

WITNESS COORDINATING COMMITTEE

MINUTES

July 22, 2013 at Silver Bay

Present: Mary Eagleson, clerk; Judy Meikle, assistant clerk; Helen Garay Toppins, Black Concerns Committee, Barrington Dunbar Fund, Prisons Committee, financial clerk; Robin Mallison Alpern, European American Quakers Working to End Racism Working Group, recording clerk; Patricia Chernoff, Earthcare Working Group; Caroline Webster, visitor; Sarah Faith Dickinson, European American Quakers Working to End Racism Working Group; Joe Kulin, Indian Affairs Committee; Susan Wolf, Indian Affairs Committee; Robert Martin, Barrington Dunbar Committee; Enoch Nixon (visitor); Joan Cope Savage, at-large; Patricia Beetle, visitor; Sue Clark, European American Quakers Working to End Racism Working Group; Naomi Paz Greenburg, Latin American Concerns Resource Person, Committee on Conscientious Objection to Paying for War; Lyle Jenks, Wm Penn House; Jeff Hitchcock, NYYM clerk (latter part of meeting)

Regrets: Jane Simkin, Fred Dettmer, Diane Keefe, Susan Weisfeld

After a period of centering silence, clerk Mary Eagleson shared several announcements and then turned to the business.

2013-07-1. The operating budget of the Yearly Meeting is facing a shortfall of perhaps \$25,000. All Coordinating Committees have been asked to look at how to **reduce our operating budgets** for 2014. Although we do not yet have a representative to the National Campaign for a Peace Tax Fund, we agreed to keep the \$250 budget line for this organization open. We discussed ways of finding representation, which could consist of a representative and an alternate.

We agreed to reduce the lines for travel by appointees to other Quaker organizations and for travel to WCC meetings from \$1000 each to \$500 each. We will ask Financial Services to restore those lines to \$1000 should funds become available. Equalization funds are available from NYYM to support Friends' travel to YM Sessions. The operating fund budget for WCC is thus approved to be

Sharing Fund appeals: \$2,400

National Religious Campaign against Torture: \$150

Quaker Earthcare Witness: \$150

NY Council of Churches: \$150

NJ Council of Churches: \$150

Friends Peace Teams: \$250

National Campaign for a Peace Tax Fund: \$250 .

AFSC, New York office: \$250 [Suggestions have been made about which program of AFSC to support]

FCNL: \$250

Travel by appointees to other Quaker organizations such as AFSC: \$500.

Committee's own travel expenses, etc.: \$500

Contingency: \$200

2013-07-2. We approved **Margaret Lechner's request to use the \$500** remaining from the \$2500 grant she received from WCC in 2012 to support her participation in the 2014 AVP International Gathering.

2013-07-3. We considered a **draft minute on gun violence**. We approved the attached version, which we will present to the YM business session on Thursday.

2013-07-4. We agreed to forward the attached **minute on drones** from New York Quarterly Meeting to the YM business meeting this week.

2013-07-5. **Internal nominations:** We approved the following re-appointments: Mary Eagleson, clerk; Judy Meikle, assistant clerk; Helen Garay Toppins, financial clerk; and Robin Mallison Alpern, recording clerk.

2013-07-6. We approved **EAQWER's request to introduce the group** from the platform this week.

Attachments:

Draft minute on gun violence

Minute on drones

Draft minute on gun violence

From the very beginning, Friends have opposed all outward forms of violence. We affirm the

fundamental Quaker belief that there is that of God in everyone, including each person whose life is taken by a gun, and in each who takes the life of another.

We support social and political initiatives, including legislation, to

- A. Eliminate the availability of military style assault weapons,
- B. more firmly regulate gun purchases and require background checks for all purchasers,
- C. Regulate the manufacture of firearms, and
- D. provide better mental health services.

We commit ourselves to being more active in working to reduce the death toll from guns, and more broadly we renew our traditional commitment to seeking nonviolent alternatives in our violence-prone society.

Minute of Concern regarding Drone Warfare

As Friends (Quakers) who believe there is "that of God" in everyone and therefore every life is sacred, we are deeply concerned about the proliferation of lethal unmanned aerial vehicles, commonly known as drones. The United States is leading the way in this new form of warfare where pilots in US bases kill people, by remote control, thousands of miles away. Drones have become the preferred weapons to conduct war due to the lack of direct risk to the lives of U.S. soldiers, but these drone strikes have led to the death of hundreds of innocent civilians (including American citizens) in countries where we are not at war, including Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia.

We urge our government to put an end to this secretive, remote-controlled killing and instead promote foreign policies that are consistent with the values of a democratic and humane society. We call on the United Nations to regulate the international use of lethal drones in a fashion that promotes a just and peaceful world community, based on the rule of law, with full dignity and freedom for every human being.

July 25, 2013 at Silver Bay

Present: Mary Eagleson, clerk; Judy Meikle, assistant clerk; Helen Garay Toppins, Black Concerns Committee, Barrington Dunbar Fund, Prisons Committee, financial clerk; Robin Mallison Alpern, EAQWER, recording clerk; Pierre Douyon, Black Concerns Committee; Naomi Paz Greenburg, Latin American Concerns Resource Person, Committee on Conscientious Objection to Paying for War; Jens Braun, Bolivian Quaker Education Fund representative; Robert Kazmayer (Sunfire), at-large; Robert E. Martin, Barrington Dunbar; Patricia Beetle, visitor; Virginia Auster, visitor; Shirley Way, at-large; Diane Keefe, FCNL delegate; Karen Reixach, visitor; Andy von Salis, Conscientious Objection to Paying for War; Steven Davison, ex officio; Jeff Hitchcock, NYYM clerk (latter part of meeting)

Regrets: Jane Simkin, Fred Dettmer, Susan Weisfeld, Lyle Jenks

2013-07-7. Errors in our updated Handbook page will be corrected by the clerk. We expect the corrected page will be put on the consent agenda for Fall Sessions. Additions made to the Witness Activities Fund guidelines were approved by the Yearly Meeting.

2013-07-8. The minute we presented to the YM on gun violence was not approved. Some Friends objected to the appeal to secular powers to carry out God's will for peace; others lifted the concern for farmers and others who need guns. Diane Keefe (convenor), Naomi Paz Greenberg, Pierre Douyon and Robert Kazmayer were appointed to an ad hoc committee to work on a revision of the minute, taking into account all the minutes received thus far, as well as ministry from the floor of the YM this morning. The resource list compiled by Meetings in Purchase Quarter will be posted to the WCC web page. WCC will forward the minutes received, if they were approved, to all Monthly Meetings with a cover letter, inviting them to participate in discernment as to what the YM can say, and to strategize actions to carry this concern forward. The four members of the ad hoc committee will be listed and we will provide their contact information. The cover letter and approved minutes will also be posted on the website, and Mary will place a note in InfoShare with a link to the webpage.

2013-07-9. The minute we presented to the YM on drones was returned to our committee. An objection was that the minute appears to decry the deaths of innocent civilians, rather than reflecting our testimony opposing violence toward anyone at all. Mary will write to New York Quarter explaining that NYYM did not endorse the minute. The letter about gun violence (see Minute 2013-07-8) will also invite Meetings to labor about the use of lethal drones and to visit our webpage for resources.

2013-07-10. Christopher Sammond, NYYM General Secretary, reported to Mary Eagleson that he had not used the \$500 we allocated him for use during his recent sabbatical to travel in support of his concern regarding hydrofracking. We approved returning the money to the Witness Activities Fund.

2013-07-11. We approved Mary's brief written description of the WCC for inclusion in a pamphlet for publication by the youth program committee for Fall Sessions, to be distributed to young Friends.*

2013-07-12. Mary will conduct an email poll to find a date for a one-day visioning retreat for our committee.

*Witness Coordinating Committee takes care of the work New York Yearly Meeting does in the wider world. We prepare statements about areas of social concern to go out to the media. We coordinate the work of Witness section committees and distribute money from the Sharing Fund.