Acton or Concord.

Marian will follow up. We suggested asking Ruah Swennerfelt to come to talk about Transitional Communities.

In May, Pat Schrock of Indiana YM, Clerk of USFW International wants to visit our spring meeting. She has worked in Belize and Kenya.

Excerpted from minutes of Dorothy Grannell, Recording Clerk.

#### **CROSSING A THRESHOLD: setting foot into prison**

I had long wished for this. When the opportunity came it simply arose through my living.

I spent the last four winters in Phoenix, Arizona, responding to a call having to do with my son's family living there. In my first winter, I received a powerful and concrete introduction to the

issue of immigration and undocumented workers by a young activist in Phoenix Meeting. Then a neighborhood in the city, where many poor live, began to attract me. I began to feel I should live there. My third winter I rented a small apartment in a complex inhabited almost entirely by Mexicans. It was the first time in my life

that I was the “odd one out”, alone, as a White and middle-class person. I learned a lot about myself, while learning about my neighbors and a lot about poverty in its concrete day-to-day challenges.

Two doors down from me lived a man I grew especially fond of, an undocumented landscaper. He’d lived there for years, a warm, caring soul, from southern Mexico. He’d been deported once or twice and made his way back. I loved to watch his tender care of the gorgeous flowers he kept in a box hanging from the railing of the second-floor outside gallery we shared, and in pots on a bench by his door. We had little verbal language between us, but found other ways to express a gently growing friendship. Once when the smoke alarm went off in my place as I was taking a shower, I found him standing in my apartment, concerned about my safety. I felt safe after that.

When he heard that my winter rental was ending, he came to express his regret. “I used to look over and you would sit here sipping your coffee - and now you won’t!”, he said. “I used to see you walk off to the mountain, and now - no more!” He rushed back to his apartment returning with an exquisite small bronze sculpture of a sun in his hands. “To remember the Arizona sun!”, he said, handing it to me.

The night before I was to move out, I was awakened by the sound of heavy pounding. It was the police pounding on my friend’s door. It wouldn’t open. Some hours and lots more pounding and shouting later, it did and the tenants filed out, my friend last. He was taken away by the police. Us neighbors - myself, the older Mexican, and the landlady stood on the gallery watching in consternation. An officer told me the reason for his arrest. Another tenant, whom I also knew and loved, had turned our friend in on a charge that seemed unlikely to us. I remember that moment on the gallery vividly- our helplessness in the sudden disappearance of a cherished friend. Then, our older neighbor disappeared for a moment in his apartment and returned with a tray of coffee and warm rolls. We stood,

eating and drinking, quietly, chatting and laughing as our hearts cried and lightened, becoming neighbors more than we had been before. A moment I think I’ll never forget, living prayer.

I vowed then and there that I would not suffer the arrested man to feel forgotten. When I returned the following fall, from Europe, I learned he was now incarcerated in a tiny town out in the vast nowhere, a two-hour drive from Phoenix. A long process of finding out how to visit followed. I found our friend in a privately owned prison for over 1200 sex offenders, although his crime is listed as “burglary 2<sup>nd</sup> degree”.

A visiting date was settled on. The landlady who was to drive (I had no car) didn’t show up that day. She was ill. I was worried about the anxiety our inmate may feel if we failed to appear. (This visit was to be his first in over a year of captivity). I called the prison but was told staff were not allowed to give messages to inmates. What to do? On a sudden inspiration I called a younger attender in the meeting we hadn’t seen in a good while. “Sure, I’ll be glad to drive!” came her cheerful voice, without any further ado. I almost fell off my chair with happiness! She turned out to be an excellent companion, due to much experience with visiting incarcerated family members as a child. She wasn’t fazed by anything.

One thing this first visit did was to reassure me about prisons. The guards were anything but intimidating, local people glad to have a job. The security check was light, I was told to find my way to the visiting room by myself, through a double set of secured doors. I didn’t know what to expect. A large room opened to me, filled with people sitting around tables, wives, girlfriends, little children excitedly riding their daddy’s lap, old parents, teenage siblings, friends. Older children were eagerly running back and forth. A row of vending machines provided for shared munchies and drinks. (Quarters for them were the only thing I was allowed to bring in.) Few guards were present, discreet in the background. The atmosphere felt peaceful to me as a church picnic, soft conversation and laughter.

I sat down at a free table and waited. My friend, when he walked in with his solid step looked good!- a relief. We hugged, it was allowed. We sat together for an hour. Despite the “language barrier“, there were no awkward pauses between us. Conversation kept flowing. I felt ever more light and free, fear had left me. From what my friend told me, he was well, sufficiently provided for, yet every now and then he would sigh: “Prison - no good!”, shaking his round head.

Later I had to think about what it means to attend to one person among tens of thousands in the same situation. It seemed so little in view of all the needs present and all the suffering, I was almost ashamed. A sense was given me of the "ripple effect" that even a small act can have. Most of all, this little undertaking, outside my usual line of work and overcoming fears, had been an act true to who I was at this time, in the circumstances I was in. We should not underestimate the power of being who we really are in a given moment. It's how “our lives speak”.

A few weeks later a second visit occurred. This time my concern was to bring the inmate's closer associates to him, who couldn't arrange it themselves. These friends were the inmate's (and my) former landlady and his long-time apartment-mate, another undocumented Mexican. One adventure in this second visit that seemed an obstacle turned out hilarious. Bras were required for female visitors. Our landlady's beeped in the metal detector. We were kindly told to take the wire out, Hard as we tried, we couldn't succeed. A female guard suggested paper suggested we try the local Dollar Store. When we shared this story with our prisoner - “I look more sexy now than before!”, the landlady beamed - we laughed so hard it all seemed well worth it. To see the face of our friend break into uncontrollable mirth, forgetting everything

else for a while, seemed a real gift. There was generally much cheer in the three hours we shared but there was also room for thoughtfulness and to allow the sense of sadness we all felt.

Our prisoner didn't seem to know how much longer he had to stay in, as sentences are sometimes reduced. Nor did he know, when asked, why he was in. He said a lawyer had visited him, but the lawyer didn't speak Spanish. Nor does the inmate know where he will go when he gets out: back to his homeland by deportation? He still had some hope still of returning to what had become his home, where his flowers are kept blooming by his good companion.

Perhaps our landlady expressed it best, the hope we tried to hold in our hearts as we drove back: “I believe our friend will be fine because he is a positive person.” I joined her in this.

The following Sunday at rise of meeting, I shared from an overflowing heart, what had come to me in the silence. These visits, most likely wouldn't, have happened if it weren't for my membership among Friends and the help I had received from them, from simple sharing of experience to various kinds of counsel and means of transport. I realized how much more a community can do than an individual, and it isn't just a matter of using the larger resources of a group. In this worship I felt how it all grew out of a continuous practice of sharing this silent hour with Friends. The concern was given to my individual heart, but the work was the community's. I was a direct experience for me of something I think was held true for Quaker work over the ages.  
Heidi Blocher, W. Falmouth

**ABOUT OUR NEWSLETTER** Our newsletter is published three times a year. All women in New England are invited to send in articles. If you prefer to receive it electronically, please email a note to [mkbaker@gsinet](mailto:mkbaker@gsinet)

**SPECIAL APPEAL**-This issues special appeal is to remind us all to send in their annual dues. If you have already renewed your dues, we suggest a donation towards the replacement of field staff vehicles, especially the ones in Samburu (in the northern desert of Kenya that are in very bad condition and not likely to run much longer.

**RETURN This FORM To Our TREASURER with your contributions.**

Enclosed please find a total of \$\_\_\_\_\_ Please use it as specified:  
\$\_\_\_\_\_ Contribution to General Fund of USFW of NEYM to cover newsletter and other budget expenses.  
\$\_\_\_\_\_ 2011 Annual dues to NEYM USFW for at large members (\$10)\* if you have not paid as yet this year. \*If you form a local USFW group you can get a reduced rate for membership.  
\$\_\_\_\_\_ Contribution to Samburu Vehicle Replacement  
\$\_\_\_\_\_ Annual subscription to the Advocate (USFW International News) (\$10 per year)  
\$\_\_\_\_\_ Copy of 2011-2012 BluePrints (12 devotionals from USFWI (\$5 per year)  
Postal address for newsletter \_\_\_\_\_  
I would prefer to receive the New England USFW newsletter electronically.  
Email address:\_\_\_\_\_

Make checks payable to “USFW of NEYM” and with this form send to:  
Ann Armstrong, Treasurer, PO Box 1401 , Shirley, MA 01464

The following prayer comes to us via Heidi Blocher:

**Prayer by an inmate in Osteraker Prison, Sweden**

*Thank you Lord for not forgetting me, even if I'm doing other things and forget you.*

*It's so good that you know just how everything is, and before you I don't have to feel less than anyone else, because you understand me and know me.*

*You know why everything turned out the way it did.*

*It's often difficult to explain things to people, but you Lord understand everything without words or explanations.*

*You know me and understand me through and through, Lord.*

*Thank you God, for being you and than you for giving me the strength to live through these days.*

New England Yearly Meeting  
901 Pleasant Street  
Worcester, MA 01062



*DATED MATERIAL*

Non-Profit  
Organization  
US Postage  
Paid  
Worcester, MA  
Permit No. 487

Come to the **Fall Gathering of USFW of New England** **ALL ARE WELCOME**  
**Sunday, October 16th**

**Held at the Green certified new Concord Friends Meetinghouse,**  
**11 Oxbow Road , Canterbury, NH 03224 603-783-8097**

9:45 Gather for singing

10:00- Worship with Concord Friends - Godly play is available for kids.

( Let Ruth Heath know of any kids coming at ruthmheath@comcast.net)

11:00- Introductions and Announcements

11:30- Lunch - bring sandwiches. Soup provided.

12:30- Program on **“Transition Villages”** Lead by Ruah Swennerfelt of Burlington Mtg.

1:30- Business Meeting Agenda includes:

- Plans for Spring Gathering
- Nominations, Budget, Special Projects, Previous minutes
- Decide whether we are willing to host the USFW International Triennial in 2016
- News from Cuba or other womens groups

Contact Marian Baker if you need overnight hospitality at her cottage on the lake enroute at mkbaker@gsinet.net or Ruth Heath at rheath@totalnetnh.net. for directions.