When we speak of Quaker values, the concepts of simplicity, peace, integrity, community, equality and stewardship challenge the believer to action rather than to a mere personal assent. Put simply, action is the reality of what we believe. More explicitly, “actions speak louder than words.”

In this issue of the NYM Journal, we present some clear examples of how our values are displayed in the things we do. Whether we are taking direct action to confront racism within and outside of our Meetings and Worship Groups; standing shoulder to shoulder with Indigenous neighbors; volunteering to better people’s lives; or, helping to shelter immigrants and asylum seekers, NYM Friends continue to show our neighbors and our nation what is important to us as believers.

Throughout this issue, readers will see scattered pictures of butterfly cookies. Based on the theme of Butterflies Across Borders, these were part of a Cookie Walk and Holiday Concert sponsored by the Racine Interfaith Coalition and area congregations including the Kenosha-Racine Worship Group. These Friends contributed both to the leadership of the effort as well as joining forces in the baking of cookies. The butterfly cookies, symbols of immigrants, were the primary contribution of the Worship Group. The money raised exceeded the group’s goal and will help in settling Afghan refugees in the area.

**Steadfast Nonviolent Action in a Hostile Situation**

*Julia B. Isaacs*

*Madison Friends Monthly Meeting*

As a Quaker, I have read many books about the courage and spiritual strength of Martin Luther King, Jr., Mahatma Gandhi, Alice Paul and others. I got a firsthand look at nonviolent action in late July, when I spent a few days with the water protectors working to stop the Line 3 tar sands pipeline,

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which the Enbridge Company is expanding through Anishinaabe treaty lands in northern Minnesota.

The hostility against the Indigenous-led water protectors was evident even before we arrived. A few miles outside our campground, a pickup truck barreled past us. The truck was “coal rolling” and the passengers were giving the finger to our three-car caravan festooned with #StopLine3 banners.

Upon arrival, we were offered places to pitch our tents, a camp-cooked dinner and an invitation to join the campfire circle. Sitting around the campfire, we heard many stories of a confrontation that morning near one of the many river crossings for the pipeline. A White woman, impatient that traffic was delayed by a ceremony, physically attacked (slapped in the face) an Indigenous youth, a runner from Standing Rock. The sheriff let the White woman go without charging her for assaulting a minor. Tempers rose and the situation became volatile. At one point, an elder Indigenous woman walked up behind a young Indigenous man and said to him, “Breathe.” He was able to step back and stay nonviolent. And he thanked her.

After hearing about this and other events at Camp Firelight, I was not sure what to expect when we traveled on Saturday to another frontline camp. Primarily a camp for holding sacred space, Red Lake Treaty Camp had been the site of a major action on Friday, July 30. An intrepid group of water protectors led by lawyer and activist Tara Houska scaled the double row of barbed wire protecting the Enbridge equipment. Law enforcement reacted with tear gas and rubber bullets. Twenty were arrested and spent the weekend in jail!

It seemed relatively quiet when we arrived on Saturday, except for the constant grinding of construction machinery and the hot dusty wind. I felt privileged to hear the drumming and singing of Indigenous men, while Indigenous women danced around the sacred fire. This was all under the stare (often through binoculars) of an assortment of Enbridge-supported state troopers and local sheriffs standing on the hill above us.

More than a dozen motorcyclists from Red Lake Nation arrived, forming a semicircle of bikes around the drumming and dancing. As a song ended, they all revved their engines at the same time, and I caught myself thinking somewhat gleefully, “THAT will

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**About the NYM Journal**

The NYM Journal aims to inform and inspire Friends with examples of Quaker faith and practice.

Editor: Tom Darrow
Kenosha-Racine Worship Group

Layout: Bill Hendricks
Minneapolis Friends Meeting

The NYM Journal is available to the public and posted on NYM website: northernyearly-meeting.org

Friends of Northern Yearly Meeting are encouraged to submit creative artistic work and writing, including personal reflections and articles about your work and experiences as Quakers, to nymjournal@gmail.com.

Deadline for submissions for the Spring Issue: April 2, 2022.

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make them (the cops) nervous." Oops! I had just fallen into such a “we/they” position that I was relishing the discomfort of the sheriffs. They were just doing their job — though it is a terrible job: defending a Canadian pipeline company that is illegally stealing water during a drought. This in addition to destroying the wild rice beds and the climate. To help me connect with the men on the hill staring down at us, I looked at the fresh watermelon in my hand (hospitality from the camp kitchen) and reminded myself that the watchers on the hill would also enjoy a bite of watermelon on a hot day. That helped me feel more connected to them, as people like me.

An elder Indigenous woman who was seated watching the younger dancers kept saying, “I wish those men on the hill could come down into camp and the young women could talk to them and let the officers know why they are defending the wrong side. I wish we could talk one-on-one.”

Yet, it seems very hard to talk one-on-one. The hostility toward the water protectors goes far beyond the Line 3 pipeline and the Enbridge dollars pumped into local communities and law enforcement agencies; it is fed by longstanding racism against Indigenous people. For example, the White landowner leasing land to Enbridge told the local sheriff to “arrest any Injuns” that got anywhere close to his land. As another example, I share two stories swapped over coffee and the morning campfire by two Indigenous women. One woman said she assured her mother she would “dress black” while traveling to camp from the East Coast, wearing a basketball sweatshirt and hiding her wampum to keep herself safe on the journey. The other woman responded with a story of her school-aged son resisting her request that he take pride in his heritage. The son said he already was seen as Black, and he did not want to go any lower in the pecking order of the school playground.

In recent months, I have heard many climate activist groups say that racial justice is climate justice. These words took on more life as I shared space with Indigenous activists, seeing them face physical and non-physical attacks by local White people, with law enforcement taking the side of those doing wrong. I witnessed the Indigenous water protectors remaining spiritually grounded and steadfast in their nonviolent resistance, even in the face of racist hostility. Those of us who are non-Indigenous climate activists have much to learn from our Indigenous sisters and brothers. Let us join them in forming a community of water protectors, working together to resist Line 3 in Minnesota, Line 5 in Wisconsin, and any other pipelines carrying tar sands oil, one of the most noxious and carbon-intensive fossil fuels on the planet.

(Editor’s Note: Rolling coal (or coal rolling) is the practice of modifying a diesel engine to emit large amounts of black or grey sooty exhaust fumes, diesel fuel that has not undergone complete combustion. A predominantly North American phenomenon, rolling coal is sometimes used as a form of anti-environmentalism. Such modifications may include the intentional removal of the particulate filter.)

by Julia Isaacs
When Quakers are called by Spirit to address racism both in our day-to-day lives and within our Meetings, the waters will be troubled. Addressing racism as a community is difficult and chaotic work for both Friends of Color and White Friends. Whether the troubled waters churn during the discernment of taking on the work or after the commitment to become an anti-racist faith community is made, there are predictable responses and behaviors that occur.

**Expect strong responses, in meeting and online.**

Don’t be surprised if there is shame and bullying of one another (though it’s important to interrupt these behaviors, and encourage everyone to use “I statements” when sharing their thoughts and feelings). Don’t be surprised that Friends step away from Meeting, both Friends of Color and White Friends. Don’t be surprised that Friends’ understanding of Quaker testimonies are individual and conflicting. Don’t be surprised when discernment seeps into social media (a place better built for education, not for the process of decision-making). Don’t be surprised that in times of struggle it is surprisingly easy to spread rumors (“this Friend told me…”).

Don’t be surprised when leaders are attacked. Don’t be surprised when White fragility stops progress. None of these is fatal, and we owe it to our loved ones who are hurt most by racism to work through them.

**Anti-racism conversations will expose important topics our Meeting may have avoided.**

It may be helpful to view these conversations through the lenses of trust and conflict. Here are some questions to ask for each:

**Trust:** Do we trust each other to do our own work, especially when your work looks different from mine? Can you trust when I challenge a statement that I am not calling you a racist? Can we commit to an open conversation where we both listen to and hear one another’s experiences, knowing that we may not agree? Can we trust a third way might emerge if we turn to Spirit? Can we trust moving through the chaos will contribute to the work at hand?

**Conflict:** Can we find ways to engage in conflict without demeaning each other? Can we agree that to change we must become comfortable with conflict? Can we do this work without blame? Can we listen to anger without becoming defensive? Can we stay at the table when things get emotional? Can we trust White Friends who have had difficult histories regarding race and racism to do their personal work wherever it takes them, even if that is outside of the Quaker Meeting?

**Always be ready to listen and hear.**

White Friends, this part in particular is for us. As White Friends, can we listen to and hear the experience of Friends of Color without defensiveness? Can we understand what we think of as normal life experience is not necessarily the normal experience of Friends of Color? Can we listen to the experiences of our Friends of Color with acceptance, rather than skepticism or disbelief? Can we receive the telling of that experience as a sacred gift?

White people live with a kind of cognitive dissonance of being lied to about racism in this country. Our fragility makes us ambivalent about practicing antiracism. It is easier to profess, “I am not a racist” than to integrate anti-racist action into our everyday life. If
you are White, there is work to do, whether you are just beginning to notice racism is not just an issue affecting People of Color or if you have been aware and working on race and racism much of your life. It takes humility to do this work. Once a White person recognizes how we have been deluded by the myths of equality and justice in our culture, we know our very soul is at stake if we don’t do the work.

At the same time, Friends of Color have their own paths to follow, their own work to do. Malcolm X said, “America’s greatest crime against the Black man was not slavery or lynching but that he was taught to wear a mask of self-hate and self-doubt.” People of Color are not divorced from the damaging influences of White supremacy culture, within and outside the Religious Society of Friends. Healing from internalized oppression, understanding intersectionality, and surviving institutional inequality happens when people with shared experiences listen to and hear each other. In our sacred faith community, when Friends of Color ask for a place of their own to worship and have fellowship (virtually or in-person), all Friends must respect and protect that space.

Reflect on: What is Spirit asking of us?

Be aware of our language. Use the first person (I and we) rather than you and them. Allow space for each Friend to do their own necessary work. Provide multiple ways for Friends to engage with the work. This might be a monthly discussion group, a Meeting wide retreat, a book club, accountability buddies, writing letters, Showing Up for Racial justice (SURJ) or joining Black Lives Matter activities. Pastoral Care might offer individual conversations with Friends who are struggling or help form care committees. Bottom line; be appreciative of Friends who are courageously engaging with the work of becoming an anti-racist faith community no matter where they begin.

Remember the words of Isaac Penington.

“...praying one for another and holding one another up with a tender hand.” Transformation is not an orderly, neat thing; God will begin working with each person where they are. And our “learning edges” are wildly divergent. So, something that’s new and tender for one person will blunder into something uncomfortably obvious to another. The only constant will be that the challenges we present to each other will threaten identities (professional, personal, and relational) that most White people have built over lifetimes following what we now recognize as mistaken assumptions. But who are we if they’re not true? The tenderness and patience to accompany each other in frightening inner work has to be balanced with the urgency of the need to end newly glimpsed injustice.

A recent message given in Meeting speaks to understanding racism as a chronic disease. A Friend spoke of her teenage boy with asthma. He is an athlete who runs cross-country. It is his passion. To do this, he must use the medical tools at hand. He must always carry an inhaler to use before and after a run.

Like this beloved child of the Meeting, we must find our inhalers, the tools available to us to become anti-racist. It takes inner strength of courage, trust and love to build muscles to paddle hard through troubled waters to find justice in our Meetings. This work, done with integrity, will deepen the Spiritual life of individual Friends and of our beloved community.

Carolyn Lejuste is a member of Red Cedar Friends Meeting in Lansing, MI. She served on FGC’s Institutional Assessment on Systemic Racism Task Force from 2016 to 2018 and served on the Institutional Assessment Implementation Committee from 2019 to 2020.

David Etheridge is a member of Friends Meeting of Washington in Washington, D.C. He serves on the Friends General Conference Institutional Assessment Implementation Committee.

(Editor’s Note: This first appeared in the February 2021 Issue of Vital Friends – A Resource for Quaker Faith and Life published by the Friends General Conference.)
I was made for simple labors
To dig and plant
To smooth the edges of weatherwood
To revel in the sights, sounds
And scents of the earth
My rhythm is slow and careful
Like the growth of an oak
To look closely and honor the detail
Of creation
To give life and breath to imagination

(Editors Note: Kathryn Kirk (1951-2016) was an avid gardener.)

There are those of a certain age who will swear that the air conditioner has led to the decline of society, principally North American. Why and why particularly here? Because its use has required people to close their doors.

There was a time that all homes had their main doors open to catch whatever breeze might be blowing. Evenings were spent either sitting on the front porch saying hello as neighbors walked by or walking past people sitting on their front porch yourself, and stopping to say hello.

All manner of things would be the subject of conversation: how the local ball team was doing, whether you should begin sprinkling your garden daily, and what to do with your kids who refused to come into the house even after the street lights went on. For those too young to remember, these were the days before play dates. Back then that meant going down the block, standing in front of your friend’s house and calling through the open door “oh for Maaaaaaaaaaa.” Can Mary come out and play?”

Everyone did it; block strolling, that is. It wasn’t planned. Either it was simply required by the temperature in the house or because it was a fine spring day and you wanted to be out smelling the Catalpa trees in bloom. It was also an easy way to meet the new neighbors and have them meet you without

Watching and Listening

Video Series – FGC
“The Jewels of Quakerism — Witness and Testimony”
The fourth in a seven part series. This episode talks about some of the early traditions of social witness among Friends and the experiential understanding of testimony. Filmed at Pendle Hill Retreat Center as part of a course in 2009.

Podcast – Scene On Radio
“The Repair”
With help from historians, leading thinkers, activists, and producers in other countries where climate change hit early and hard, this traces the evolution of the colonizing, extractive Western culture that has driven us into the ecological ditch, and then looks at potential solutions—the repair.
having to knock on their door to ask permission to, well, be neighborly.

In addition, there was always the porch on the block that had someone sitting there with whom you always felt comfortable. That someone could tell you how to cook a soft-boiled egg (put the egg in cold water, bring to a boil and boil for 3 minutes); what to do with a bee sting (remove the stinger and put clean mud on it. The mud pulls the poison out as it dries. Unless, of course, you are allergic to bees; in which case, get yourself to the hospital immediately); and, what to do with a fussy baby (dip the pacifier in a tiny bit of sugar). Sometimes their advice included what to do if your spouse continually goes to the basement to work on his hobby, leaving you alone or your kids go to their rooms after school without talking to you. Often there was a discussion of recipes, helpful hints and traditions (sometimes they were like yours while often they weren’t). Life was made of stuff like that.

My block had Aunt Ella. She was born at the time that people got around by horse and buggy and lived through the moon landings and space station. Born on one continent and living on another, along the arc of her life, she collected recipes, people and wisdom. This was her wealth; living life simply, the results of which was she was able to focus herself and her spirituality.

So dear friends, writ large and small, we will from time to time visit Aunt Ella on her porch and meander through traditions, recipes, events; in general, life. You might not always agree with Aunt Ella. That’s ok. Aunt Ella accepted that you had a different viewpoint; she even changed her traditional meatball recipe once to add garlic, after she had lunch at the Italian neighbor lady’s house. She wants to hear your viewpoints. Mostly, she wants you to engage in life with her. It’s a wild ride! Sit back and enjoy it.

Traditions

Remember the song from *Fiddler on the Roof*, “TRADITION?” It was as though the whole song was written in All Caps. You can see the importance of tradition when dealing with a child that is less than 6 years old. They look for the regularity of the patterns in which the family engages. First, we do this. THEN, we do that. Change that routine and the child will question why, often loudly.

Tradition grounds you. It gives you predictability in an otherwise uncertain world. It makes you a part of the web that we call family, nation, country, world and even meeting. Sometimes it does get in the way of progress. Have you ever heard someone say, “We’ve ALWAYS done it that way”? The result is a preference for ritual over progress when what was really needed is to “satisfy the wolf while keeping the goat alive” as the Poles would say.

However, the result of change may be that the original tradition is then forever lost, along with the meaning that was imparted when keeping it. This “loss” or diminution can be seen in a tradition observed by the Poles.

Aunt Ella has ties to Poland. It is a common tradition among Polish people to celebrate Christmas on Christmas Eve rather than Christmas day. Such celebration always includes extended family, friends and neighbors. Depending on the region of Poland, the meal consists of from nine to 14 dishes; half of them sweet, half of them sour and none of them meat. Each diner has next to his/her plate a thin wafer called *Oplatki* that looks very much like a communion wafer. There is also a pink one for the animals of the family. Each person takes up their wafer and goes around the table, offering their wafer to the person in front of them, and in turn, taking a small piece of theirs. Both parties consume their pieces and there is an embrace or handshake with a Merry Christmas wish. This continues until everyone has personally interacted with everyone else.

Aunt Ella knows a number of Americans of Polish heritage. In attending their Christmases the *Oplatki* was only with the head of household who, either at the beginning or end of the meal, would stand up, hold up the *Oplatki*, perhaps say something, and then consume the wafer. One can guess why this practice developed stateside. Aunt Ella surmises that since there was a time that *Oplatki* was very difficult to obtain in the U.S. perhaps, the family wanted to limit its use, in order to preserve the few pieces they had managed to obtain.

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Thus, in trying to practice good stewardship with the Oplatki, a new tradition was born, this being the one of the family’s traditions. What was lost in the birthing was the inclusivity of the original custom. It’s something to remember as we flit about the holiday adding a super hero ornament next to grandma’s traditional angel on the Christmas tree or, dare we say, a Christmas hymn to Meeting for Worship. Tradition is a method of stewardship, but should include the ability to grow. We can have both.

2021 Piedmont Friends Yearly Meeting Epistle
Sixth Annual Session, Fourth Month, 2021

Greetings to Friends everywhere,

As the Covid-19 pandemic continued to grip our world, the 2021 Piedmont Friends Spring Retreat met virtually April 9-11 for a weekend of fellowship, worship and the Piedmont Friends Yearly Meeting (PFYM) annual sessions. Friends gathered from Piedmont Friends Fellowship (PFF) and PFYM monthly meetings and worship groups in North Carolina, Virginia, and South Carolina. Guests from other meetings and Friends organizations were warmly welcomed. The theme for the retreat was Cultivating the Garden of Diversity and Inclusion, with Friends reflecting on the query: What is most on my heart as we cultivate the garden?

The Friday evening roll call of participating meetings included a Native American Friend reading names of the nations and tribes whose ancestral lands the meetinghouses currently use. Small groups reflected on queries that focused on the retreat’s theme, offering opportunity for sharing, rich discussions and making personal connections.

The Saturday morning session welcomed author and educator Niambi Jaha-Echols speaking on the topic Healing the Illusion of Our Separateness: Cultivating the Garden of Diversity and Inclusion. The deeply thoughtful workshop led Friends into an exploration of colonialism in the Quaker community and to re-imagine Piedmont Friends as a blooming, flourishing diverse society. She shared her own persuasion of being “pro-inclusionist” toward combating racism; to acknowledge that each of us carries within us not only “that of God,” but inherited trauma and attitudes that we must address and heal. Friends were deeply grateful for Niambi’s insightful presentation and the gift of our time together searching for and celebrating our oneness.

The retreat included an intergenerational art activity centered on the Hamsa Hand, an ancient Middle Eastern symbol of the Hand of God. Participants traced and illustrated their own hand’s silhouette while the deeper meaning the symbol holds within major religions was explained.

All gathered into a spirit of worship for the Piedmont Friends Yearly Meeting annual session. Friends shared in the work of the yearly meeting, received reports from PFYM representatives to various Friends organizations, and reflected on the year’s accomplishments, including our individual and meeting adaptations for the pandemic. It was reported that Piedmont Friends, under the spiritual care of PFYM, will serve as the host for the 2022 FGC Gathering in Radford, VA.

The 2021 Piedmont Friends Spring Retreat closed with Sunday morning meeting for worship. Guest Ron Echols concluded worship by filling the space with the healing tones of his singing bowls. Friends departed holding a deep sense of gratitude for the weekend together, for deepening personal connections, and for the contributions of Piedmont Friends in the larger Quaker world and in the Religious Society of Friends.

Shared in peace,
Sally Freeman and Paul Klever, Co-clerks, PFYM
(Piedmont Friends Yearly Meeting includes Meetings and Worship Groups in North and South Carolina as well as parts of Virginia.)
Holding On
Travis DuPriest
Kenosha-Racine Worship Group

My whole life, in some form or another, someone has been telling me to Let Go.

So, I was glad when the instructor said unto me: Hold on! Stay with the stillness.

So, Holding On, in some form or another, is my new practice, but to what?

Something hidden, I think, something beneath the edge of thought, something like the invisible geometry of a Botticelli or da Vinci painting.

Perhaps something new, something like wisdom. A palpable silence, imminent like a cat.

(Editor’s Note: Travis died in June 2021, but submitted this poem before his sudden death. Poetry was the voice closest to his heart. He published poems in a number of journals and published a number of poetry collections: “Soapstone Wall,” “Summer Storm on the James,” “Noon at Smyrna,” “Hours of the Day.” Additionally, he published “Picking Up Sticks: Meditations on Rest and Relationship.” This poem, published posthumously, reflects the essence of his spiritual journey.)

Meditation on Stained Glass
Carl Houtman
Madison Friends Monthly Meeting

While living in France, I had the chance to visit a couple grand cathedrals. I have a memory of the rose window at Notre-Dame de Paris. I think it survived the fire. The day we visited, the sun was out, and the window cast shafts of colored light in the candle smoke. The beauty transported me. Another time I visited Sacré-Cœur. In this case, it was the evening, and getting dark outside. The windows were black planes above us. While the evening mass was inspiring, the pipe organ filled my ears, and the candle glow warmed me, the windows did not have their power. Unless illuminated from behind, stained glass is just another dark void.

Drawing on this metaphor, we are all windows illuminated by the Divine. Each of us bends the light coming through us. Each of us has our own unique colors. Each of us has defects that refract the light. Each of us have had our glass tempered by struggles. The wonder of Quaker Meeting is that we can naturally embrace the wide diversity of light passing through us. The origin of the power is the same for everyone, but we each transmit it in our own unique way. By combining our lights, we come closer to the Divine.
As I think of those who are no longer with us physically, I realize we are all stained-glass windows in progress. Each person we meet presents a chance to exchange glass. We carry forward with pieces of each other. Some people have given me bigger pieces, for example, my parents and family. Other parts are small but show brilliantly. I am a complicated window made up of the bits I have collected from others. We are blessed to have each other. In all our diverse, glorious, and messy interactions, we are building our windows. We are providing a way for the Divine power to shine on the earth.

Author’s Note: I made the wooden frame window in honor of my grandmother Houtman’s birthday. During the celebration, each family member held a marble as we honored the part she played in each of our lives. Afterwards, the marbles were collected and framed for her. It sat in her window until she died.

I am excited about the work I do with Quaker Voluntary Service, “an experiment at the intersection of transformational spirituality and activism, a year-long program for young adults.” (Quaker Voluntary Service, n.d.)

I’m excited about this work because we are changing the world. These young adults are creating the kind of world that we want to live in.

The Quaker Voluntary Service (QVS) Fellows have been socially and politically active before coming to QVS, all express an interest in spirituality and many express an interest specifically in Quaker values and practices. These values are presented up front in marketing the QVS opportunity. I’m excited about this work because we are spreading the values of Quakerism.

The Fellows live together in an intentional community with all the struggles that this involves.

Each of the Fellows has a mentor, called a Spiritual Nurturer, who is a Friend, and who listens to the struggles and questions that arise in dealing with all the new experiences in the QVS year. The Spiritual Nurturer is there to support the Fellow’s spiritual development through the year. Several deep, ongoing friendships have formed from this relationship.

Each Fellow is matched to a work site before the start
of the program year. The work sites are selected based in part on values of equality, peace, integrity, earth care, and community. The work sites agree to give the QVS Fellow work that will significantly contribute to the organization, ideally developing new capacity for the organizations where they have their yearlong position.

**This year the worksites are:**

**Minnesota State Horticultural Society** - working with communities to beautify local spaces and grow healthy foods for the neighborhood,

**Open Arms of Minnesota** - providing healthy food for people facing life threatening illnesses,

**Rainforest Action Network** - challenging companies responsible for deforestation and climate change,

**Our Savior’s Housing** - helping people transition from homelessness to new homes,

**AMAZEWorks** - offering anti-bias training for workplaces and communities,

**Bridging** - providing furnishings for people moving out of homelessness,

**COPAL** (Communities Organizing Power and Action Latino), organizing across cultures and organizations to create justice and equity for Latinx Minnesotans.

I’m excited about this work because it’s fun! The participants in the Local Support Community (LSC), made up mostly of local Quakers, sometimes including QVS alumni, prepared a beautiful house for the Fellows. Let me paint you a picture: a fine old house on Park Ave just south of downtown Minneapolis. Yes, it is a run-down part of town, but has lots of character. The second and third floors are the QVS residence. The house is fully furnished with an elegant dining room table and chairs, handsome living room couch and chairs, and each of the six bedrooms has its own desk, bookshelf, chair and plants. The household gathers for dinner several nights a week. They meet for business every couple of weeks using Quaker business practices to reach consensus decisions. The Fellows experiment with Quaker worship in their home and visit local Friends Meetings to join in worship there.

The LSC creates community events to get to know each other. We hold silly, even hilarious events, to raise money to support the Quaker Voluntary Service program. It is expected that each location (Atlanta, Boston, Minneapolis, Philadelphia and Portland) will raise $10,000 annually to support the program.

I will paint you another picture, a welcome event that was held annually for several years before the pandemic. It was an outdoor gathering in the front yard of the Twin Cities Friends Meetinghouse, a food truck selling Middle Eastern food, a New Orleans jazz band playing on the porch, Friends and the new QVS Fellows gathered at standing tables in the yard. At our first welcome event, Cannon Valley Friends presented a hand-made quilt to the house. We gathered later in the Meetinghouse to get to know each other better through questions and answers.

I’m excited about the QVS program because it is extending the impact of the Quakers in the Twin Cities in several ways. They extend our Quaker presence at their respective worksites. Some of the QVS Fellows put out the word about actions for social justice and local Friends show up. Some of the alumni choose to live in the Twin Cities and that group is enlarging our Quaker community. Having these young adults present in local Quaker activities, in our Meetings for worship, and in our Local Support Committee meetings is great fun. Two of the alumni have been local coordinators for the QVS program. This is a key position overseeing programming and work sites and household functions.

Many young people of my parent’s generation had seminal experiences in the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) work camps, where they were first introduced to the values of the Society of Friends and...
where they could express their idealism in action. Many of these young people became lifelong Quakers. QVS provides a similar experience but also goes deeper in the commitment to living in community and exploring spirituality.

How can Quakers have an impact in the world? There are many ways. Our stand on social and political issues can be made known. We can identify ourselves as Quakers when we are at public events. We can clearly mark our meetinghouses as Quakers (Society of Friends). We can extend an invitation to those who are interested to come visit. We can teach children the values of the Society of Friends in our homes, in Quaker schools and camps and colleges. We can support and applaud our young people making meaningful contributions to better the world we live in. Northern Yearly Meeting has made a substantial budgetary commitment to the MSP QVS program, now going into its fourth year. Thank you for making this possible. Thank you for continuing to make this possible.

If you would like to see the bios of current Fellows and learn more about their work sites, check out www.quakervoluntaryservice.org

We are seeking champions for the QVS program within Northern Yearly Meeting. If this program inspires you, consider whether you could spread the word about QVS events within your community or even join the Local Support Committee (LSC). With the advent of Zoom, Friends could join our Zoom game nights or Zoom candlelight dinners or the LSC from anywhere in Northern Yearly Meeting! If this speaks to you, contact cynthiabartoo@gmail.com

Upcoming Dates

Combining Virtual and In Person Worship What Are the Possibilities?
Sunday Jan 9, 2:00 pm
NYM communications committee will host an online session to consider how meetings and worship groups might incorporate virtual into in-person worship.

Interim Session (Virtual)
February 17-20, 2022

Deadline for Spring Issue
April 2, 2022

NYM Annual Session
May 27-30, 2022

Friends General Conference Gathering
July 3-9, 2022