

**Online via Zoom**

**Tuesday, July 21, 2020, 7:30 p.m.**

*Clerk Jeffrey Aaron (New Brunswick)*  
*Assistant clerk Elaine Learnard (Conscience Bay)*  
*Recording clerk Mary Eagleson (Scarsdale)*  
*Reading clerk Barbra Bleecker (Montclair)*

2020-07-11. Matt Venhaus read some advice on how to participate in a business session held by Zoom. The clerk explained that the process of discerning approval for a proposal will be somewhat different from an in-person meeting. Instead of asking for vocal approval of a proposal or minute, as would be done in a physical gathering, he will ask if anyone has a concern about the matter which should be heard. If no one responds, he will announce that the proposal or minute has been approved.

2020-07-12. The clerk introduced David Male, Ohio Yearly Meeting; Steven Willett, Britain Yearly Meeting; and Tom Roberts, Western Yearly Meeting.

2020-07-13. The Seasoned Business Items from the Spring Sessions were approved by Friends on June 8 as follows:

Endorsement of travel minutes for Peter Murchison (Wilton, attached) and Christopher Sammond (Poplar Ridge)

Approval of the 2<sup>nd</sup> presentation of the NYYM Trustees Handbook revision

Nomination of Peter Phillips (Cornwall ) and Mary Harpster (Rahway & Plainfield) to Trustees; Dawn Pozzi (Rochester) to Sessions Committee; Laura Higgins (Wilton) as recording clerk.

Release of Irene Goodman from Ministry Coordinating Committee and Karen Reixach from recording clerk.

2020-07-14. Anne Liske (Albany) from the State of Society Committee read the first section of their report (attached), which was compiled from State of the Meeting reports sent in by monthly meetings. Because many monthly meetings were still completing their reports when quarantine for Covid-19 was imposed, only 31 meetings were able to send in finished reports. Rather than drafting a report to address the state of the yearly meeting as a whole, the committee decided to read selected quotes on each of several topics.

2020-07-15. Laura Cisar (New Brunswick), NYYM Treasurer, gave the attached 2019 year-end treasurer's report, which would have been reported at spring sessions.

We were fortunate that there were generous donations to Aging Resources Consultation and Help (ARCH) from individuals. In addition to contributions to the ARCH Fund, there was a return of excess premiums from New York Yearly Meeting's healthcare insurance carrier, and spending was less than was budgeted. These changes led to a surplus of \$79,250.03 in the operating budget. At the end of 2018, there was \$5.6 million in designated trust funds; at end of 2019, \$6.7 million.

2020-07-16. Steve Mohlke (Ithaca) reported that we had decided, at Fall Sessions, to divest our funds from fossil fuels, over a period of six years, by moving our funds into their Green Fund. Clerk Jeffrey Aaron wrote a letter to Friends Fiduciary Corporation, which manages our yearly meeting's investments, and told them why we were taking this action. His letter also requested that Friends Fiduciary consider divesting all its funds from fossil fuels. In January, we received a reply which said, in effect, "Thanks, we'll think about it." In March, Friends Fiduciary sent another letter saying they would not add any new fossil fuel companies to their portfolios, and were thinking about whether to go further. Steve then read sections from an email received today (attached) in which FFC announced that its board of directors had revised its policies to include the following addition to their Investment Guidelines:

- Friends Fiduciary excludes companies that explore, extract, produce or refine coal, oil or gas or have carbon reserves. Further, we exclude companies that derive a majority of their revenue from the transportation and storage of these materials, for example, pipeline transport companies.
- We seek to invest in electric utility companies that are transitioning to a lower carbon, sustainable business model. We evaluate companies on their current and future fuel mix and their plans to increase renewable energy capacity.

2020-07-17. Mary Harpster (Rahway & Plainfield), clerk of Financial Services, gave the report from that committee (attached). The Covid-19 pandemic forced the yearly meeting to cancel spring sessions and to hold the current summer sessions remotely. This has necessitated revising the budget for the remainder of 2020, and mainly because the office assistant position at Silver Bay was not needed, the yearly meeting was able to continue the part-time young adult field secretary position for the remainder of 2020 without making any of the other changes to the budget it had anticipated.

Financial Services recommended approval of the proposed revised and balanced 2020 budget (attached), with the understanding that flexibility may be needed going forward as financial realities continue to change. The committee believes the current proposed budget provides a realistic guide to the rest of 2020. No concerns being expressed, the revised 2020 budget was approved.

The committee has begun working on a 2021 budget proposal which, by using some of the 2019 surplus, might be able to support a full-time children/youth/young adult field secretary position. The committee has also begun work on the 2022 budget as well, and invited any Friends who are interested to join them at their next committee meeting, which will be held July 29.

Clerk Jeffrey Aaron reminded the body that at fall sessions 2019, we had approved a budget with the understanding that a revised budget would be presented at spring sessions, 2020. However, because of the pandemic that was not possible before now.

2020-07-18. Laura Cisar (New Brunswick) gave the treasurer's report for 2020 to date.

In mid-March 2020, the COVID-19 outbreak made it necessary to close the yearly meeting office temporarily. At that time, the treasurers and the office staff began to monitor the meeting's cash flow and its ability to access cash to help ensure business continuity.

At the end of March, 2020 there was a deficit of approximately \$41,000. Subsequently, New York Yearly Meeting applied for and received a Small Business Administration Paycheck Protection Plan ("PPP") loan of \$80,400. Beginning in May 2020, this is displayed on its balance sheets as a liability, as it is a loan. However, after 24 weeks, we can apply for forgiveness of this loan. At the end of June, there is a deficit of \$14,000 in the operating account. The invested trust funds, as of June 2020, were valued at \$6.7 million. The May 31 balance sheet is attached.

2020-07-19. Jeffrey gave his report on an interim action taken on July 8.

A statement sent to the governor of New York on holding religious services (attached) states that the undersigned religious leaders will observe science-based recommendations before opening their houses of worship. Jeffrey and Steve Mohlke signed on to this letter.

In response, one Friend asked whether the letter is meant to serve as a guideline for monthly meetings considering whether or when to reopen their meetinghouses. Another quoted Jesus on true worship (John 4:21-23) happening neither in the temple nor on the mountain, but where people worship in spirit and in truth.

2020-07-20. In a spirit of worship, Barbra Bleecker (Montclair) read the FGC pre-gathering epistle from Friends of Color and their Families (attached), repeating in her reading the epistle's words describing pre-gathering attenders' experience of the "rare opportunity of not being othered in Quaker space".

Ministry followed. Friends were deeply moved by the epistle, and by its call to action. A friend spoke of how the words of the epistle resonated with her experience as a Friend of color, and that she holds that experience in tension with the love she feels for her meeting communities. In additional messages, Friends encouraged the yearly meeting as a whole to get under the weight of anti-racism work, decentering whiteness and privilege, so that individually and collectively we may begin to heal and transform ourselves and our society.

2020-07-21. Helen Garay Toppins reported on Black Concerns Committee's development of Action Teams to work on mass incarceration, restoring college programs in prisons, and reducing gun violence. Many Friends have joined one or another of these action teams since they were announced on the weekly emailed Yearly Meeting Updates.

## **Attachments:**

### **Peter Murchison Travel Minute**

*see minute 2020-07-13*

Wilton Quaker Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends  
317 New Canaan Road, Wilton, CT 06897  
[fgcquaker.org/could/wilton-quaker-meeting](http://fgcquaker.org/could/wilton-quaker-meeting)

December 8, 2019

Dear Friends,

We send you our loving greetings with Peter Murchison as he travels in ministry to eliminate gun violence.

Peter, a member of this Meeting for over 40 years, has opened to us his leading to travel among Meetings in the United States and other faith communities with a ministry of gun violence prevention. He will ask others to use their faith and understanding of the Spirit to decide on actions they can take to move our country towards the elimination of gun violence. He will travel in this ministry between the current date and March of 2021.

This Meeting unites with Peter Murchison's leading. We trust that you will benefit as we have from sharing his experiences and insights. Peter's extended family was devastated by the Sandy Hook shootings, which took the life of a loved one. Over the last several years, Peter has increased his activism with a series of activities. He ran a Remembrance Event at our meeting house in 2018 for those lost to gun violence in all parts of our society, met with Senators and Congressmen, testified in our state capitol on pending legislation, and partnered with FCNL on this issue, including helping to train their current Advocacy Corps: 20 young adults who will do community organizing in their home states on this issue. Most recently he helped run a gun buyback with the city of Norwalk, CT where the guns collected will be turned into gardening tools and donated to community gardening programs. Several Meetings have asked Peter to visit with them and discuss the many facets of this important issue.

Peter's efforts in this work have provided an abundance of spiritual energy to our community: We commend him to your care and hospitality.

Approved and minuted at Wilton Quaker Meeting for worship with a concern for business held Twelfth Month, 8, 2019.

Martha Gurvich, Clerk, Wilton Quaker Meeting  
Mary Eagleson, Clerk, Purchase Quarterly Meeting  
Jeffrey Aaron, Clerk, New York Yearly Meeting

## **Christopher Sammond Travel Minute**

*see minute 2020-07-13*

Poplar Ridge Friends Meeting  
1868 Poplar Ridge Road, Poplar Ridge, NY, 13139

September 15, 2019

Christopher Sammond, a member of Poplar Ridge Monthly Meeting, carries a long-standing concern about deepening the faith and practice of Friends, especially with the respect to the gathered worship experience and vocal ministry, and he has acted on this concern in a variety of ways and in many venues. Years ago, in seminary, Christopher applied for a residency in Clinical

Pastoral Education, because, to use his own words, “I knew by then that I craved working with those who really wanted to find a deeper path to God.”

In his past service to New York Yearly Meeting as its General Secretary, Christopher recognized and named the spiritual gifts of those within the Yearly Meeting and beyond, releasing them not only to deepen their own Quaker faith and practice, but often strengthening the monthly meetings and in the wider world.

Christopher rejoices in the gathering of diversified Friends in the unity of worship and in the spiritual nurture of individuals and groups. Again, in his own words, “Inviting Friends into deeper contact with the Inward Teacher...and creating a container for a group to open powerfully to the presence of the Holy Spirit has been my greatest joy.”

Christopher traveled to Meetings within NYYM and beyond, including FGC (Friends General Conference), Roanoke Monthly Meeting, Patapsco Friends Meeting, Pendle Hill and Homewood Monthly Meeting. He leads workshops entitled “Opening to the Heart of Worship.” These workshops were very positively received with praises toward his spirit filled leadership. He is truly a blessing to those lives he touches. We (Poplar Ridge Friends Meeting) continue to support Christopher as he travels leading future workshops on this and similar topics.

A care and accountability committee, under Poplar Ridge Monthly Meeting’s Ministry and Counsel, is charged with the support of Christopher’s ministry. The committee meets at regular intervals with Christopher to listen, test and discern where his ministry lies and how it is proceeding.

We expect to revisit this travel minute within one year.

Hannah C. Richter, Clerk of Poplar Ridge Friends Meeting, 2/8/20  
Kathy Slattery, Co-clerk of Farmington Scipio Regional Meeting, 2/11/20

## **State of Society report**

*see minute 2020-07-14*

### State of Society 2019

The timeframe for some meetings to prepare their 2019 annual State of the Meeting Report started just before and after the turning of the year, for some in December and others in January. For many they initiated their process prior to the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic and completed their reports as its reality settled into our communities and meetings. We are sad in particular the shutdown meant that we were not able to support our prison worship groups to complete and provide reports.

To read the documents, to discern what to lift up, what to highlight, and what to summarize felt daunting in the face of all that was swirling around us all day after day. A wise Friend invited us to consider that perhaps we might want to do something different which led to the format of this year’s report.

What follows are statements and ideas that in some way capture a theme, a concern, a joy, a practice from different meetings’ reports grouped by the committee under headings reflecting relevant topics. These threads form a tapestry of wisdom and experience from across New York Yearly Meeting gathered together from 35 meetings. They each stand on their own and together

weave a message of how Divine guidance continues to speak to and through us as we face conflict, grief, joy and the individual and collective witness and service we offer in the world.

You may also encounter some of these same threads woven into the framework of other documents and reports during the 2020 Summer Sessions. And we invite all Friends to take the opportunity to read through each of this year's State of the Meeting reports which will be made available in a folder on the NYYM website. You may be surprised, delighted, inspired or dismayed, yet in the end amazed at the power of Love made visible throughout each of them.

### **Worship and Ministry**

We are outgrowing our space, sometimes using all our chairs.

Our attendance at worship is higher and more consistent, we are able to provide a vibrant midweek worship and worship sharing meeting, and we maintain a much adored first day school program for our small group of children

Our meeting is growing into faithfulness.

With attendance so low, we felt the stress to our spirit had reached an acute level, and some action needed to be taken to provide relief...we decided to continue as a monthly meeting at this time, rather than becoming a worship group, but we will limit what we try to do. Rather than have no one or a single person attend a scheduled meeting for worship, we now try to keep in better contact with one another and schedule worship sessions less often than weekly, announcing them to the community through our website. We have not held regular monthly business meetings, or Religious education meetings.

The importance of silent worship is a highlight for [our meeting]: settling in, feeling enveloped in the space. The corporate nature of expectant waiting blankets and enriches our spirits.

Online worship continues and there are people joining us from other states and even other countries.

We have powerful ministry, sometimes even when the meeting is silent.

We began reading and discussing the New Testament gospels, and found that rereading them helped in the search for the life of the spirit, as well as finding new meaning in the familiar.

Prison ministry is also vibrant in our meeting if not new. It is about relationship and ministry.

New attenders and new members come with change. Their addition to worship in all forms brings new experiences and new perspectives, so while our practices may generally remain the same, the life of the meeting remains fresh, shifting in response to who is present.

Our meeting has a diverse group of members and attenders, including folks who express a deep faith in the divine, those for whom activism is a guiding spirit, and those who come in order to care for and be with other members of the community.

Our meetings for worship have been consistently warm and graced by Divine Presence. We have been blessed with meaningful ministry and often gathered in deeper silence this year. Although we are fewer in number these days, we feel the Spirit moving among us and we are grateful.

Minute: We believe adult Quakers hold their faith by conviction. Obtaining conviction means that experimentation and discernment are necessary. We support young people in our

meeting in developing their spiritual lives throughout their childhood. In our meeting, children were designated as members at a young age by their parents. When children grow into adulthood we encourage them to consider their continued membership in and commitment to our meeting and to our Religious Society as a whole. We welcome the fellowship of persons of all ages as they explore their spiritual identity and membership status.

A real strength is how we come together in Meeting for Worship; this is our basis and what “unites and sustains us.”

All have come with hearts and minds prepared, and Meeting is rejoicing in the fresh flow of Spirit that settles upon us in that readiness of heart.

We are reminded that our connection to the Spirit and to each other will allow us to face the troubled days ahead with love in our hearts and dedication to continue the work of the Spirit.

The Divine Spirit that guides us is unchangeable and we trust to that Presence among us and within each of us to lead us through the years to come with the certainty that our faith provides.

We conscientiously increased vocal ministry during worship.

Some wish for more vocal ministry, but we all realize that it is not quantity we need, but more ministry of a certain quality. As a meeting, we intend to educate and encourage each other in this direction.

We are a relatively quiet meeting, but our messages are from the heart and people speak when they are led.

Using a form taught by a Seneca clan mother in her teaching circle, at rise of meeting for worship on March 17, 2019, each person present was asked to give one word that conveyed their experience of worship together. These were recorded in sequence, and immediately arranged in lines, giving us a picture of where our meeting was, in that moment:

Surprise:

Centering, healing silence.

Unity

Warmth

gratitude.

Pruning compassion with truth.

Hope, willow;

caring thought.

The meeting’s meditation garden continues to invite members and attenders to sit or walk quietly in visible connection with the natural world.

Meeting provides space for “things to come up” — the room is like a big hand that can hold all types of thoughts, reflections, and issues, and that there is more space than we might initially imagine.

[Ours] is a small meeting. We don’t take on huge projects. We hope that simply by keeping the doors open we stand as a resource for spiritual light and solace to the community of Friends and to the broader public. We endeavor to carry a spirit of loving concern with us as we face the reality of everyday life.

## **Life of the Meeting – Inreach and Outreach**

“Inreach” – how to support and enhance life of the Meeting

Beginning in July, we welcomed New York Quarterly Meeting’s proposal to observe a year of Jubilee as a time of intentional repose. With discussions and time, we came to embrace and give shape to our range of perspectives – whether and what to set aside, and what new opportunities to create.

It is important to remember that the Spirit is not absent from our Meeting. Could it be that we have been blocking ourselves from the light of the Spirit in our struggle to communicate and work through difficult matters together?

Our social room and its table have come to have a sacred feeling this year because of our growing sense of community.

Our membership and attendance have stayed steady. We have recognized, more than ever, the importance of the meeting community.

Having each other in our lives is deeply meaningful. It feels good to have an intact community.

An effort has been made to develop smaller jobs that an attender can do and ways to contribute to the life of the meeting.

While our size remains tiny, participants speak of expanded opportunities.

Spirit has been most visible in our meeting this year as we have comforted and supported each other in a year of considerable loss.

[Creating]....deep opportunities for people to share their insights, fears and questions about race, white privilege and how Friends might respond.

The Manasquan member who maintains the meeting Face Book page created an Instagram page this past year. Both pages have elicited interest and response. Also, first- time attenders have remarked that they were drawn to the meeting by our well-managed website.

There is a need for history and an awareness of our history within our meetings.

In many ways, meeting feels alive, partly because we remember those who have passed, whose lives gave testimony to their beliefs, and who trusted meeting to be with them in their final and most intimate moments

Each of us, along with our words, is but one precious thread speaking its truth, while seeking to be woven into and serving to strengthen the fabric of our community.

New, younger attenders have given us the opportunity to practice and to demonstrate that it is safe to talk, even if you don’t agree; that questions are more valuable than answers; that it is OK to acknowledge the things we just don’t know or have a response to; and that community is based on relationships of equals.

Responding to a need to nurture new adult attenders, we are presented with the opportunity for all to discover more about Quakerism and to explore and deepen our spirituality.

Our Adult Education and Spiritual Nurture Committee alternates between Quakerism 101 one month and worship sharing about our experiences of that morning’s meeting for worship the next.

We continue (not without some struggle) to provide a vibrant Social Hour after meeting for worship that is a portal for new and old Friends to transit from worship to Fellowship.

How do our various and individual approaches to membership affect our integrity as a meeting?

We wish for greater diversity.

We are attempting to deal with disagreements on a profound level, and to learn how to remain a community even when individuals find themselves in discord. Our listening circles have provided us with an opportunity to work through these disagreements by speaking honestly and listening sincerely to one another.

As we attempt to meet the various needs within our own faith community, we have become aware that this requires openness, persistence, patience and letting go of the fear that each attempt may not unfold as hoped for.

As a meeting we were able to move beyond a seeming impasse and start working towards long needed conflict transformation.

In our monthly gathering of “Moving with Spirit,” we dance together, soaring beyond our words. We also support each other in our artistic endeavors.

### **Business and Care of Space and Place**

The special care of our grounds is part of our meeting’s ministry.

The cost and strain of maintaining our large property is a continuing concern as we labor to seek unity on what may be right stewardship of those abundant assets.

Importantly we have only three members who make significant, continued contributions to running the Meeting. We have managed to keep the nursery school running and maintain the building but it is difficult, when problems arise, to deal with them in a timely, professional, economical way.

Friends found Spirit at work in our discernment around replacing carpeting, repainting, and refreshing rooms in the meetinghouse, as we were encouraged to consider the environmental impact of replacing and ecologically disposing of old carpet, and replacing furniture with gently used rather than new pieces.

One of our goals in building our Meeting House was to provide a space for the community to participate in a variety of activities as well as to issue an invitation to join our community.

We have put in place a plan of how to respond to an emergency should it occur during our worship time.

[We as a meeting] recognize our challenge to know and act recognizing “that there is that of God in everyone,” and George Fox’s teaching of consensus and that nobody’s will should be imposed on others.

As a small meeting, we function well as a “committee of the whole.” Members and attenders are generous in the ways they contribute to and participate in the life of the meeting, and it is believed that this comes from a spiritual force felt in worship that binds us.

The Life of the Spirit is visible in the increased desire for, and reinstatement of, a nominating committee and separate committees to help channel the latent energy and capabilities of our members and attenders.

Too often a meeting focuses on preservation of the institution instead of serving the community.

### **First Day School and Intergenerational Activities**

First Day School has been a welcoming space for the children to be heard, to hear from each other and from adults that are not their parents, and to play and connect with each other.

We welcome our kids and respect them.

We remain committed to encouraging intergenerational activities

The small moment when children come down to worship feels big, as there is something wondrous in their intermingling with adults, as they increasingly become an important part of the community.

### **Witness and Service**

Where is the spark that Quakers used to have?

Our experience more than ever in 2019 was that our witness work attracted new attenders to our worship and our community.

Young Peacemakers Week (YPW), held this past summer of 2019, our urban day camp, hosted 36 young people between grades 2 and 8, plus 4 delightful teenagers, for a week of bearing witness to our Quaker Peace Testimony.

We continue our monthly Meeting Peace Vigil in front of the State Capitol.

Our concerns have centered on Gun Violence in our society and culture.

We feel a sense of balance which comes from grounding our actions in “old” values, priorities, and ideas but updating how we address issues based on the “new” of what is going on in the world now.

One Friend noted that she tries to support organizations that do good work, but it’s essential that there be a call behind such activism. Though we recognize that many Friends are active in their professional lives and look forward to the Meeting for peace, if everyone comes as an escape and is not open to hearing a call, that presents a problem.

Our regular participation in a variety of local advocacy and justice groups shows an ongoing commitment to making the world a better place.

Several people from other faiths who attended our gun-control vigil stated that ours is the only house of worship in the community willing to confront controversial issues. These remarks were both a confirmation of our calling and a sobering challenge. If Quakers are not willing to step forward to offer space and opportunity for like-minded people to gather, then who will? Whether we seek to end violence against the earth or earth’s inhabitants, we must be prepared to do what God requires of us.

Lofty thoughts on theory and policy manifest themselves on the ground with lobbying, letter writing, making phone calls, visiting representatives in Albany, and maintaining a relationship

with the men in the worship group at the Woodbourne Correctional Facility. When we live the lives that we preach, we become both a mystical and practical religion.

Though our meeting occasionally experiences doubts about our long-term future, we are joyful that the continued existence of our witness demonstrates that the Spirit is present among us and works through us to help others in our world.

Meeting offers a place to worship together, as well as offers a way to communally make a positive impact on our world and the lives of others.

## **Treasurer's Report, December 2019**

The link on the NYYM website: <https://www.nyyym.org/sites/default/files/TreasurersReport-2019-12.pdf>

Major point:

There was a surplus of \$79,250.03 resulting, in part, from contributions to the ARCH Fund, a return of excess premiums from NYYM's healthcare insurance carrier, and spending was less than was budgeted.

## **Email from Friends Fiduciary**

July 21, 2020

RE: Friends Fiduciary Goes Fossil Fuel Free In All Funds

Friends,

The Board of Directors of Friends Fiduciary Corporation, at the recommendation of its Investment Committee, has made the decision to exclude fossil fuel companies from all Friends Fiduciary portfolios, including our flagship Growth & Income Fund. This decision was made after careful consideration and is consistent with both the Board's fiduciary responsibility to our many constituent investors, as well as the Quaker values that Friends Fiduciary reflects in its investment process.

In its deliberations, the Board carefully considered the investment risk of companies that hold fossil fuel reserves as well as companies involved in the extraction and refining of fossil fuels; all such companies are excluded under the new policy. In addition, companies that derive a majority of revenue from the transportation and storage of those products will also be excluded. The new policy includes refined screens for utility companies and their fuel stock mix for power generation, favoring those moving towards renewable energy. This reflects our investment philosophy that companies with climate risk exposure could represent an additional risk to shareholder value and are less likely to be sustainable in the long-term.

The Board of Directors approved the following addition to our Investment Guidelines:

- Friends Fiduciary excludes companies that explore, extract, produce or refine coal, oil or gas or have carbon reserves. Further, we exclude companies that derive a majority of their revenue from the transportation and storage of these materials, for example, pipeline transport companies.

- We seek to invest in electric utility companies that are transitioning to a lower carbon, sustainable business model. We evaluate companies on their current and future fuel mix and their plans to increase renewable energy capacity.

In reaching this decision the Investment Committee and Board considered the long-term sustainability, valuation and risk factors for these companies, their weighting in the current portfolios, and care for Creation. While the Board was considering this exclusion, FFC's various managers were instructed not to increase fossil fuel holdings and staff will now work with them to effect an orderly sale of any holdings not in compliance with the current policy by September 30, 2020.

You may recall that the Quaker Green Fund was launched in January 2014 to provide an investment option for those constituents who did not want to invest in fossil fuel companies. This change naturally raises the question of the Quaker Green Fund and whether we should continue to offer it with its existing investment strategy.

The Board of Directors has asked staff to review the current Quaker Green Fund and develop a new potential investment offering; an all-world, all cap equity fund with a rigorous focus on companies leading the transition to a low-carbon economy. This will include investments in clean tech, renewable energy and energy conservation, water, environmental finance, and low carbon commerce. It will be the only fund of its kind that combines a concentrated, environmentally focused investment strategy with the Quaker values of simplicity, peace, integrity, community, and equality. As an all equity fund it will be an ideal supplement for constituents who want an environmentally focused investment option in addition to their balanced portfolio.

Staff is beginning conversations with some current investors in the Quaker Green Fund to "test market" this concept for a more concentrated, environmentally focused stock fund. We will share more information as the potential new fund offering progresses.

If you have any questions about this new policy and our investment options please don't hesitate to contact me at [jperkins@friendsfiduciary.org](mailto:jperkins@friendsfiduciary.org) or 215-241-7272.

Sincerely,  
Jeffery W. Perkins, Executive Director

## **Financial Services Committee Report to Summer Sessions 2020**

*see minute 2020-07-17*

### **Background**

**At Summer Sessions 2018, the YM expressed its support for creating new staff support to work with children, youth, and young adults.** The original proposal for this staff support followed the ARCH model and included creating a new full-time staff position as well as five part-time positions. Crafting a budget that includes this staff support has proven to be a longer process than originally anticipated because the YM's limited financial resources have required making choices among the many good things the YM wants to support. Therefore, Financial Services Committee (FSC) has had to take gradual steps towards the goal. At Summer Sessions 2019, the Young Adult Field Secretary Task Group was formed to assist with the process. This task group developed a list of recommended sources of income for the new position, some of which were incorporated into the budget approved at Fall Sessions 2019.

Because the plan developed by the task group included redirecting funds away from other programming, there was not time before Fall Sessions 2019 to fully season these suggestions and ensure the choices being made truly reflected the priorities of the YM. **Therefore, FSC presented, and the YM approved, a budget that provided funding for seven months of interim staff support for youth and young adults (Y/YA) and twelve months of all other expenses.** This allowed the current interim secretary to continue her work and was a first step towards full funding of the children, youth, and young adult staff support. FSC promised to continue working towards the goal of full support and to bring a revised budget back to Spring Sessions 2020.

### **Where we are now**

2019 ended with a larger than anticipated surplus. This was due to a number of things including expenses that were not paid in 2019, but would be paid in 2020, additional fundraising by ARCH, and an unexpectedly large refund check from one of NYYM's insurance companies. By using some of this surplus, FSC was able to draft a revised 2020 budget that continued the current interim staff support for Y/YA for a full twelve months without having to make any of the task group's other proposed changes. This revised budget was disseminated prior to Spring Sessions 2020. FSC also started work on developing a 2021 budget with full time children/youth/young adult staff support. The 2021 budget anticipated using the remainder of the 2019 surplus funds.

**Then, before Spring Sessions could occur, the COVID-19 pandemic and its related shelter-at-home orders and economic impact, hit.** A group comprised of the YM clerk, YM assistant clerk, General Services Coordinating Committee clerk, clerk of Trustees, Trustees financial clerk, Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, General Secretary, and clerk of Financial Services, met to consider how these unprecedented occurrences would affect the 2020 budget.

**Taking as a starting point the 2020 budget approved at Fall Sessions, and making educated guesses about likely decreases in income and expenses, a proposed revised 2020 budget was developed and has been provided along with this report.**

The revised budget is an attempt to understand the impact on the YM's income and expenses of our current economic realities.

- The revised budget **does not include any new spending.**
- The revised budget does include a **significant reduction in income** – some of this due to **the cancellation of Spring and Summer Sessions** and some due to **anticipated reductions in donations and covenant donations.**
- Due to the cancelation of Spring and Summer Sessions, the YM's **personnel needs are reduced** as the usual temporary staffing for those events will not be hired. This has allowed **interim staff support for youth and young adults to be expanded from seven months to a full twelve months**, without an increase in budgeted personnel costs.
- The other major decreases in expenses are for **staff travel** and **Development Committee events.**

### **Summer Sessions 2020**

FSC is recommending approval of the proposed revised 2020 budget, with the understanding that flexibility may be needed going forward as financial realities continue to change. FSC believes the current proposed budget provides a realistic guide to the rest of 2020.

### **Going forward**

**FSC had previously started developing a 2021 budget that included funds to hire full time children, youth, and young adult staff support (C/Y/YA).** It is unknown at this time what the full impact of COVID-19 will be on this budget and so FSC will need to assess a variety of scenarios to ascertain how the YM can best support everyone, including C/Y/YA, given the new realities.

FSC will be having ongoing meetings to continue our work on the 2021 budget and start drafting a 2022 budget. All are welcome to join us.

### **Revised 2020 NYYM budget**

On NYYM website: [https://nyym.org/sites/default/files/2020-SummerSessions/BudgetReport\\_7-21-20\\_BusinessMeeting-DOC2.pdf](https://nyym.org/sites/default/files/2020-SummerSessions/BudgetReport_7-21-20_BusinessMeeting-DOC2.pdf)

### **May 31, 2020, Treasurer's Report**

In mid-March 2020, challenges in NYC due to the COVID-19 outbreak led to a temporary closure of the NYYM office. At this time, the treasurers and the office staff began to carefully monitor NYYM's cash flow and ability to access cash to help insure business continuity.

At the end of Q1 2020 there was a deficit of approximately \$41,000. Subsequently, NYYM applied for and received an SBA Paycheck Protection loan of \$80,400. Beginning in May 2020, this is displayed on a balance sheet, which is the last page of the May 31, 2020 Treasurer's report.

**May 31, 2020 Treasurer's report** on the NYYM website:

<https://www.nyym.org/sites/default/files/TreasurersReport-2020-05.pdf>

### **Interim Action Faith Statement re Reopening Houses of Worship**

*see minute 2020-07-19*

July 9, 2020

#### **A Statement on COVID-19 Prevention in Houses of Worship from Religious Leaders of the State of New York**

We are aware that on Friday, June 26, a U.S. District Judge issued a preliminary injunction prohibiting the New York State government from ordering or enforcing any arbitrary limits placed upon religious gatherings held in outdoor or indoor venues.

We are also aware of news reports that are revealing a disturbing and dramatic rise in the number of Covid-19 cases throughout the United States. The increasing number of positive tests and hospitalizations in dozens of states many times can be attributed to ill-advised gatherings of people who are worshipping indoors and often not engaging in proper social distancing, nor

employing recommended sanitation measures, or participating in the disciplined use of face masks covering mouth and nose. After much sacrifice New York infections have stabilized.

As leaders of religious communities and organizations throughout the State of New York, we hope to prevent another increase and unite with a common voice to state the following:

- We will always rely on the analysis of facts and the expertise of medical professionals and scientists to helping us determine when and how to reopen or scale back observances in our sanctuaries, temples, mosques and other worship settings;
- We depend upon the centralized and focused leadership of those in our state government to provide uniform messaging, standards and protocols for the safe and timely reopening of our state, including all houses of worship;
- We pledge to continue to follow the guidance from New York state government and health officials and welcome the intentional steps they have provided for conducting religious and funeral services found within the NY Forward Guidelines;
- While we recognize the importance of our First Amendment right to freedom of religion, we as faith leaders also understand the importance of keeping our worshipping members and those we serve safe. A pandemic is no respecter of persons and thus, this is the time to prioritize the health and safety of all New Yorkers, especially those in high risk categories amongst those who need or want the religious or social services we provide;
- Likewise, we urge our brother and sister religious leaders to comply with the consistent and data driven advice of the overwhelming majority of virus scientists and public health officials and follow New York State's public health emergency experts in curtailing the ill effects of the pandemic.

As religious leaders we celebrate the opportunity to be participants with other leaders in the State of New York as we lessen the spread of the Covid-19 virus. Because of the uncertain nature of the virus and pandemic as well as the reality that we often minister to highly vulnerable and disproportionately affected constituency, as well as in settings that often include activities in the highest transmission risk categories, such as singing, we do not wish to see our houses of worship and other worship spaces placed into any exempt category or treated in any way different than other businesses or gatherings that assemble people in venues where their health may be adversely affected.

We invite and urge all New York religious leaders, lay and ordained, from all faith communities in their abundant diversity, to join us in creating a consistent witness of the value we place on a human life that is equal to the value we place on the care of a human body and soul.

We stand with Governor Cuomo in stating that, as religious leaders, we too are New York Tough, Smart, Disciplined, and most of all, loving.

Love thy Neighbor - wear a mask, social distance and practice good hygiene.

Signed:

Bishop. Thomas J. Bickerton

Resident Bishop, The New York Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church

The Reverend Dr. Chloe Breyer  
Executive Director, Interfaith Center of New York

The Reverend Peter Cook  
Executive Director, New York State Council of Churches

The Reverend Que English  
Senior Pastor, Bronx Christian Fellowship

Peter B. Gudaitis, M.Div.  
Executive Director & CEO, New York Disaster Interfaith Services

Bishop John Macholz  
Upstate New York Conference, Evangelical Lutheran Church of America

Rabbi Joe Potasnik  
New York Board of Rabbis

Pastor James Richmond, Community Liaison  
Seventh Day Adventist Church

Jeffrey Aaron, Presiding Clerk  
New York Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

Steve Mohlke, General Secretary  
New York Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

*LIST IN FORMATION*

## **People of Color and their Families Pre-Gathering Retreat Epistle**

*see minute 2020-07-20*

“We are a harvest of survivors. But then, that's what we've always been.”  
—Octavia E. Butler, Parable of the Sower

To Friends Everywhere:

We begin by remembering our ancestors who were strong enough to make a way for us. Friends of Color and their families met for Pre-Gathering Retreat on 26 Day through 28 Day Sixth Month 2020. This is the eighth year Friends of Color have met for our Pre-Gathering Retreat. First-timers felt welcomed and validated. This year, we met virtually with our largest attendance yet. There were 47 attendees, ranging in age from 11 months through 77 years from Canada, Mexico, Switzerland and the United States of America.

The importance of this Gathering for Friends of Color worshipping in community together cannot be overstated. To our Friends in the wider Quaker world, we the Friends of Color, can't breathe. During this weekend, we enjoyed the rare opportunity of not being othered In Quaker space. We experienced the joy of being seen as we are and the affirmation of a supportive spirit among ourselves in the “Amen corner”. The term “Amen corner” comes from the Black church

and is a communal space that validates, affirms and uplifts the spirit. In isolation, due to COVID19, we are being kept apart and away from those we love, trust and need. The pre-gathering retreat brought back the source of community and family that has been missing. We were able to exhale, relax, and breathe together. Many of us did not realize how exhausted we were until we were able to relax with one another. The gifts of the spirit were abundant. We shared in worship, gentle yoga and meditation, meaningful discussions, journaling and self-discovery. We also listened and shared in each other's joys, triumphs, pains and sorrows. We experienced spiritual renewal that was awakened by moving through pain to hope for the future for ourselves and our children. Attention and space was given for people to play games, dance, talk, grieve, play music, watch videos, and write.

We have much gratitude to the Program Coordinator for the Ministry on Racism; the pioneer who laid the groundwork to make the Pre-Gathering Retreat available to us within FGC gathering and who faithfully makes it happen each year. We are grateful for being able to acknowledge all that makes us human, for finding home and connection. Our inner Light is magnified and our capacity to breathe deeply is nurtured when that of God is acknowledged in each of us. It is our hope that other Friends of Color will know that such a space exists and know that they are desired, needed and will be warmly embraced.

The Pre-Gathering Friends of Color Retreat provides a reprieve. Friends of Color need respite from the systemic racism too often found in our American Quaker community that often goes unseen by many white Friends. Friends of Color need respite from the insidious lie of white supremacy manifested in daily oppressive traumatic stressors (microaggressions) which have the effect of blaming the oppressed for our own oppression. Friends of Color need respite and support which our home meetings have not provided. Friends of Color are fatigued from being asked to teach white folks.

We ask all Quakers to heed a Call to Action. Please sit with these queries:

1. What is the Spirit leading me to do about the historic and ongoing racial pandemic across my meeting, my community, my work environment and my country?
2. How can we honor the memory of people who have lost their lives to the struggle for a better world?
3. How can we construct ways for people to engage and remain engaged *beyond* good intentions in the struggle for true equality in health, education, wealth and against state sanctioned violence?
4. How can we encourage the support of Friends of Color in Quaker worship and meetings around the world?
5. How can Friends de-center themselves in order to listen to and hear Friends of Color?
6. How can I support respite for Friends of Color?

In this time of COVID19, People of Color discovered that a deadly pandemic is secondary to the long-time pandemic of racism in our lives. People of Color are more likely to die from COVID19 due to the effects of racism and oppression. Think about how this pandemic has turned your world upside down, economically, emotionally, psychologically. Now imagine there is no one

working on a vaccine, and that if you get sick or die, no one notices or cares. For People of Color, the human-made pandemic of racism is deadlier than COVID19, and we need you to do work so that we can BREATHE.

In Peace, Love and....

2020 FGC Virtual Pre-Gathering Retreat for Friends of Color and their Families