



Jim Altman

THIRD HAVEN FRIENDS MEETING

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April, 2026 Newsletter

“...in the sharp crisis of 1917...we were conscious of a divine leading, and we were aware, even if only dimly, that we were ‘fellow-laborers with God’ in the rugged furrows of the somewhat brambly fields of the world.” *Rufus Jones 1937 Faith and Practice 2018, p.170*

Third Haven Friends Meeting Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business Eighth Day, Third Month, 2026

Opening Silent Worship: Clerk Ben Tilghman opened the meeting at 11:25 a.m. with a moment of reflection.

Attendance: (hybrid) Jim Altman, Michael Berry, Lorraine Claggett, Susan Claggett, Kristen Hawkinson, Marsie Hawkinson, Amy Kimball, Bill Lane, Marie Leonard, Steven Meixner, Beth Mufson, Clinton Pettus, Kathryn Pettus, Cynthia Quast, Dee Rein, Nancy Robbins, Bill Schauer, Ellen Schecter, John Schreiner, Priscilla Sener, Jonathan Slocum, Sheryl Southwick, Ben Tilghman, Paige Tilghman, Heidi Wetzell, Jonathan Williams, Mary Yancey

Comments on Third Query (Deepening our Faith: Spiritual Nurture)

This query is the query that includes all queries and we should concentrate more on our hearts than thinking. At some time, we should discuss the nature of the second question. “What is the nature of our shared experience of the Divine and how do we nurture our collective growth and spiritual transformation?” Others answers would be of interest.

Appreciation was expressed for presenting queries throughout the month in pieces, which allows deeper digestion.

Approval of minutes for Second Month Business Meeting Approved



Clerk's Desk- *Ben Tilghman*

Third Haven is finally duly legal and incorporated as a business entity in Md. and we have accomplished all tasks desired at Shore United Bank, simplifying work for treasurers.

All clerks will meet March 14th from 9:30-11:30. Agenda will follow. Ongoing conversation is occurring re taking over maintenance of Cecil (Chester River Meeting) burial ground. A clearness committee will be formed to undertake clearness of maintenance and ownership of this ground, which was given to Chester River Meeting in the 1980s by Third Haven Friends Meeting.



Hospitality Annual Report-*Paige Tilghman* Accepted

The Hospitality Committee meets ad-hoc and includes Beth Mufson, Jonathan Williams, Bill Schauer, Terry Thomas Primer, Christine Swaine and Nell Folmar. We rotate responsibility to offer hospitality at the rise of meeting with a signup sheet on the refrigerator, and anyone from Meeting is welcome to contribute or participate. We will be offering an App called Sign up Genius to all who want to participate. We have organized the basic supplies to be available. We have ordered large round matching table cloths for the round tables.

Comments: Hospitality is vital to our life here, to get to know people deeper, and to cooperate with other committee events. Note that the Hospitality budget is for hospitality at the rise of meeting. Other events are the financial responsibility of the sponsoring committee. Prior to the construction of the Common Room hospitality used to be in the Brick Meeting House with food passed through the now closed window at the back of the room.



Budget and Finance *Bill Lane*

The Third Haven organization is in good shape financially because everyone has been generous. We are interested in fixing maintenance issues as needed. The budget needs approval in June to start July 1. It will be submitted in May Meeting for Business first reading leading to June approval. Think about projects committees would like to do and include them and costs in your budget proposal. Our budget has varied from \$55thousand to 75 thousand over the years.



Financial Update-Kristen Hawkinson/Janet Kemp

Treasurers are willing to work with committee clerks to develop budget proposals. Please send to thmmtreasurer@gmail.com



Testimonies and Concerns Mary Yancey

Peace Vigil Update

Our now approved permit application will need renewal annually per Town of Easton ordinance passed in the last year. This allows police to plan and staff advance called gatherings. Included is a one-million-dollar liability insurance certificate, which we have, and \$100 application fee.

We will be inviting other congregations to join us. We prefer a foundational Third Haven presence attending on a regular basis.

Ice Readiness Discussion

Third Haven's process to develop Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Border Patrol responses started months ago with consultation with a local immigration attorney who inspected buildings on the site to discuss private vs. public. Private areas may only be accessed by governmental agencies with a judicial warrant. Public spaces may be entered. The community and trustees who have ownership have decisions to be discussed. The published papers seen in announcements will be discussed at two arranged meetings to cover these guidelines and how we want to express ourselves re these buildings should ICE or Border Patrol enter this property. A preliminary injunction entered last Feb. in Md. essentially said ICE and BP cannot enter places affiliated with Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. There are exceptions to this, so we can't take refuge in that injunction. Talbot County has been a target of ICE activities so we need to discuss the issue. Jim Altman is available to answer questions. Following the two meetings we will discuss the issue at the next business meeting. Discussion meetings will be Tuesday, March 10th at 6pm and Monday, March 16th at 6 pm. Discussion will cover whether each building should be considered public or private, what resultant signage is necessary, website information concerning access, and visitation access for historical purposes. Think about what you believe to be the case and what you want to be the case. How has the property been treated thus far? Is this reasonable? How does it fit with the Trustees agreement with Md. Historic Trust? The situation is nuanced.

Comment: One person suggested considering the historical Maryland Religious Code.

New Business

Property and Grounds committee welcomes input on repair and maintenance needs. Please send information to Nancy Robbins.

Immigration If you know of a non-US citizen, you can get information to help them from Susan Claggett.

Closing Silent Worship 12:27 p.m., D. Rein, Recording Clerk

Third Haven Events



Friendly Groups, arranged by Pastoral Care continue to meet, sharing fellowship and Quaker thoughts together.



Michael Van Hoy Michael Van Hoy, an active member of Greene St. Meeting in Germantown, part of Philadelphia, PA., spoke about his recent trip to Israel and the West Bank, on March 1 following hospitality. He presented shared insights into the challenges faced by people there as well as the hospitality and interactions he experienced.

Old Meeting House Thoughts After the rise of Meeting and hospitality on April 19, under the auspices of the Worship and Ministry Committee, Jim Altman will be sharing impressions about the Old Meeting House based on the article below. Others are invited to share their thoughts and feelings about the Old Meeting House during that discussion.

THE SPIRIT OF THE OLD MEETING HOUSE

Jim Altman



When my daughter and I first entered the Old Meeting House in the Fall of 2023, I did not know what I would find. I knew only that Wikipedia said that it was the oldest surviving Quaker Meeting House in the United States, and that it had been in continuous use since 1684. What I found surprised me. There was no pulpit or raised platform on which presiding clergy stood to speak. There were no stained-glass windows or other religious iconography. The wooden benches and plaster walls were unpainted and unfinished. The benches were organized around an empty space in the middle. This was so different from any church interior I had ever seen.

The simplicity of this centuries-old wood-frame building, without heat on a cold November day, lit only by the natural light of the sun, felt deeply spiritual. Its peaceful silence felt sacred. I was captivated.

A few weeks later, I came back with my camera to explore the Old Meeting House. I wanted to understand its spirit and why I found it so compelling. Since then, I have become a regular attendee of the Third Haven Meeting and an active member of some of its committees. I have been exploring Quakerism.

In the midst of this part of my spiritual journey, I would like to share some of my feelings and thoughts about the Old Meeting House from what I believe to be a Quaker perspective, and I invite you to share your feelings and thoughts about it at a discussion on April 19.

The Quaker Values Manifest in the Old Meeting House

Quakers often identify six pre-eminent testimonies: simplicity, peace, integrity, community, equality, and stewardship. These values have made the Old Meeting House what it is.

Simplicity

Quakers believe in living simply. They seek to pare things down to essentials, so they can focus their attention and efforts more fully on what is most important -- their inward, spiritual growth. They believe that discarding clutter in all aspects of life — or not taking it up in the first place — allows greater access to what really counts.

In terms of architectural style, Quakers seek functional structures without ornamentation, often elegant in their plain design. Not surprisingly, then, there is nothing ornate about the Old Meeting House. It has a wood frame structure with clear and simple lines. The interior of the building shows hand-hewn logs supports at the building's corners and cross pieces; wide pine floorboards; exposed wooden support and ceiling beams; unpainted plaster walls; and unadorned wainscoting. The movable wooden benches are spare and also unpainted, with thin cushions for sufficient, but not excessive, comfort. Once there were beautifully carved balusters under the railings along raised benches, but most of them were removed in 1797 because they did not conform to the then prevailing Quaker standard of simplicity.

Peace

The logbook comments of visitors to the Old Meeting House confirms that I'm not only the person who feels its peacefulness. The setting of the Old Meeting House contributes to that feeling of tranquility. Since 1791, entry has been by way of a long driveway bordered by loblolly pine trees, passing through an old wrought iron gate. The Old Meeting House is surrounded by trees of many generations, with a Quaker burial ground out back. This quiet natural setting separates the sacredness of the Old Meeting House from the everyday hub-bub of a town street and its residences. That helps me leave my everyday self behind.

The burial ground makes its own contribution. Since the late 17th century, it has been a quiet final resting place for Quakers who worshipped in the Old Meeting House. It contains simple markers that date back to 1793; for the century before that, Quakers were buried without markers because markers were considered vain. Like other graveyards, it commemorates the moment when the movement of life yields to the stillness of death.

Inside, the Old Meeting House feels harmonious. In every direction, there is old hand-hewn wood unifying the interior. The arrangement of the benches around an open space creates a balanced floor plan.

The Old Meeting House remains a pre-industrial structure: it has never been updated with the modern conveniences of electricity, heating, or plumbing. Although it has been enlarged, renovated and repaired, whenever those modifications occurred, efforts were made to preserve its pre-modern character. For example, when window panes needed to be replaced in 2023, recourse was made to a German manufacturer for hand-blown glass to match the original.

To me, that pre-modern character is very significant. It more easily evokes my spiritual feelings. The lack of electricity, for example, means that the only source of light in the Old Meeting House is Divine. The natural interplay of sunlight and shadow inside the building symbolizes my ongoing spiritual journey, which has moments of concealment and moments of disclosure, moving from confusion or mystery to clarity or insight, then back again.

Integrity

For Quakers, integrity has to do with the consistency between their outward actions and appearance in the world, and the inward purpose and commitments of their spiritual life. They are committed to living a life that testifies to their direct relationship with the Divine.

The appearance, structure, and interior of the Old Meeting House reflect that. The Old Meeting House is humble. There is nothing pretentious or self-important about it. There is no ornamentation inside or outside. No effort is made to present the Quakers with a house of worship in the architectural style of a religious tradition that is not theirs: there is no steeple, as in the Anglican tradition; there are no Gothic arches; there is no elevated dais or pulpit from which clergy speak to their flock. The Old Meeting House is just a plain space to gather and sit still, in silence, waiting expectantly for the presence of the Divine, in community with those who share that commitment.

The artist James Turrell is a Quaker who has worshipped and was married in the Old Meeting House. What he has written about Quaker Meetinghouses in New England is equally applicable to the Old Meeting House: “[Y]ou will find writ in this humble architecture the presence of a plain people seeking direct contact with a simple Truth.”

More symbolically, the Old Meeting House allows an interpenetration of the outside and the inside. Sunlight streams into the Old Meeting House. Some Quakers seek to sit and worship in

certain parts of the Old Meeting House so as to be physically touched directly by the sunlight. During worship in warm weather, open windows and doors allow worshippers to feel and hear the natural surroundings — a breeze wafting through the building, birdsong, the rustle of tree branches and leaves, the patter of raindrops. Sitting still and silent, especially with eyes closed, sometimes I feel that there is no barrier between the inside of the Old Meeting House and the natural world outside. It's as if I am worshipping in the midst of nature, as some of the earliest Quakers once did.

Community and Equality

Third Haven is a spiritual community, and the quintessential spiritual experience is our communal worship.

This priority may seem at odds with the Quaker view of worship that each person can attain a direct relationship with the Divine, which individualizes each person's faith and spiritual journey. But Quakers believe that when they worship in community, their individual worship is greatly enhanced. For some Quakers, this is simply a matter of numbers: the more worshippers, the stronger the Divine presence. Communal worship signifies group unity, and the solidarity of worshipping with others supports and encourages the efforts of individual Quakers as they seek the Light. Vocal ministry — when an individual worshipper interrupts the silence of the communal worship to share with the gathered community a spiritual insight — can benefit other worshippers or the community at large.

Quakers believe that all people — no matter the sex, gender or sexual orientation, race, or ethnic background — are equal from the point of view of the Divine. However, long before the 1797 renovation, there once were raised benches and railings used to seat elders in the community. Today, those raised benches are no longer used except during Quaker Weddings and Memorial Services, when the Clerk of the Meeting or the Officiants sit on those benches and conduct the ceremony or explain the Quaker procedure to those non-Quakers attending.

For many decades, all the movable benches in the Old Meeting House faced the long Eastern wall. Then, early in this century, that arrangement was changed so that the movable benches in the front room of the first floor now face each other around an open space. That change was prompted by the wish to create a more intimate community — people facing each other so there is more visual interaction. This change also promoted more equality, since there was no unidirectional focus that could create a hierarchy based on proximity to the front.

The first floor of the Old Meeting House has always had two rooms of equal size, each with a separate door. Originally, one door was for men, one door was for women. They were viewed as symbolizing the equality of the sexes, since women, like men, had their own doorway in which to enter. That gender equality was the traditional Quaker view. From its very beginnings, women were leaders of Quaker communities. Margaret Fell, the “Mother of Quakerism,” was an outspoken advocate for women's spiritual equality. Elizabeth Harris, likely the first Quaker to set foot in Maryland, has been considered the “Founder of American Quakerism.”

Despite the two rooms and the two doors, men and women have always been free to mingle during worship. But before the 20th century, during the Meeting for Business, men and women were separated so that they could discuss their concerns separately: the men would discuss financial matters and occasionally a man's "clearness" for marriage; the women would discuss a woman's "clearness" for marriage and other intimate matters. In 1797, a central paneled partition with two folding doors was added to the first floor of the Old Meeting House. The panels could be moved up and down, much like double hung windows, and the folding doors could be kept open or closed. Since December 1879, that partition has not been used during Meetings for Business to segregate the sexes.

The values of both community and equality were furthered by the 2013 construction of the ramp along the West side of the Old Meeting House, which enables persons with mobility challenges to use wheelchairs and walkers to enter the Old Meeting House more easily.

Stewardship

Quakers view themselves, individually and as a community, as temporary trustees of their material, social and spiritual resources, including the natural world, with an obligation to use those resources wisely and to preserve them for future generations.

The Old Meeting House is, and has been, a continuing creation. The major renovation occurred in 1797, when the footprint of the building was enlarged. Shortly after the Civil War, the South entrance was expanded and a pedimented porch was constructed. In 1990, the entire building was raised and put on a new brick foundation. Since 2023, the old glass window panes were replaced, new window sashes and mullions were installed to update the double hung windows, the side doors and window shutters were repaired, a new entrance to the crawlspace along the north wall was created, and new louvers in the north and south gables of the garret were installed for increased ventilation. That costly effort at historical preservation is how a pre-industrial structure retains its character as a vibrant place of worship.

That historical continuity is evidenced by the carved initials on wood columns and the back of the front door, the graffiti on a window frame and the garret's plaster walls, and the inscriptions in the visitors log book that provide echoes of long-ago members who worshipped or married or whose life was celebrated there. The virtual presence of past worshippers creates a sense of continuity with a vibrant spiritual tradition that enhances the holiness of the Old Meeting House. When I attend Meeting there, I feel joined in community with the spirit of those who worshipped there for more than three centuries.