

Reading Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

July and August 2017 Newsletter

“Maybe these trees can teach us something about ourselves. Me and I and you, we’re nothing. We’re little snapshots in time, and we’ll soon be gone. This grove has burned in huge fires during the past millennia. Redwoods don’t die if they burn. A redwood can be burned to a blackened spar, and afterward it goes, ‘Wooah,’ and just grows back. Look at Kronos. It’s been hammered. It’s dying. And it’s more beautiful than ever. These trees can teach us how we can live. We can be hammered and burned, and we can come back, and be more beautiful as we grow.” *Steve Sillett, a biologist who loves to climb the tallest trees, particularly redwoods, and studies the life in their crowns, is speaking to his wife Marie and a friend, who are also experienced tree climbers. from The Wild Trees: A Story of Passion and Daring by Richard Preston*

August 2017 Calendar

First Day, August 13 10am 6th Street Meetinghouse
Hosts: Heather Ehrlich and John Rivera

Tuesday, August 15 7pm Peace and Social Concerns
Committee meets in the Penn Room. Blair Seitz,
contact

First Day, August 20 10am 6th Street Meetinghouse
Hosts: Judy Ballinger and Blair Seitz
Caln Quarter meets at Old Caln Meeting House
(see article to right).
3:30pm — Vigil at the Berks County Family
Detention Center

First Day, August 27 10am 6th Street Meetinghouse:

September 2017 Calendar

First Day, September 3 10am 6th Street Meeting-
house Hosts needed. Last day of worship at
Maiden Creek. (No potluck)

First Day, September 10 Worship resumes at 6th
Street Meetinghouse for all. Meeting for Business
follows Meeting for Worship.

Tuesday, September 12 6pm Reading and Exeter
Meeting Friends prepare supper for Opportunity
House folks. Volunteers welcome. Beth Finlay,
contact.

Schuylkill Meeting leads The Way Forward

When Caln Quarter Friends gather on August 20 at the Old Caln Meeting House, they will learn about a new Quaker organization. How did it come to be? Larry Mackenzie of Schuylkill Meeting explains:

“In the wake of the 2016 Presidential election, Friends at Schuylkill Meeting became aware that many of us along with friends and neighbors were stricken with fears and doubts about the future. In a changed political climate, what would be done about jammed prisons, racial injustice, fearful immigrants, school inequality and many other harsh problems? The Meeting decided to sponsor a kind of threshing session for all concerned to share their feelings and thoughts. Large numbers of Friends and non-Quakers attended this and follow-up meetings—outgrowing the meetinghouse.

With newfound energy and commitments, we were led to form a new organization that would sustain our renewed civic efforts. As Quakers and allies, we wanted to better understand key public policy issues and to facilitate a higher level of engagement with our fellow citizens and with political leaders. We also sought fresh ways of being effective on behalf of causes of deep interest to all of us.

We called the new organization: The Way Forward. Its mission, all agreed, would be to:

- Defend the vulnerable
- Practice courageous dialog
- Resist injustice and fear

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Reading Monthly Meeting, 108 North Sixth Street, Reading, PA - www.readingfriendsmeeting.org



Notes of the Summer Reading Monthly Meeting for Business Friday, August 4, 2017

Janet Lamborn, clerk Jim Lamborn, recording clerk

Present: Judy Ballinger and Blair Seitz, Ann Bodnyk, Judy and Phil Bohne, Jeanne Elberfeld, Charlie Gilbert, Jim Hiatt, Tom Hughes, Bonnie and Carl Knutsen, Betty and Taylor Lamborn, Roger Lawn, Nan and Jim Morrissey, Joe Morrissey, Marie Ryan

{Enjoying a beautiful summer evening at Maiden Creek, Friends gathered in a circle of lawn chairs, eating the suppers they had brought as the meeting proceeded.}

Reports—The minutes of Meeting for Business, Sixth Month, 11, 2017 were approved. Ann Bodnyk presented the Treasurer’s Report for the first six months of 2017. Contributions slightly exceed expenses because some meeting members have chosen to pay ahead. The Treasurer’s Report was accepted.

The Hedge at Maiden Creek

Taylor Lamborn presented his concerns over the ageing 800’ long hedge that borders the Maiden Creek property and separates it from the road. The hedge has been deteriorating for a few years and is now well past its prime. It cannot tolerate dry weather or wet feet. Taylor consulted with the county agent and found him to be of little help. Two members of our meeting, Heather Ehrlich and Jennifer Hanf, both master gardeners, have considered the problem and recommend that we tear out the hedge this fall and plant a new hedge of inkberry, a native holly, in the Spring.

It would be a serious undertaking to remove the entire hedge and we would need about 160 plants, placed 5’ apart to start a new hedge. The cost would be close too \$3,000.

One friend suggested that we consider planting a variety of plants to avoid the problems of a monoculture. Another asked if we could do away with the hedge altogether. Janet Lamborn, who lives at Maiden Creek, said that the hedge gives her a feeling of privacy and safety. People walk their dogs and ride their horses along this road and the hedge keeps them and their messes away from our property.

The hedge sits on our property line. The land on the other side bordering the road is owned and maintained by the Reading Area Water Authority.

Since neither Jennifer nor Heather were able to attend the meeting, Friends decided to postpone any decision until September. Roger Lawn suggested we establish a hedge fund. For a picture and description of the Inkberry, see <https://www.thespruce.com/densa-inkberry-holly-versatile-native-option-2131850>.

What to do about First Day School?

Charlie Gilbert reviewed the challenges of First Day School, particularly that we have a shortage of teachers and students and no set schedule for Fall. After a thoughtful discussion, Friends agreed that having lessons prepared and in a box ready for use if children did attend, was the best solution for now.

Homeless Man in our side yard

Charlie Gilbert reviewed his efforts to locate the homeless man who is storing his belongings by our side door. He has learned that this man is allowed to sleep on the Trinity Lutheran back porch, but not to store his things there.

The trash pile with large pieces of cardboard is growing and attracting vermin. Concerned for the safety and health of Friends, Charlie will press to remove the piles by the end of August. Jeanne Elberfeld urged Charlie to leave a note of what he intends to do, so the man has time to collect his stuff. Charlie also noted that city trash often overflows in front of our meetinghouse along the fence. The meeting thanked Charlie for his efforts to solve this problem.

(See update on Page 3)

Reports

Those who attended the called session of PYM on June 24th and the PYM Annual Sessions in July shared their thoughts and experiences with Friends. Racism and how to deal with it within PYM and local meetings were the main topics at both gatherings.

Announcements

Shape Note Singing: September 2, Saturday, 10am—4pm, Maiden Creek Meeting House

The Taste of Hope Gala Fundraiser for Family Promise will be held Thursday, September 28. See Judy Ballinger if you wish to support our gift basket donation (by end of August)

A vigil will be held at the Berks County Family Detention Center on First Day, August 20 at 3:30pm

PYM needs a representative from Caln Quarter to serve on the PYM Nominating Council

- from Bonnie Knutsen

Meeting Larry

Note: On Saturday morning, August 5, 2017, Charlie Gilbert found and met Larry, the homeless person who has been storing his belongings by our side door. The following are excerpts of an account by Charlie of this first meeting between a member of our meeting and Larry.

This morning I went to the 6th Street Meetinghouse to begin taking the cardboard away. I noticed a new suitcase under the pile and thought the gentleman might be nearby. I found him asleep on the back porch of Trinity Lutheran Church. I woke him up and he immediately introduced himself as Larry.

He was very friendly and explained that he is allowed to sleep there and that "David", who is apparently a custodian at TLC, makes him breakfast and coffee on weekdays. He said it was the only place where he could stay that did not require that he attend their services.

I introduced myself and asked if he was a long time Reading resident. He said yes but he had traveled away from Reading for a year or two and returned because it was "home". I asked him where he grew up in Reading, but he said he has no memory of those years.

I explained that we need to start cleaning up the accumulation of cardboard and trash next door and asked him to get his bedding together and bring it over so we could choose some other things that I could take away. He came over a few minutes later and we began to pull out cardboard and plastic he wanted to save to keep his "stuff" dry and set some of it apart that I would take away.

As soon as we started I was surprised to find that a lot of what was there was actually clothing wrapped in six or more layers of plastic bags. Some clothing is new and has never been worn. Some was dirty and wet. A lot of trash was mixed in with plastic bottles, some filled with water for him to drink. He wanted to keep most of the plastic bottles even though there were many more than he could ever use.

I explained to him that we needed to clean up the whole area over the next three weeks and he said that he would ask "David" if there was a place he could store his stuff. I encouraged him to do that and to look for himself for a place to keep it.

He told me a story about finding a place in the bushes near 6th and Greenwich Streets that no one ever goes to. He left a bicycle there for a couple of hours and it was stolen. I suggested that if he could find a place for his stuff, I would help him transport it there. I reminded him several times that the area

needed to be cleared before the end of the month

I explained that we had considered using the yard for the children, but felt we couldn't do so with all of the trash there. He then asked if the building (meetinghouse) was being used. I told him about our faith, the use of another meetinghouse in the summer and how our worship is conducted. He seemed surprised that the building was being used at all. He said he chose our spot because it was so private...

We worked together for about thirty minutes sorting through the stuff. It was full of bugs of all kinds, flies, what looked like fleas and other small insects. There were mouse droppings on the cardboard and the ground. When I mentioned that, he said he never saw mice and that only squirrels had been there. I hadn't brought trash bags, so I left behind a lot of items that need to be disposed of. We put together a pile of cardboard about two feet high. He helped me tie it up and carry it to my SUV. I also took a small bag of trash and bottles. Larry thanked me profusely for being a nice man and not just taking his stuff away without giving him a chance to go through it or move it. All told I took away maybe 10% of the cardboard.

Larry is a pleasant man of medium height with sandy hair and beard. He seems to be in his late 50's or early 60's and is not threatening. Aside from a severe memory deficit he is a "hoarder." It may be difficult to keep him focused on the task of removing his stuff. We might benefit from speaking with "David" at Trinity.

from Charlie Gilbert
Care and Concern Committee

* * * * *



Homeless in Oley

Heather Ehrlich seeks a home for this kitten who wandered into her yard this summer. Probably a male, he looks to be about 3-4 months old. Heather says he likes to eat and play. (Ah, don't we all?)

Friendly Readers chose Tribe

The Friendly Readers have chosen Tribe: On Homecoming and Belonging (2016) by Sebastian Junger for their next book discussion, Monday, October 16. (Time and location to be announced.)

Only 192 pages long, Tribe explores our need for belonging, for community in a 21st-century culture that does not offer that gift easily.

One reviewer wrote: "This is not a book about war, the military or PTSD. It's about the loss of belonging, and of caring for others as we do about the ones closest to us."

Junger is the author of The Perfect Storm and co-directed the Academy Award-nominated film, Restrepo.

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Schuylkill Meeting leads the Way Forward

The Way Forward community meets twice a month to hear speakers and to work in committees, currently Environment, Community, Healthcare, Social Justice and Political Action. We encourage each other to reach out to Senators Casey and Toomey and other elected officials on key issues and to form alliances with other organizations.

Representatives active on The Way Forward committees will speak about their experiences and ideas right after lunch on August 20 at Caln Quarter's summer meeting.

For more information Google WayForwardPA.org or contact Larrymackenzie29@comcast.net. You can also visit the website by clicking on <https://sites.google.com/view/wayforwardphx/home>

Hold in the Light Marie Ryan and her husband, Mark Gunlefinger, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.

Happy Birthday to Dean Rohrbach, 8/8, Fran Hoopes, 8/14, Nancy List, 8/22, Thomas Dareneau, 8/31 and Jessica Lamborn, 9/7.

Best Wishes to Nan and Jim Morrissey who are moving August 30 from their Wyomissing home of 37 years to an apartment at The Highlands. Their new address will be posted when they move.

Happy 5th Wedding anniversary to Sheila Kline and Larry Gingrich and to Marie Ryan and Mark Gunlefinger. Both couples were married under the care of our meeting in June of 2012.

Congratulations to Elizabeth Maillie, daughter of Marie Ryan, on her engagement to Will Blair. The Philadelphia couple look forward to a wedding in 2018.

Last Word

The important thing is not to think much, but to love much; and so do that which best stirs you to love.

- St. Therese of Lisieux



Please join us for worship every Sunday this summer at 10am at Maiden Creek or 6th Street Meeting House. We are an unprogrammed meeting, and a member of Caln Quarter and Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. For more information, call 610-372-5345, visit us on Face Book or our web site, www.readingfriendsmeeting.org.

The Reading Monthly Meeting Newsletter is published at our website and in print 10 times a year by the Communications Committee. Send news for the September newsletter to Bonnie Knutsen, bknutsen@ptd.net by First Day, September 10. Submit address, telephone or Email changes to Carl Knutsen at webagent@readingfriendsmeeting.org.

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