

**New York Yearly Meeting
Fall Sessions
November 8–9, 2008**

Hudson Valley Community College, Troy, NY
Saturday, November 8, 2008

*Ernestine Buscemi, Clerk
Heather Cook, Assistant Clerk
Elaine Learnard, Recording Clerk
Norma Ellis, Reading Clerk*

2008-11-01. The Meeting gathered. Out of the silence, the reading clerk, Norma Ellis (Scarsdale), called the roll, asking Friends to rise by regional meeting.

2008-11-02. The assistant clerk, Heather Cook (Chatham-Summit) read an excerpt (Leonard Kenworthy, 1991) from *Daily Readings from Quaker Writings Ancient and Modern*, Volume II, that describes the meeting for business as “a mood, an atmosphere, a spirit” that is as simple—and as difficult—as the Quaker Meeting for Worship; it is a rare form of democracy especially suited to a religious fellowship that believes in the availability of Divine Guidance in the transaction of business. Ernestine Buscemi (Morningside), Clerk of New York Yearly Meeting, then asked if we were ready to do business and when the body responded “Yes!” she reminded us that the challenge is to be open, to listen fully and discern the will of God.

2008-11-03. Boyce Bengé (Brooklyn) read the 2008 epistle from Ohio Yearly Meeting (Conservative).

2008-11-04. The reading clerk read a memorial minute for John Randall of Scarsdale Meeting, who died suddenly on April 29, 2008, at his home in Yonkers, NY. As had his father in World War II, during the Vietnam conflict John became a conscientious objector, based on his clear understanding of the futility of war. His Peace Corps service and work with war tax resistance and the Peace Tax Campaign were among the many ways that he demonstrated his commitment to the belief that “a Christian follows the example of Jesus.” John and his wife, Nana, often brought people together for good dinners and good work. He was much loved and respected for his living of the peace testimony. Friends spoke of John’s commitment to getting the work done and of how he was remembered at his memorial meeting, by people from all parts of his life, Quaker and other, with a great and encompassing love.

2008-11-05. The reading clerk read a minute of travel for Greta Mickey, from her monthly meeting, Central Finger Lakes Friends Meeting, and endorsed by Farmington-Scipio Regional Meeting on September 20, 2008. Greta travels with a concern to lift up work for peace and social justice. She serves as Peace Concerns Coordinator for New York Yearly Meeting (NYYM) and works with the Fellowship of Reconciliation. Greta spoke of her understanding and central leading that the work of peacemaking begins

within. Friends approved the Clerk's endorsing Greta's minute, which also asks us to share with her meeting how the Spirit leads Greta in her concern for peacemaking.

2008-11-06. Vonn New (Bulls Head-Oswego), reporting for the Communications Committee, provided a brief history of how, when there is a perceived need for action or communication arising between regular sessions, the Clerk and the General Secretary are empowered to take whatever action they deem appropriate, with the advice of senior staff and members of the Liaison Committee. The Communications Committee finds that, because there are Friends who have expertise in some areas and who may be better able to explain particular witness work and other activities, it would be beneficial for others to also be empowered to speak on behalf of the Yearly Meeting. Friends approved giving the Clerk and the General Secretary the discretion to appoint other Friends to speak on an as-needed basis to the media on behalf of the Yearly Meeting.

2008-11-07. Patricia Chernoff (Morningside) brought a request from the National Religious Campaign Against Torture that monthly meetings and individuals endorse the Declaration of Principles for a Presidential Executive Order on Prisoner Treatment, Torture and Cruelty. (See also www.tortureisamoralissue.org and www.nrcat.org.)

2008-11-08. Susan Bingham (Montclair), NYYM Treasurer, presented the Treasurer's Report as of October 31, 2008, which is available in full on the NYYM website (nyym.org). There is a closing balance of \$190,049 with a net change of (-)\$13,362. This is about \$30,000 ahead of where we were at this point last year. Friends received the Treasurer's Report.

2008-11-09. Steven Mohlke (Ithaca) presented the proposed budget for 2009, which he noted is a balanced budget. He described how the process of developing the budget was different this year, as the Finance Committee prepared a detailed expense description of the programs of the Yearly Meeting, using detailed information on staff time, making clear the "fully loaded" costs of doing all we do. This was made available to monthly meetings, inviting—and generating—full discussion of the budget as it relates to our work. Friends approved the proposed 2009 budget of \$540,825, which includes expected income of \$540,825, including the anticipated covenant donations of \$487,225.

2008-11-10. Paula McClure (Montclair) brought business from the NYYM Trustees concerning a minute proposing a relationship between and among New York Yearly Meeting (NYYM), Friends Foundation for the Aging (FFA), and the Aging Resources Consultation and Help (ARCH) program.

Paula provided some background for the minute. At Spring Sessions 2007, Friends approved the sale of the McCutchen Friends Home in North Plainfield, NJ, and understood that the McCutchen board was working on ways to use its assets, which would include the sale of the facilities, seeking ways to continue to assist the elderly. By Summer Sessions 2007, the transition to the Friends Foundation for the Aging had begun, and the McCutchen's facilities had closed. Anita Paul, a member of Schenectady Monthly Meeting, and Barbara Spring, a member of Missoula Monthly Meeting in

Montana now living in the Albany area and attending Albany Monthly Meeting, developed a pilot program in the Albany area called ARCH, which was funded by FFA. At Spring Sessions 2008, NYYM Friends approved the creation of the Committee on Aging Concerns under the Nurture Coordinating Committee. Friends also approved setting up a fund line to receive, hold, and disburse funds received from FFA under the care of the Committee on Aging Concerns. Summer 2008 found Barbara and Anita now paid consultants for FFA, eager to help ARCH change from being a pilot program funded by the FFA to become more a part of NYYM and with the hope of expanding beyond the Albany area. Friends Foundation for the Aging would like NYYM to become fully engaged with the ARCH program by the end of the year. NYYM found itself in a unique position because this would be the first time we as a body would have Friends who would not be staff, not volunteers, but paid consultants, and we needed to work to define how such a relationship could work and provide legal protection to both the individual ARCH consultants and to the corporate structure that is NYYM.

After consultation with lawyers and insurance companies about several possible structures, it was proposed that the consultants, Barbara and Anita, be considered part-time employees of NYYM, paid for with the funds deposited by FFA into the Fund for Aging Concerns maintained in the NYYM treasurer-managed accounts but not part of the operating budget, and supervised by the Committee on Aging Concerns, which is part of the Nurture Coordinating Committee. The description of this committee would need to be expanded in the NYYM Handbook to include the significant new responsibilities. The Fund could also accept grants and contributions from sources beyond those from FFA. This Fund would pay all of the expenses involved, including the additional costs to NYYM for employers' taxes, insurance, and any additional staff time necessary to process administrative responsibilities such as vouchers and bookkeeping. The consultants would be covered under the workers' compensation policy of NYYM and also under the Directors' and Officers' liability policy maintained by the Trustees of NYYM that would cover Errors and Omissions (Malpractice) insurance for the consultants.

The Nurture Coordinating Committee would have the responsibility of the accountability issues involving both the Committee on Aging Concerns and ARCH. The Committee on Aging Concerns would also have the responsibility of reporting to FFA on an annual basis; this report would include an evaluation of the project's effectiveness and a funding proposal for the next year. While it is hoped that the ARCH program will expand to serve other regions of NYYM, it is understood at this time that FFA cannot commit to unlimited funding for extensive expansion and that other sources of funding may be needed for this support. After further consideration of the appropriate terminology, it was determined that the individuals carrying out this work would be "staff members" who are "part-time employees of NYYM". In order to create this proposed structure, the Trustees of New York Yearly Meeting proposed and Friends approved the following minute:

New York Yearly Meeting (NYYM) proposes engaging with Friends Foundation for the Aging (FFA) in support of the Aging Resources Consultation and Help (ARCH) program to assist elderly NYYM Friends and their families with the issues they confront as they

age and to assist Friends in NYYM to consider issues of aging and end of life from a Quaker perspective. Friends Foundation for the Aging would deposit funds into the Fund for Aging Concerns maintained by the treasurer of New York Yearly Meeting and under the care of the Committee on Aging Concerns. These funds will be used to pay part-time staff members working with ARCH, including travel expenses, as well as additional costs to NYYM for employers' taxes, insurance, and any additional staff time necessary to process administrative responsibilities such as vouchers and bookkeeping. These staff members will be part-time employees of NYYM and will be covered under our workers' comp and Directors' and Officers' liability policies. Pending acceptance of this proposal by the Friends Foundation for the Aging at its next meeting, it is expected that the new relationship could begin in January 2009. It is our understanding that Friends Foundation for the Aging is committed to an on-going funding relationship of senior programs under the care of New York Yearly Meeting, based on annual proposals from the Yearly Meeting and on evaluation of the program's effectiveness.

2008-11-11. The reading clerk read a minute of appreciation for Irma Guthrie from the Executive Committee of the Middle Atlantic Region of the America Friends Service Committee for her long, faithful and effective service.

2008-11-12. The minutes of the day's session were read and approved.

2008-11-13. The meeting closed in silent worship.

Hudson Valley Community College, Troy, New York
Sunday, November 9, 2008

Ernestine Buscemi, Clerk
Heather Cook, Assistant Clerk
Karen Reixach, Recording Clerk
Norma Ellis, Reading Clerk

2008-11-14 The meeting entered into worship at 9:00 A.M. From the settled silence, Christopher Sammond (Bulls Head-Oswego), General Secretary of the Yearly Meeting, delivered a message of hope that began with the song *Set My Mind on Freedom*. Speaking of the recent election he said, "When I focused on what a growing throng of people were trying to create, I could feel the life and power in that. When I focused on the lies and smears, I found myself losing hope. There is great power in what we want to create."

We are called as a yearly meeting to see where we are and where we are going. We have done so piecemeal on Friends United Meeting, racism, how we are not incorporating our youth. He stressed that we need to address this intentionally and in a sustained fashion.

There are signs of life—new worship groups are forming throughout our region. New youth groups and stronger youth groups are evolving. Newcomers are arriving.

We are good at welcoming. We are less able to integrate new life and change, so that people stay. We are reluctant to ask people to join, so newcomers feels like ours is a closed circle.

We have much work ahead. We need to move forward with the intention of finding God's vision for us.

2008-11-15 The Clerk welcomed Friends and urged us to speak to each other about what rises for us as a Yearly Meeting, as a region, as a monthly meeting, about what is on our hearts and about the good news in our lives. She reviewed the items of business on our agenda.

2008-11-16 Frederick Dettmer (Purchase), clerk of Witness Coordinating Committee, recommended Naomi Paz Greenberg (Flushing), Greta Mickey (Central Finger Lakes), and Sara Mandolang (Alfred) as representatives of New York Yearly Meeting to the peace conference "Heeding God's Call," sponsored by Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, the Brethren and the Mennonites, to be held in Philadelphia, January 13-17, 2009. Friends approved these appointments.

2008-11-17 Fred provided an overview of the work of the Sharing Fund and urged Friends to dig deep. He stressed that the Sharing Fund is not a pass-through to other organizations other than the Alternatives to Violence Program and Right Sharing of World Resources, which are children of this yearly meeting with active participation of NYYM Friends. He announced that the Witness Coordinating Committee has discerned that the goal for the Sharing Fund should be raised in light of the increased needs and has been set at \$60,000 for 2009.

2008-11-18 Nadine Hoover (Alfred) articulated that her commitment for at least twenty years has been to be faithful. Letting the truth work within us may be uncomfortable and challenging but it brings great power. The Indonesians with whom she works, whatever their religious background, have been reached by the truth and come alive. Their interfaith companionship is a miracle and ground for peace available for all of us. She described the tensions between human rights advocates and those who fear the destruction of the rain forest. She told of the possibilities of bringing together these different concerns and described the commitment to truth of the people she is working with. She plans to return to Indonesia in early 2009 and to bring back further news on a speaking tour after that.

2008-11-19 The reading clerk read the letter written by the General Secretary and the assistant clerk of NYYM to Friends in the Republic of Georgia after violence erupted there this past summer.

August 21, 2008

Dear Friends in Georgia,

Our hearts go out to you as we hear of the violence in your land. We are grieved to hear of the deepening divisions along ethnic lines, and hope that you can help people from all sides of the conflict to remember your common humanity and destiny.

We will be holding you in our prayers as you do the difficult work of tending to the needs of refugees. We trust that service will be a gift to you and to those you serve, ground all of you more deeply in God's love and compassion. We hope that this work strengthens your fellowship and opens doors to your testimony about how God works through you in this service.

You are not alone in this work. Friends from around the world support you. You are in the hearts and prayers of many, and we will be publicizing how Friends from this yearly meeting can send funds to support you in your ministry. Please let us know if we can help you in other ways, as well.

In God's love,

Christopher Sammond, General Secretary
Heather Cook, Assistant Clerk
New York Yearly Meeting
Religious Society of Friends

2008-11-20 The Clerk reported that Greta Mickey, in her role as Peace Concerns Coordinator of New York Yearly Meeting, was invited to communicate with the Friends from the Republic of Georgia on behalf of NYYM. Greta then reported on the situation of the fourteen F(f)riends in Georgia who are working with the United Nations High Commission on Refugees to respond to the 60,000 people displaced by the conflict. These Friends have established a nongovernmental organization (NGO), Friends House Georgia, and have asked us not just for material aid but for skills in conflict transformation. Greta has reached out to a wide variety people with expertise and concern. She plans to visit Friends in Tbilisi in January with funds provided by Witness Coordinating Committee and will bring a grant from the World Ministries Committee to assist with refugee relief administered by Friends House Georgia. She hopes to learn from these people with such depth of character and spirit, and expressed gratitude in being sent in our name to do this work. We pray that the seeds keep growing.

2008-11-21 Helen Garay Toppins (Morningside), coclerk of Prisons Committee, described the history of the Doing Justice Interfaith Coalition. This coalition was inspired by Lawrence (Larry) White, who was active in Quaker worship groups while incarcerated for many years. Larry had given up hope of parole and planned not to appear before the parole board, when a corrections officer urged him not to give up hope. When Larry unexpectedly received parole, he vowed that he would never forget the people who are incarcerated for life without parole. The coalition is working on hope for

lifers, higher education for people in prison, spiritual programs in prisons, and change in prison and parole policy, and he has asked Friends to help.

2008-11-22 Naomi Paz Greenberg, clerk of the Committee on Conscientious Objection to Paying for War, updated Friends on several developments. Naomi reported that the Friends who plan to edit, as a Pendle Hill pamphlet, the amicus brief to the Supreme Court in the case of *Daniel Jenkins v. the Commissioner of the Internal Revenue Service* expect to begin work in the late spring.

She reminded Friends that previously the committee had asked the YM to consider a minute approving an expanded Call, and that this proposed minute had been returned to the committee for further seasoning. The committee feels that they are carrying out this work in other ways. For example, Dan Jenkins (Saranac Lake) is working on a group complaint to an international body and will give a more detailed report at a later date. Almost 100 individuals from various traditions of faith and morality are ready to join in pursuing conscientious objection to paying for war as a human right through this vehicle.

2008-11-23 John Cooley (Central Finger Lakes), clerk of Sessions Committee, witnessed to the housekeeping adventures connected with Fall Sessions. He indicated that Anita Paul, who clerked the Northeast Region's host committee, reports 127 registrants. He noted a youth program was held in conjunction with Fall Sessions.

He then reported on the experience with soliciting comments from attendees at Summer Sessions this year without using a formal evaluation page. Copies are available, and further comments and thoughts are always welcome.

Summer Sessions are scheduled for July 19 – 25, 2009.

2008-11-24 Timothy Johnson (Schenectady), clerk of the Nominating Committee, offered new nominations, corrections, and resignations.

New Nominations

World Ministries Committee

	<i>Class of 2011</i>
Larry Coulthurst	Somerset Hills
Radh Achuthan	Peconic Bay
Susan Weisfeld	Scarsdale
	<i>Class of 2012</i>
Noel Palmer	Westbury
Deborah Wood	Purchase

Sessions Committee

	<i>Class of 2011</i>
Mary Eagleson	Scarsdale
Carol Rice	Bulls Head-Oswego

Powell House Committee

Margaret Morgan-Davie *Class of 2010*
Mohawk Valley
Birdie Condon *Class of 2013*
New Paltz

Black Concerns Committee

Helen Garay Toppins *Class of 2011*
Morningside

Ministry Coordinating Committee

Kathleen Gale *Class of 2012*
Elmira

Witness Coordinating Committee

Greta Mickey *Class of 2012*
Central Finger Lakes
Linda Chidsey Housatonic

Committee on Conscientious Objection to Paying for War

Andrew Mead Von Salis *Class of 2011*
Brooklyn

Epistle Committee

Gale Swiontkowski *Class of 2011*
Amawalk

Friends Peace Team Representative

Susan Nowelsky *Class of 2010*
New Brunswick

Friends Committee on National Legislation

Ron Inskeep *Class of 2011*
Purchase

Personnel Committee

Susan Bingham *Class of 2011*
Montclair

Ministry & Pastoral Care Committee

Amy Willauer-Obermayer *Class of 2011*
Binghamton

Advancement Committee

Class of 2011

Friends General Conference Representative

Virginia Prenot *Class of 2010*
Bulls Head-Oswego

Nurture Coordinating Committee (at large member)

Nancy Sunshine *Class of 2011*
Flushing

Prisons Committee

Anthony Nocella *Class of 2010*
Syracuse

AVP Committee

Anthony Nocella *Class of 2010*
Syracuse

Witness Coordinating Committee

Bobbi Sue Bowers *Class of 2010*
Manasquan

Powell House Committee

Amy Savage *Class of 2010*
Syracuse

New Jersey Council of Churches

Elizabeth Savory *Class of 2009*
Dover-Randolph

Friends approved the nominations. Friends received the corrections and resignations.

2008-11-25 The minutes of the morning session were read and approved.

2008-11-26 Boyce Bengel read the epistle from the young adults from New England Yearly Meeting about the Sabbath time they experienced at the Young Adult Friends Camp in Starksboro, Vermont. Friends ended this session in silent worship.