

**Online via Zoom**

**Wednesday, July 29, 2020, 2:30 p.m.**

Clerk, Jeffrey Aaron, New Brunswick

Assistant Clerk, Elaine Learnard, Conscience Bay

Recording clerk, Mary Eagleson, Scarsdale

Reading clerk, Robin Alpern, Amawalk

**2020-07-45.** Friends gathered into a period of waiting worship. Clerk Jeffrey Aaron introduced those at the virtual clerks' table. Chloe Thomlinson from the technical support team gave some reminders on how to participate in the Zoom meeting.

**2020-07-46.** Roseann Press (Housatonic), clerk of Trustees, announced that this business session, in accordance with article V, Section 1 of the New York Yearly Meeting By-laws, is noted as the Annual Meeting of the Corporation.

**2020-07-47.** Matthew Scanlon (Scarsdale), convener of the Lindley Murray Trustees, introduced a proposed change in the handbook description of Lindley Murray Fund. This revision to the yearly meeting handbook merely formalizes what have long been the respective roles of the yearly meeting Trustees and Lindley Murray trustees, namely that the yearly meeting Trustees are the trustees of the Lindley Murray Fund. The Lindley Murray Committee is appointed by the yearly meeting, and makes decisions on applications for grants from the fund.

Several Friends made comments or raised questions which indicated a need for a review of the entire entry for Lindley Murray. The change in name was approved today, and a review of the entire handbook page will be undertaken and reported at a later time.

**2020-07-48.** Kelly Kellum, general secretary of Friends United Meeting (FUM) gave the attached report. Friends around the world have been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, and FUM has discerned that its role is to continue to connect Quaker communities around the world with one another. It also is led to work to support the most vulnerable among us, and has taken several steps in response. It has established funds to aid suffering communities in Kenya and Belize City. To support the spiritual needs of Friends cut off from one another by travel restrictions, it has offered monthly opportunities for Friends around the world to join in prayer and sharing of experiences through electronic communications.

The FUM Triennial planned for 2020 has been cancelled, and there is hope that it will be possible to hold it in the summer of 2021. Some changes in staffing were reported.

Kelly Kellum thanked New York Yearly Meeting Friends for continuing to support FUM through financial contributions and by sending representatives to it.

One Friend observed that through travel with the Friends World Committee on Consultation (FWCC), Friends learn to demystify the perceived differences between ourselves and other members of our extended church; it is impossible to describe the love between Friends from different parts of the world.

**2020-07-49.** The clerk introduced Julia Giordano (Bulls Head-Oswego), who read the first draft of this year's NYYM epistle to Friends everywhere. He noted that the first reading of the epistle in Summer Sessions is intended as an opportunity for feedback from those who hear it; Friends who wish to suggest changes are invited to send them to Julia via email.

The second, final reading of the epistle will be heard in tomorrow's business session.

While most of the ministry that followed will simply be forwarded to the Epistle Committee for their use in reworking the epistle, there was one strong request that we not leave these sessions without a concrete plan for specific anti-racism actions we will undertake, for which we have acknowledged the need several times. This message resonated with many Friends.

**2020-07-50.** Barbra Bleecker (Montclair) presented a proposal (attached) that the Meetings for Discernment become a standing function within the yearly meeting. Due to technical difficulties, the proposal was read by our reading clerk, Robin Mallison Alpern.

A recommendation for improving the process of the Meeting for Discernment will be forwarded to its steering committee. There being no hesitations expressed, the Meeting for Discernment is now approved as a standing function of the yearly meeting.

**2020-07-51.** The reading clerk, Robin Mallison Alpern, read more excerpts from the State of the Society Report.

**2020-07-52.** The minutes were approved.

## **Attachments**

### **Friends United Meeting Report to New York Yearly Meeting of Friends**

See minute 2020-07-48

The COVID-19 pandemic is touching the lives of the global FUM family in multiple ways. We did not anticipate a singular global event that would simultaneously impact the entire FUM community in various ways (including schools and meetings closed, travel restrictions, food scarcity, illness, and economic distress).

During these days of concern, FUM's staff is working to provide ongoing support to our members and ministry partners. Most significantly, we continue our commitment to connect the global family of Friends and we are increasing our support to our most vulnerable communities.

In March 2020, FUM established the Solidarity Fund. In Africa, FUM partnered with FWCC-Africa, and Friends Church Kenya to establish the COVID-19 African Collaboration Fund. Friends

have contributed nearly \$60,000 to support communities whose lives and livelihoods are impacted by the pandemic and other natural crises. In Belize City, this allowed Friends to establish a feeding program to relieve the hardships of families in the southside community. In Kenya, Friends funded PPE's to the Lugulu Friends Hospital, assisted community outreach initiatives in Turkana and Samburu, provided food relief for isolated families in the Mount Elgon region, and even aided stranded truck drivers.

One of the ways we are keeping Friends connected is by offering spiritual support and prayer. Currently, FUM is hosting international prayer gatherings on Zoom and WhatsApp to learn how the coronavirus is impacting our members in Belize, Cuba, Jamaica, North America, Palestine, Tanzania, Uganda, and Kenya. Ron Bryan, presiding clerk of FUM writes, *"It is powerful praying as a global community, to listen to the cares and concerns of Friends from around the world, and pray together with one voice."* Prayer centers us and calls us to selfless generosity and service.

### **2020 Triennial**

Because of international travel restrictions, the Executive Board of FUM agreed to cancel the 2020 Triennial sessions in Kenya, with the hope of rescheduling it for June or July 2021.

### **Personnel Updates**

This coming year FUM will manage several staff transitions. We are currently searching for a bookkeeper for the Africa Ministries Office. Additionally, Ben Snyder (Coordinator of North American Ministries) and Julie Rudd (Media Specialists) are leaving FUM's to pursue other callings. After 16 years of faithful service to FUM, Eden Grace (Director of Global Ministries) believes it is time for a change. FUM will take this opportunity to align staff responsibilities to better serve our constituents and purpose.

### **Thank You**

I want to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the members of New York Yearly Meeting for your ongoing commitment, participation, and generous support for the vital work of FUM.

Grace and Peace,  
Kelly Kellum, General Secretary

### **Recommendation from the Meetings for Discernment Steering Committee**

See minute 2020-07-50

The Steering Committee for the Meetings for Discernment recommends to the New York Yearly Meeting that the Meetings for Discernment be made a standing function of our yearly meeting.

The origins and history of the Meetings for Discernment have been detailed in previous reports to the yearly meeting. To aid in considering this recommendation and discerning the way

forward, we provide the following information, including (in *italics*) quotations from the 2014 report, made at the time of the most recent extension of the Meetings for Discernment.

## **History**

*In 2007, the yearly meeting body temporarily suspended the Yearly Meeting on Ministry and Counsel and replaced it with Meetings for Discernment, giving Meetings for Discernment three charges: ‘to help strengthen connections between monthly meetings and the yearly meeting, to support individual leadings, and to help discern emerging directions within the yearly meeting.’ In July 2008, and again in July 2011, the provisional status of the Meetings for Discernment was extended.*

In 2014, the provisional status was again extended and that approval ends with this year’s Summer Sessions 2020.

The Yearly Meeting on Ministry and Counsel was laid down in 2016.

## **Meetings for Discernment as a Practice of New York Yearly Meeting**

*Meetings for Discernment are an experiment in deep listening for the movement of Spirit among us without the constraints of agendas. Open to all Friends, they provide a place outside our committee structure and business agenda for the richness of extended worship in which concerns, questions, leadings, and new gifts find voice, take shape, are seeded, or begin to emerge. They deepen connections among geographically distant Friends. During the many hours of unprogrammed worship, guided by focusing queries, ministry rises up, sharing our experiences of God’s presence and direction in our individual lives and the lives of our monthly meetings, and expressing much about the yearly meeting as a whole – our concerns, leadings, joys, and pain.*

*Sometimes concerns rising at Meetings for Discernment are forwarded to committees or taken back to our monthly meetings and worship groups. Sometimes individuals find the spiritual support or impetus for following leadings, experiencing transformation, or furthering their spiritual journeys. We find ourselves strengthened; our bonds of love deepen, and we are better prepared to meet challenges together. We are growing in our capacity for corporate discipline and for recognizing and nurturing one another’s gifts, particularly those of eldership and vocal ministry.*

From the beginnings of Meetings for Discernment, Friends were invited to serve as “elders,” a non-hierarchical practice of holding the body in the Light. Through the Meetings for Discernment “elders gatherings,” a diverse group of Friends learned, reflected on, and practiced skills that have served to ground and center the yearly meeting in all its sessions.

In Summer 2019 and Winter 2020, the Meetings for Discernment expanded its scope to provide space to consider specific issues facing our yearly meeting, at the Summer meeting a proposal to provide an additional pathway to membership and at the Winter meeting an opportunity to consider the impact of power and authority in our lives and in our meetings.

## **Reasons for the recommendation**

The practice of extended worshipful discernment is foundational to our life as Friends. On a corporate level, Meetings for Discernment offer the space to ground decisions in deep worship. We believe that this ongoing practice responds to current needs within our yearly meeting, and provides opportunities for spiritual deepening and growth.

## **Recommendation for Action**

The Steering Committee for the Meetings for Discernment is in unity to ask that the Meetings for Discernment be approved as a standing function of our Yearly Meeting, per the following proposed minute:

- A. the Meetings for Discernment shall be a standing function of our yearly meeting;
- B. the *Handbook* pages for the Meetings for Discernment and for the Meetings for Discernment Steering Committee shall be revised to reflect this status and the Steering Committee's current practice (except for the method of appointment of members of the Steering Committee);
- C. Appointment of members of the Steering Committee will be the responsibility of the Yearly Meeting Nominating Committee; and
- D. *Faith and Practice* shall be revised to reflect the purposes and processes of the Meetings for Discernment as a part of our faith and practice.

As approved by the Steering Committee of the Meetings for Discernment, 7/1/ 2020

Beverly Archibald

Barbra Bleeker

Lu Harper

Angela Hopkins

Caroline Lane

Elaine Learnard

Steve Mohlke

Chloe Tomlinson