

ATTACHMENTS

***NYYM Handbook* page revision, first reading COMMITTEE TO REVISE FAITH AND PRACTICE**

See minute 2017-04-09

History

The Committee to Revise Faith and Practice (“the Committee”) was created in the fall of 1977 by the clerk of the Yearly Meeting and subsequently by the Representative Meeting. Initially its charge was to address the membership of children.

From 1977 until 1988, the Yearly Meeting appointed members to one-year terms. Since the Committee was considered *ad hoc*, there were no restrictions on successive appointments during the early years.

With the passage of time, the Committee identified additional sections of *Faith and Practice* in which material needed to be changed or added: sexist language, prison reform, troubled marriages, separation and divorce, death and dying, and human sexuality. The Committee also considered matters of Quaker spirituality, such as ensuring that references to Christ remained in our Book of Discipline while recognizing that the spirituality of our faith ranged from Christian to universalist, including atheists, non-theists and agnostics as Members. Friends individually, and through suggestions from monthly meetings, called on the Committee to consider most sections of the book. The second part of the book, “Practice and Procedure,” received final approval in July 1987; the first part, “Faith,” in July 1995. The most recent printed edition was approved in April 2014. Changes approved subsequently are posted on the Yearly Meeting website.

Committee Responsibilities and Process for Proposed Changes

The Committee is charged with the consideration of proposed changes to our Book of Discipline and the preparation and presentation of such proposals to the Body at Sessions.

The process associated with its charge was approved at Summer Sessions 2016 as follows:

“Proposed revisions to *Faith and Practice* may originate in a monthly or regional or a Yearly Meeting body. When the proposed revision has been seasoned by the Committee to Revise Faith and Practice and approved by Ministry Coordinating Committee, the Committee to Revise Faith and Practice may bring the proposed revision to any Yearly Meeting session for a first reading. After being brought forward the first time, the proposed revision is brought for a second reading and final approval to a subsequent Yearly Meeting session.”

Functions and Activities

1. The Committee functions under the care of the Ministry Coordinating Committee, to which the Committee reports. The Ministry Coordinating Committee may offer

guidance and counsel to the Committee's work and help facilitating Friends' understanding of Committee proposals for revision.

2. The Committee meets at all Sessions and at other times as needed to fulfill its responsibilities. Between Committee meetings originating bodies (*i.e.*, a monthly, regional or Yearly Meeting body) may write suggestions for new sections or for changes in sections already published as set forth above in the section entitled "...Process for Proposed Changes."
3. The Committee is on call to explain suggested revisions and to listen to Friends' thoughts and concerns.

Organization and Method of Appointment

Committee members are appointed for three-year staggered terms, with about one-third of the members having their terms end each year. The Yearly Meeting's limit of two successive terms applies to appointees. The Yearly Meeting's Nominating Committee recommends appointments, for subsequent approval by the Yearly Meeting.

Only members of the New York Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends may be appointed to the Committee.

The Committee selects its own clerk and recording clerk for one-year terms and names a representative to the Ministry Coordinating Committee for a one-year term as well.

Meeting Times & Places

The Committee meets at all Sessions, at a date, time and place selected by the Committee's clerk, typically on site at the scheduled Session, and announced in advance, typically in SPARK and on site at the scheduled Session. All Committee meetings at Sessions are open meetings. The Committee's clerk may schedule additional meetings.

Communication on all matters in connection with the Committee's work abide by the guidelines set forth in the minute approved at Fall Sessions 2016 entitled "Use of Technology in The Conduct Of Business".

Finances

The expenses of the committee are met by an appropriation in the Operating Budget. Sales of *Faith and Practice* are intended to cover the costs of its printing.

Travel Minute for Kathleen Wooten, New England Yearly Meeting

See minute 2017-04-18

Fresh Pond Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

October 2, 2016

Dear Friends of New England Yearly Meeting:

We send you warm greetings with our member Kathleen Wooten. A member in good standing of Fresh Pond Monthly Meeting, Kathleen travels among Friends with a strong concern for the many ways we connect and are in relationship with each other. Kathleen hopes that her visits serve to strengthen the bonds of love and friendship around New England and beyond. While face-to-face meetings are the foundation of Kathleen's practice, she carries a concern for digital ministry and the ways we connect, communicate, and

support each other through various electronic media. We have witnessed and benefitted from this ministry ourselves.

We experience Kathleen as carefully listening for the ways that Spirit is at work, carrying new Truth as it Prospers among Friends.

Please welcome Kathleen as she visits among you. We look forward to hearing from her how the Spirit is moving among Friends in New England.

On behalf of Fresh Pond Meeting,
Laura Street and Mary Hopkins,
Co-clerks

General Secretary's Report to Spring Sessions: Where We've Been, Where We Are, and Where We Are Called

See minute 2017-04-18

The following report incorporates both the spoken report delivered at Spring Sessions and the written report prepared ahead of time. There was so much overlap between the two that it didn't make sense to have separate oral and written reports. The result is long, but I hope worth the read.

— Christopher Sammond, General Secretary

Good afternoon, Friends. Each year when I write up the report on the previous year's work for my Advance Report, I have an acute sense of both how far we have come, and also how much work I see before us. As I wrap up my work serving you as General Secretary, I feel both of those sentiments even more acutely. In my reports to our sessions I usually focus on reflecting back to this body my sense of our current condition as a whole yearly meeting. Today it seems important to not only name where I see us in the moment, but also where we are in the arc of our life as a yearly meeting, the work we have done, work we are engaged in, and the work I see still before us.

Here is my overall sense, one I'll flesh out in what is to follow: We are poised. We are poised on the brink of growth in depth, growth in numbers, growth in witness, and growth in overall health. And as I prepare to leave this service at this particular point in the life of this yearly meeting, I must confess I feel like Moses knowing he won't get to enter into the Promised Land with the rest of the Hebrew host. I witness the energy and life in this body, and see the potential ahead, and I am wistful, sad to not be a part of it, but also clear that that is not my work, but someone else's.

While I am optimistic about our current trajectory, I am not a Pollyanna. (And when one of my readers read that statement, her response was "Ha!", meaning that she indeed thought that I did bring a Pollyanna's optimism to my view of our condition. But I actually witness myself as being more of an Eeyore in temperament, so I'm not sure I agree with her.)

About three years ago I met with our trustees to name my concern for our condition, and of the need for the yearly meeting organization to step up with all the resources we can muster in order to address the erosion in our meetings' capacity to revitalize themselves. The need for that level of commitment has not changed. We recently had two monthly meetings alert us to their sense that they don't anticipate being able to keep the doors open

for too many more years. I habitually encounter Friends who say that they are not spiritually fed in their monthly meetings. I hear of unresolved conflicts, young families leaving due to insensitivity in their new meeting, young adults who are deeply struggling to find a way into being a part of our Society, Friends of color experiencing racism in our yearly meeting, Friends deeply questioning how to live out our faith in the current political landscape. What has changed, however, is that in these past three years, the yearly meeting organization, and the yearly meeting as a whole, have radically increased in our capacity to address those problems and others.

My confidence comes from two sources: we have done a lot and grown in the doing; and I witness new flexibility, creativity, and energy in how we are addressing where we need to grow.

Some of what we have done:

At our summer session, 2006, I named six areas which needed attention and care:

1. Closing the divide that separates Monthly Meetings from the Yearly Meeting organizational structure.
2. Coming to a unified, clear vision of who we are, where we are going, and why.
3. Passing on the substance of our faith to our children.
4. Becoming more skillful at resolving conflict.
5. Better welcoming and integrating the newcomers who are joining us.
6. Addressing the spiritual nurture of existing Friends.

We have done, or are doing, much of this work. Some of it is never “done.”

- We have significantly lessened the substantial gap between those Friends with little interest in the work of the yearly meeting organization and those who value it greatly.
- With the work of the Priorities Working Group, this body has united in a common vision of our work as a yearly meeting.
- With the hiring of a Children and Youth Field Secretary (CYFS), creating the Monthly Meeting Partner Project, holding the Youth Institutes through the support of the Powell House Youth Directors, the Youth Committee, and the CYFS, and a clear intentionality to address the spiritual nurture of our youngest Friends, we are taking up the work of passing on our practice to our children.
- Our Conflict Transformation Committee has become an effective resource for our monthly meetings, our committees, and our sessions. We have become more skillful in addressing conflict, and less fearful of facing it head on.
- Our Young Adult Field Secretary has helped us to become more skillful at welcoming and integrating not just young adults, but Friends of all ages. Our new Outreach Working Group is creating a community of practice which is energizing and inspiring the fifteen monthly meetings currently participating in it, and whose work is addressing the perpetual requests for help from monthly meetings in how to do more effective outreach.
- Through having the Drawing Out Gifts, Kindling the Fire, and most recently, the Tending the Garden series of workshops and retreats, we have formed a broadly

based community of Friends who carry a passionate concern for the spiritual nurture of this yearly meeting.

The economic crash of 2008 had a lot of Quaker institutions doing significant soul-searching as to their vision and mission. Our yearly meeting organization was no exception. We engaged in a three and a half year process of visiting all of our monthly meetings and as many of our worship groups as possible, and listening for where the Life was in those communities, and how the rest of the yearly meeting could support that Life. Through a process of listening and discernment, we ultimately united in our Statement of Leadings and Priorities, a broad sense of how to prioritize the budgeting of our operating budget, our trustee managed funds, and our staff time. We are currently living into that process, with the Leadings and Priorities Support Working Group engaged in assessing just how well the yearly meeting organization is following up on what we heard from our grass roots constituency.

Part way through that process, I named the need for us as an organization to focus on three areas in order to maintain our fiscal health and ability as an organization to serve our constituency well: Vision, Communication, and Development. As I just mentioned, we did come through a process with a coherent vision for our common work. And we created a Development Committee, whose contributions to our budget have helped to offset cuts in our Covenant Donations made after the 2008 crash. We created the new job description for our Communications Director, and have gradually, sometimes haltingly, moved into the digital age in our communication. Our new website should be launched very soon, and we are doing a better job of communicating the work that the contributions from our monthly meetings and individual Friends support. We are just starting to become marginally effective at communicating with our younger members. With that, and our overall communication, we still need to do more to communicate to our grass roots and to the world the work in which we are engaged.

We have done *a lot*. I hope that this historical perspective is helpful in understanding where we are, and where I see us poised to go.

Until recently, the yearly meeting organization had enough financial support, and therefore staff time, to not do much more than maintain the existing structure, to keep the doors open, as it were. For years I witnessed crying needs in our monthly meetings for which our minimal staff simply did not have the time or resources to address. In more recent years, with the addition of two more field staff, the Young Adult Field Secretary and Children and Youth Field Secretary, along with those now bringing the work of ARCH to our monthly meetings, I see us finally having barely enough of a staff presence to meaningfully address the needs in the field. Now Friends in our monthly meetings may, I hope over time, be less mystified as to what the Covenant Donations from their monthly meetings goes to support.

We have done the work necessary to address the needs of our community. And, we are stretching mightily to do so. Thanks to generous contributions from individual Friends and from the reallocation of trust funds, we are sustaining the structure necessary to do the work that I strongly feel is necessary. We are stretching, and we are making that stretch, currently. And we will need to continue to stretch. In 2019, a generous multi-year grant to the annual appeal will end at the same time the Shoemaker grant supporting about half of the Children and Youth Field Secretary's salary will end, at the same time that ARCH has

said that it is possible that their grant from FFA will be reduced. This is cause for concern, and prudent planning. It is also, I hope, a motivation for Friends to dig deep to support this ongoing work. This year's budget surplus is the result of a series of one-off events, none of which I see happening next year, or in subsequent years. A surplus this year does not mean that we can pause in our support of this ongoing work. Without those one-off events, this year would have shown a deficit, not a surplus.

We need to not allow ourselves to either lose focus or to lose heart. I have seen Friends really step up to the plate to support this ongoing work, with many new Friends giving to the annual appeal this year, and giving substantial sums. In the arc of our work, we are on the right track, and Friends are stepping up in surprising ways to support that work.

We are not in the Promised Land, not yet, by any means. And I have faith. I have faith in us; I have faith in God; and I have faith that we are pointed in the right direction, and moving there with determination and passion.

Our work as a community will never be done. That's the nature of building community. Here is some of the work in which we are mid-stride, or just opening into:

- Supporting the spiritual deepening of Friends of all ages
- Revitalizing our monthly meetings
- Addressing systemic racism. Much of the strife and discord which currently embroils our nation can be traced back to issues of race and racism. As a yearly meeting, we have begun to enter into the work of seeing how systemic racism impacts our lives and our society. We sent over one hundred Friends to the White Privilege Conference, and have taken further steps to enter more deeply into this work. This is work about becoming more conscious, and as such is spiritual work as much as work in the world. I am extremely grateful for those Friends in this yearly meeting who have been carrying this ministry.
- Learning to welcome "the Other." Historically, Friends have been above divisions, going back to our being unwilling to take sides in the American revolution, to feeding starving Germans after WWI, refusing to buy into the demonization of "the Hun" promoted by our governments propaganda, to our bringing medical supplies to Vietnam in the midst of the Vietnam War. Can we once again stand in a truth that is broader than the polarization which divides us as a nation?
- Making Summer Sessions accessible to any Friend led to be there. Our exploration of a "Pay as Led" structure is perhaps one viable solution to a serious problem which must be addressed.
- Redefining what it means to be a young adult in this yearly meeting
- Bridging the gap in our distinction between "ministry" and "witness"
- Embracing gifts in ministry the way we have embraced gifts in elders
- Expanding the Monthly Meeting Partner Project, which helps our meetings to more effectively integrate their youngest members into the fabric of the MM
- Changing our culture around money; recognizing, as early Friends did, that money is a spiritual issue, not separate from our spiritual life
- Changing the staffing structure which supports the ARCH program
- Nurturing the current influx of newcomers; there is quite a flood right now. How do we help them become a part of us?

- Holding ourselves accountable to our named priorities, even if that means making some hard choices
- Having our nominating committees operating as Spirit-led engines of gifts-development for all our members and attenders. I've discussed the problem of how hard our nominating committee has been struggling to find Friends willing to serve on our committees. Our Clerk, Assistant Clerk and myself have committed to work with our Quarters and Regions to advocate for Friends with that gift of discerning the gifts of others to do this work for our larger community.
- Exploring new structures other than committees for organizing our work as a community. Some work is best done by centralized committees, such as Audit, Financial Services, etc. Some things are best done through open-ended networks, such as Advancement and Outreach, supporting youth, and spiritual nurture. We have done some experimenting in this area, and those experiments have been bearing promising results.
- Seeking a corporate response to the divisiveness of our nation

I have a nudge to close with an anecdote, one which illustrates just how far we have come as a community, in trusting each other, in trusting God. Many of you were present at Fall Sessions in 2009, where we faced a \$4000 shortfall in the budget. We spent no less than three plenary sessions agonizing about what to do about that shortfall. We were paralyzed. We never did come to clarity as to how specifically we would address that problem, but laid it over until the following Spring Session. Contrast that with summer sessions last year, when we were faced with a last-minute request for \$10,000 from the ARCH program to finish out that same year (and with a \$20,000 shortfall in their overall budget and the need for yet more money than *that* added to 2017's budget). Friends were clear to move forward, though still uncertain about the long-term finances for the program. After that decision, two Friends came forward, offering substantial contributions, alleviating not only the immediate need, but also much of the projected need for the 2017 budget. The decision was easy. We were clear, we were not afraid.

We have come a long, long way. More and more, we are loosening up and are willing to experiment. We have changed the schedule of our summer sessions, which used to seem to be set in stone, and we have experimented with changes not just once, but multiple times. We are experimenting with non-committee structures for organizing our work. We may well try a pay-as-led approach to summer sessions. I could go on.

We have the financial resources to do the work that needs to be done. What I have seen is that if we are doing the work that needs to be done, the work we are called to do, Friends have, and will, step forward to support it.

I celebrate our growth in faith, our growth in trust, and our expanding capacity to care for one another.

Report from Outreach Working Group (OWG)

See minute 2017-04-19

It was a year ago, at Spring Sessions, that the Outreach Working Group (OWG) began to take form. In response to a rising interest in Quaker Outreach within NYYM and to the

temporary suspension of the Advancement Committee, the General Secretary invited us (Robin Whitely and Arlene Johnson) to become co-conveners of an as-yet-undefined Outreach Working Group, reporting to Ministry Coordinating Committee, to advance and nourish the growing interest in outreach that was expressed in the Statement of Leadings and Priorities approved by the Yearly Meeting in 2014.

Initially, the task was to devise a structure and process that could gather and grow the energy for outreach as it existed around New York Yearly Meeting. Thank you to all of you—Friends and NYYM staff—who assisted in clarifying that structure. Through several months of discernment and talking with many of you, it appeared that it was important initially to focus on nourishing the energy for outreach coming from monthly meetings. We needed a structure for sharing information, getting new ideas, encouraging each other, learning outreach skills and methods—and, just as important, very gently holding each other accountable for moving ahead with outreach efforts.

The structure that emerged consists of two bodies, each of which is facilitated by us as co-conveners: (1) The first is a Steering Circle that provides perspective, advice and counsel on direction, process and goals of the OWG within the context of NYYM and Quaker practice. The members of the Steering Circle are Jeffrey Aaron, Melinda Wenner Bradley, Bob Frick and Miranda von Salis. (2) The second group is the Outreach Practitioners' Circle made up of representatives of monthly meetings who answered an invitation to pursue more effective outreach. Last fall every monthly meeting was invited to join the Practitioners' Circle by committing to participate in bi-monthly conference calls and to take some action—whether large or small—to promote Quaker outreach. We expected that perhaps five or six meetings would accept this invitation and accountability, but *nearly one-third of monthly meetings responded with interest*. Eventually fifteen monthly meetings became part of the Outreach Practitioners' Circle and are currently on the OPC list¹

At this point, six months into the process, we have had four conference call meetings with the Outreach Practitioners' Circle. Each ninety-minute call has had a topic, agenda, advance reading and often a “homework assignment.” Each of these calls has been rich—rich in spirit, in the content shared, in the ideas that emerged, and in a growing sense of energy and potential for Quaker outreach. (We should also say that the immediacy of the calls has been aided by use of NYYM's Zoom video conference account and the ability to see each other as we conference.) Our sense is that the spirit is indeed moving among us to create a community of practice. Though we have not met in person, we are becoming a virtual community of monthly meetings who share a deep commitment to outreach and, who, through sharing and listening and working together, are expanding our outreach and learning to make it more effective. To quote one OPC member, “I am getting a lot of good suggestions for activities and a lot of inspiration to keep doing them. It helps to know there is a larger community out there working on the same issues.”

For our conference calls we have been blessed to have guest resource people such as Emily Provance and Melinda Wenner Bradley; we have drawn upon existing resources from FGC; and we have started to create our own outreach resources that will eventually be available on the NYYM website. It would be impossible to share fully all that is happening

1 The following monthly meetings are at present on the Outreach Practitioners' Circle (OPC) list: Albany, Binghamton, Buffalo, Chatham Summit, Conscience Bay, Easton, Flushing, Mohawk Valley, Manasquan, New Brunswick, Old Chatham, Rahway-Plainfield, Saratoga, Scarsdale, and Wilton.

within the OPC or within the participating monthly meetings, so we'll take the approach of sharing just a few of our key learnings to date.

Effective outreach needs to be a Quaker practice. We are discovering that, to be effective, outreach cannot be just an initiative, program, or special event. It must be a *practice* that is nourished and motivated by spirit, that is an *ongoing part of the life of the meeting*, linked to all committee work and grounded in the historic tradition of sharing the good news. We are working toward understanding what outreach looks like when it is an ongoing, fundamental practice with a monthly meeting.

Greeting is not the same as Welcoming. We have been exploring the difference between *greeting* visitors and truly *welcoming* them. It turns out that welcoming has many dimensions, both spoken and unspoken, starting with the signage out front and extending to what is on our websites and how we follow up with inquirers. In fact, we started developing a checklist of multiple good ideas and best practices for welcoming newcomers; that checklist has now grown to *five pages!* (It will soon be on the NYYM website if you'd like to check it out.) It also turns out that becoming a truly welcoming meeting may be **the** most important first step in outreach. Research shows that feeling connected and feeling that “I could fit in here” is the major determinant in whether people return to our meetings.

It is worthwhile to consider what is Good, Better and Best in Quaker Outreach. On one hand there is a “just do it” aspect of outreach. Doing something is almost always better than doing nothing. But, as we are learning, most outreach we do could be improved— by understanding our strengths as meetings, by being more conscious of the welcoming process, by being more intentional in crafting our messages, and by enlarging our knowledge of the options and approaches for outreach. For example, we've spent time thinking how we describe ourselves and how we respond to the question “What is a Quaker?” The result is a short paper on “Discovering and Shaping Your Own Quaker Kernel” and a role play process for practicing our own responses to that question. This, too, will shortly be available on the NYYM website.

IN SUMMARY

The first year of work for the Outreach Working Group has been filled with the joy of discernment, discovery, learning and an emerging, spirit-filled community of practice. We personally feel gratitude for being part of that process.

The OWG was, from the outset, a two-year program, designed to have a sunset and re-evaluation in June, 2018. So, as OWG enters its second year we are thinking about how to build on our work so far and whether there should be any changes in how we operate in the next twelve months. We will be seeking the advice of MCC and our Steering Circle and also invite and welcome ideas from all Friends.

It seems clear to us that the spirit is moving to inspire outreach. It is important that, together, we find the structures and process to keep these leadings alive in order to continually improve our messages and welcome. As we grow toward an understanding of

how outreach fits within fundamental Quaker practice we are also helping to ensure that the Quaker message remains alive, speaking with power to the condition of those who seek to know it.

Report from Children and Youth Field Secretary

See minute 2017-04-21

I'm led to begin this report with a verse from the chapter in Isaiah that guides our Sessions theme this year:

**The wolf shall live with the lamb,
the leopard shall lie down with the kid,
the calf and the lion and the fatling together,
and a little child shall lead them.**

Isaiah 11:6, New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

The verse offers that the young will lead us. Not *can*, but **shall**. That seems like a good place to begin a report on the work of supporting our children and youth in New York Yearly Meeting. Possibility and hope. These are things I feel in my work every day. And I'd also like to suggest that this verse about new ways of being in relationship. The lion and the lamb are both led by the little child. We're asked to stretch our belief and our trust in that image. As we struggle in our nation to relate to "the other" and under the weight of political polarization, as Friends seek peace and justice in a world aching for succor, how are we sustained by the relationships in our meetings? How are we authentically taking care of one another, and offering spiritual companionship to each other when we travel in the world between First Days? How do our relationships reach across age and experience? In my work, I am seeking new ways to connect and sustain us whether we are the child, the youth, a parent, or another adult led to serve children and youth programs in a meeting community.

During the time since my last report to the body at Fall Sessions in November, my work has been to be in relationship and nurture relationships in several ways. I've been on ten visits to monthly meetings, six of those to our Partner Project meetings. Friends in Montclair Meeting and Wilton Meeting are gathering for Listening Sessions, an opportunity to process together the themes lifted up in the YM survey about meeting life, including experiences of welcome and inclusion. We're identifying growing edges and hopes as a meeting community, and together creating next steps in relationship to one another, to deepen in Spirit, and to grow as multi-age community. I am deeply grateful to Friends in the Partner Meetings for their candor in this sharing, and their care of one another. I'm very hopeful about moving forward, and what we're learning with each other. This is a touchpoint of possibility and hope, and the Yearly Meeting will be seeking applications for two more meetings to join the Partner Project before Summer Sessions.

I seem always to be re-learning the lesson that as Friends our spiritual journeys are about *process* and not a "product," and this is true for the Partner Project as well. Our work is about being present to where we are and how we are in relationship with each other in

this moment, and with that knowing, seeing where we want to go next and moving toward it together.

I've had the joy of leading First Day programs for children and youth at both Partner Meetings and on other monthly meeting visits. Looking back I realize that on three occasions, the lesson was connected to hospitality and community. These are the questions we're asking in the Partner Project: How do we welcome one another? Do we know each other's gifts? Do we know how to participate? How are my gifts included as part of the whole? The activity we're doing with children in the Partner Meetings, which is serving as their Listening Session, lifts up these questions, and they are for all of us.

Since the fall, Yearly Meeting Friends have also gathered in two quarters for three Quaker Family Meetups, and two more are planned for the spring. These are simple occasions for families in a quarter or region to gather to be in relationship with one another. The children play, and the adults have worship sharing and fellowship together. The thread that has run through all three events has been a desire to better know and support one another. One participant said, "We need a cooperative!" So we're seeking mutual assistance, another way to be in relationship, through events that gather us across distances and different meeting communities.

Reading the state of the meeting reports, I've been moved by the descriptions of what's happening in meetings, whether it's a thriving First Day program, the pleasure of attending to children when they are there, or a yearning for more children and families.

One young Friend from Albany Meeting, named Aldo Kinchy Meltz, said some important things in their state of the meeting report, and I have his permission to share this excerpt:

There is something different every week at First Day School. We learn what Quakers do. We learn about famous Quakers. We wish First Day School was bigger.

We get to talk to the adults about things. They listen to us.

Sitting in silence can be kind of long and boring, the adults are sitting and listening for God. We are sitting and waiting.

We would like to learn more games that Quakers do. The people of Albany Meeting are kind.

Aldo lifts up big ideas for us to attend to, for all ages: There's something new every week when we gather. We balance knowing our history with the "doing" of today. We talk and are in relationship. **"They listen to us."** Sitting in silence may not meet everyone's needs. Let's value play, and kindness. Wishing there were more of us.

I've shared with Nurture CC a longer report on the CYFS work, and I'm glad to share that with others. Here are some things I'm carrying hopes for, that exist are in the spaces between the visits and projects and emails and programs:

- Building bridges between generations and between stages of youth. How do we support the child moving from child care to First Day programs? the teen moving from FDS to youth programs? the youth moving into young adulthood?
- Gathering and supporting a community of practice among Friends called to youth ministry. There is always more wisdom in the circle of people gathered. Sharing information and experiences and apprenticing ourselves to one another. Another

way of being in relationship. We made a wonderful start on this work in the Farmington-Scipio Region, at the Youth Institute there in March. The planning group for children and youth programs at these Sessions was another example — Friends with deep experience in YM youth programs and others for whom this was their first time doing something like this; joining hands, sharing institutional memory and thinking in new ways together.

- How to better communicate with and gathering older youth. This one has a specific intention: Emily Provance and I are planning an online listening circle in the near future, focused on hearing from youth and young adults about how better communicate with them. Please watch for that and help us gather with these groups; we will be glad to share what we learn beyond how it supports our staff service to them.

My friend Robin Mohr talks about being “the Quakers the world needs us to be.” Clearly, this is true now more than ever. I would challenge us to consider how it is the relationships between us that sustain us and help us to grow, particularly for our children and youth, and their families.

Minute from Nurture Coordinating Committee to the Yearly Meeting Body

See minute 2017-04-28, #1

In January of 2016, at the Friends World Committee for Consultation World Plenary in Pisac, Peru, the body gathered wrote a minute: “Living Sustainably and Sustaining Life on Earth.” In this minute, that body asked each of FWCC’s constituent yearly meetings to discern and commit to two radical, concrete actions in support of climate justice.

To this date, New York Yearly Meeting has not responded to the Pisac minute, although it has been discussed in various venues.

The yearly meeting’s relationship with FWCC falls under the care of Nurture Coordinating Committee, and so it is our responsibility to be faithful in our care of that relationship. This is why we are bringing this minute to your attention today.

We realize that New York Yearly Meeting has defined structures in place—committees and working groups that have the charge of holding the concern of sustainability, and the Friends serving in those capacities are doing so faithfully. It is possible that the prophetic voice needed to move us toward our response to the Pisac minute will come through one or more of the Friends already serving in those capacities. It is equally possible that the prophetic voice will come through some other Friend or Friends among us—and so, we are holding this up to the entire body.

As we held this concern in worship last night, Spirit moved us in powerful and unexpected ways. We knew that to bring this concern to you was important, but simply to communicate the concern was not enough; we also had to respond by taking our own concrete steps.

We felt empowered to commit to actions appropriate to the work of Nurture Coordinating Committee. FWCC has created a QuakerSpeak video, “A Quaker Approach to

Sustainability,” along with accompanying program and discussion resources for adults and youth. We charged Melinda Wenner Bradley, Children and Youth Field Secretary, to promote these resources widely among Friends serving in Religious Education capacities. We asked Emily Provance, Interim Young Adult Field Secretary, to post the video on the Young Adult Friends Facebook page and to host a video conference for Friends to share their responses to it. We directed Aging Concerns and Callie Janoff, ARCH Director, to also explore uses of the video and to consider the Pisac minute in the light of the committee’s recent conversation about aging and activism. We will ask other committees under the care of Nurture Coordinating Committee, including the Powell House Committee, to also consider how they can commit to concrete actions.

Nurture Coordinating Committee did not intend to engage with this minute as part of last night’s committee meeting. It was not on our agenda. But God worked among us, and we listened to the unfolding of the moment. We were faithful to responding to this leading within the scope of the Nurture Coordinating Committee, and we were clear where our work stopped. We were clear that to move further forward, we needed to bring before all of you the leadings of the Spirit and this question: Friends, what canst thou say?

[Link to the original minute, for historic reference: <http://fwcc.world/fwcc-news/living-sustainably-and-sustaining-life-on-earth-the-minute-from-the-plenary>]

Report from The Friends World Committee for Consultation Section of the Americas

See minute 2017-04-28, #2

On Friday, March 24, seventeen Friends met to discuss the sustainably minute approved at Pisac. We had three working groups and here is a report on what transpired. We’d like to begin with a quote from Isaac Penington:

“Sink down to the Seed... and thou shalt find by sweet experience that the Lord knows... and will lead....to the inheritance of Life.”

Powerful though it was in many ways, we felt the Sustainability minute at Pisac dealt mainly with mitigating anticipated climate disruption. We strongly feel Friends need to go further. Since climate disruption is already adversely affecting the earth as well as the lives of people and other living beings, we need to consider how we can act in solidarity with communities affected by climate disruption as they strive to respond, resist or adapt. We also need to consider ways in which we can help to restore the damage caused to the Earth.

We see a need for a collective as well as personal spiritual awakening leading to transformative spirit-led action. To be effective, we need to express joy in the changes we have made in our lives and share our joy with others. To be spiritually grounded, we need to deepen our relationship with nature and connect with God’s creation. We suggest that Friends traveling in the ministry through FWCC share FWCC’s material on sustainability and collect stories about the effects of climate disruption on local communities and how they are responding. We urge each one of us to carry out our Quaker testimony on earth care and lift it up to all the bodies we are part of.

Queries: How are we as Quakers living our lives as if climate disruption is real and really matters?

How are we showing solidarity with indigenous and marginalized peoples affected by climate disruption?

El viernes por la noche, se reunieron diecisiete Amigos para discutir la minuta aprobada en Pisac acerca de la sostenibilidad. Nos dividimos en tres grupos de trabajo y a continuación les doy un informe de lo que ocurrió. Quisiéramos empezar con un extracto de Isaac Penington:

“Húndete hasta la Semilla... y encontrarás por dulce experiencia que el Señor [la] conoce ...y [la] ha de guiar hasta la heredad de la vida.”

Aun cuando fuese poderosa en muchas maneras la minuta sobre la Sostenibilidad de Pisac, ésta tuvo que ver más que nada con reducir el impacto esperado de la disrupción climática. Tenemos la fuerte opinión que los Amigos tienen que ir más allá. Ya que la disrupción del clima está afectando de forma nociva tanto a la tierra como a las vidas de las personas y otros seres vivos, debemos considerar cómo podemos actuar de forma solidaria con las comunidades afectadas por la disrupción climática mientras que éstas luchan por responder, resistir o adaptarse. También nos toca considerar formas en las cuales podemos prestar apoyo en el proceso de restauración de los daños de la Tierra.

Vemos la necesidad de un despertar espiritual al nivel colectivo así como al nivel personal, el cual nos pueda guiar hasta la acción transformadora dirigida por el Espíritu. Para ser mayormente eficaces, tenemos que expresar el gozo en los cambios que hemos hecho en nuestras vidas y compartirlo con los demás. Para estar arraigados espiritualmente, tenemos que profundizar nuestra relación con la naturaleza y conectarnos con la creación de Dios. Sugerimos que los Amigos líderes que están viajando en el ministerio a través del CMCA compartan los materiales del CMCA sobre la sostenibilidad, y que reúnan historias acerca de los efectos de la disrupción climática sobre las comunidades locales y las maneras en que las mismas están respondiendo. Animamos a cada uno de nosotros que lleve consigo nuestro testimonio cuáquero sobre el cuidado de la Tierra y que llame la atención de todos los entes de los cuales forma parte, a este tema.

Preguntas:

¿Cómo estamos viviendo nuestras vidas nosotros como cuáqueros a la luz de la realidad y la verdadera importancia de la disrupción climática?

¿Cómo estamos expresando solidaridad para con los pueblos indígenas y marginados que se encuentran afectados por la disrupción climática?

Prisons Committee's Letter to Governor Cuomo

See minute 2017-04-30

Dear Governor Cuomo,

The New York Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) calls on you to withdraw your proposal to drastically cut the number of visiting days at New York State maximum-security prisons. This request is informed by our direct experience with those who are incarcerated and with their families.

It is a guiding truth of our faith as Quakers that there is that of God in everyone and that no person is beyond redemption. In light of this belief, we support programming in

correctional facilities in New York State, helping facilitate Alternatives to Violence workshops in fifteen facilities and holding worship groups in eight facilities.

We listen deeply to the lived experience of incarcerated men and women and hear of the critical importance of ongoing connection to their families and loved ones. We hear from people serving long sentences that time spent in the visit room with friends and family is especially important, keeping hope alive and providing a key incentive for positive behavior. We have witnessed how these connections have contributed to the successful reintegration of men and women back into society

We have heard of the devastating effects your proposed cuts will have on the families of the incarcerated. The majority of these families already struggle financially and emotionally to maintain ties with their loved ones. Now they must face the reality that their options for visit days will be limited and the likelihood that their visits will be cut short due to overcrowded visit rooms.

Your proposal would reportedly save \$2.6 million, which represents a fraction of your overall state budget of \$152 billion. We ask you to consider the human cost, particularly to poor communities and communities of color, and urge you to withdraw your plan.

Report on Alternatives to Violence Project in El Salvador

See minute 2017-04-31

February 14–March 7, 2017

Shirley Way (Ithaca MM) and Fazilee Buechel (has attended Ithaca MM)

This was my (Shirley) third trip in four years to El Salvador to help facilitate AVP workshops and Fazilee's second. Shirley Way and Mara Komoska (Brooklyn MM) went for two weeks in 2014 and Fazilee and Shirley went for three weeks last year and again this year.

The trip in 2014 and this one in 2017 were funded almost entirely by NYYM's Sharing Fund. Please support this and other great Spirit-led witness work by making a donation to the Sharing Fund. Thank you!

My clearness turned care and accountability committee can tell you that in discerning around the trip this year, I was clearly called to continue the work—I could not not go. I have built relationship with the team and know the power of the work that flows through me and the team.

And my clearness committee can tell you that I really was not keen on going. There was a fear and a dread that I've not experienced before. It stemmed from witnessing the effects of gang violence on the people and knowing that we were not safe last year. A newspaper headline last year was, "Only twenty-one killed yesterday in the country".

And I knew that I could not not go.

Thankfully, the social climate is much improved this year. People openly smile and laugh and greet one another on the street. Gang violence has lessened, we were told, because gang leaders are either imprisoned or have been killed.

So holding workshops was easier this year than last. People were not as afraid to attend.

Salomon Medina coordinates AVP in El Salvador, working for Friends Peace Teams' Peacebuilding en Las Americas (PLA). His friend of more than thirty years, Mario Gonzalez, is a newly trained AVP facilitator. Mario is a pastor with an evangelical Christian church in San Salvador. The four of us—Salomon, Mario, Fazilee and me (Shirley)—were the facilitation team for the four workshops.

This work is the most meaningful I have ever experienced and I speak for the team in conveying my gratitude to NYYM for funding it.

We started by returning to a small village close to the Honduran border—Santa Marta. Mara, Salomon and I had held a Basic and an Advanced with the people of this village and neighboring San Felipe in 2014.

This time we held an Advanced Special Topic Workshop on Trauma Resilience.

The participants are part of the organization founded by Oscar Romero called Co-Madres. Family members of the Co-Madres were disappeared during El Salvador's civil war in the 1980's and this community fled to Honduras for seven years. The Salvadoran army fired on them from helicopters as they crossed the river to Honduras. When they returned, their land had been taken by neighbors. They still are fighting to get it back. Without land, people cannot grow enough crops to feed their families. But they are not starving and it is not entirely clear to me how they sustain themselves.

The workshop scene here is always a bit chaotic. Many participated for two days but only nine completed all three days. Only a few participants could read and write. Dogs, children, elderly who could not participate much were all in the mix and were welcomed by all. Domestic violence, sexual violence, alcoholism, machismo, mothers whose sons had opted to or were coerced into joining gangs, unemployment and lack of potable water are issues that are alive for them. (The stream that runs through the village has gone dry.) There were a lot of tears and a lot of laughter. This is a community that knows and loves each other and the workshop was a place to process old and new traumas.

Our second workshop was another on Trauma Resilience, this time with Co-Madres in San Salvador. Several participants were forced to flee their homes during the war, all had lost family members. One man joined the guerrilla forces when he was fifteen. His older brother had been killed. He fled the country and when he returned he was captured by the army and tortured. Now, more than thirty years later, he has increasing debility in his legs but worse, he has not recovered from the trauma. He distrusts nearly everyone. He has had three families but cannot sustain relationship. He still needs to isolate himself from others and avoid seeing army soldiers on the street. All of the participants recognize the healing effects of AVP and it's clear that people need on-going support in order to fully recover.

Our third workshop was a Basic with a new group of Co-Madres. Last year we held a Training for Facilitators Workshop with some of the Co-Madres and two from that group joined our team for this workshop. But when you are homeless or have nightmares of the army so severe you cannot sleep for more than a few hours at a time and you have difficulty reading, facilitating is a challenge. They ask for your prayers. One participant was likely a guerilla fighter during the war. The army cut off one of her breasts. I'm sure whatever else they did was unspeakable. She now lives with her husband in a part of San Salvador so heavily controlled by gangs that only those who live there are free to come and go. This group was also very fluid and only three were present all three days.

Our fourth and last workshop was a Training for Facilitators with nine participants. All completed all three days and all have potential to be strong facilitators. One participant is

just 13 years old! Most of the graduates are congregants of Mario's church, including his wife Mimi who is a co-pastor. Another graduate is a Roman Catholic nun from Ireland who works with gang members inside a prison in San Salvador. Salomon and Mario hope to bring AVP inside the walls with Angela.

Salomon, Mario, Fazilee and I and all of the participants are so grateful for NYYM's support of this work. We have been sustained by your prayers and your love and your money. The work was funded through NYYM's World Ministries (\$1,500) and Witness Activities (\$1,100) grants with an additional \$300 coming from Ithaca MM. Thank You!!!

This work is coordinated through Friends Peace Teams' Peacebuilding en Las Americas. The organization also coordinates AVP work in Guatemala, Honduras and Colombia. Really great work is happening in all of those countries. For more:

www.pla.friendspeacetams.org

2016 Treasurer's Report

See minute 2017-04-32

Please see accompanying PDF.

Minute of Exercise

See minute 2017-04-37

For over a year, NYYM has been laboring with concerns being raised about the integrity of our supporting Friends United Meeting, given the discriminatory nature of the sexual ethics portion of the organization's personnel policy. During the past year, the Nurture Coordinating Committee has twice asked monthly meetings from across the yearly meeting to weigh in on this issue. About a third of the meetings and worship groups have responded. From these responses, and times of discussion and discernment by NCC, we can name places where we sense unity, and places where we as yet do not have unity.

Places where we have unity:

- We joyfully affirm that each and every person is equally loved and cherished by the Divine, equally worthy of love, respect, and equal treatment, and that the gifts which God bestows upon a community are equally distributed to all for the benefit of the community regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, race, class, or any other distinction.
- We find the Friends United Meeting sexual ethics portion of its personnel policy to be at variance with that knowledge and experience, and therefore discriminatory and unjust.
- We hope for, and advocate for, its revision.
- We are deeply pained to be in the position of financially supporting an organization engaging in injustice and discrimination.
- We seek actions which might be effective in changing this situation.
- We recognize and value the good works that FUM is doing throughout the world.

Places where we do not yet have unity:

- We are not clear as a yearly meeting to disaffiliate from the other yearly meetings that comprise FUM.
- We are not clear as a yearly meeting to withhold financial contributions from FUM as either a matter of conscience, or in protest.
- Some NYYM Friends are aware that the FUM General Board does not have unity on this portion of the personnel policy, either unity to retain it, or to revise or eliminate it. Some are not.
- Some of our meetings see the benefit of withholding funds from the general fund of FUM, while others do not.
- Some of our meetings, as a matter of conscience, are withholding from their covenant donation an amount they deem equivalent to what would go to the FUM general fund. Some are choosing not to.
- In some cases, current withholding of funds to FUM by meetings and individual Friends is a matter of conscience and integrity. In other cases, withholding of funds seems to be for the purpose of trying to exert leverage in this process.
- Some of our meetings would support a more assertive advocacy on this issue by NYYM's representatives to the FUM General Board, while others support the more quiet diplomacy and ministry of presence, which has characterized the stance of board members over the past nine years.