

**NEW YORK YEARLY MEETING**  
**SUMMER SESSIONS**  
**July 19-31, 2020**

Online via Zoom

Monday, July 20, 2020; 6:45 p.m. EDT

*Jeffrey Aaron (New Brunswick), Clerk*  
*Elaine Learnard (Conscience Bay), Assistant Clerk*  
*Laura Higgins (Wilton), Recording Clerk*  
*Robin Alpern (Amawalk), Reading Clerk*

2020-07-01. Friends gathered into a period of waiting worship.

2020-07-02. Out of the silence, Jeffrey Aaron (New Brunswick), serving as clerk of the yearly meeting, welcomed Friends to the 325th annual gathering of New York Yearly Meeting. He posed the query *Why We Meet*. (attached, see page 82)

2020-07-03. Lu Harper (Rochester), a member of the Technical Support team, spoke to Friends about how to participate in Summer Sessions with Zoom. She reminded Friends how to mute and stop video sharing over several platforms. Video participation is not required to participate in meetings.

2020-07-04. Marissa Badgley, NYYM Interim Young Adult Friend Field Secretary, led us in an activity to welcome one another. She invited us to “lean in” to this small group activity among the beloved community. She asked Friends to go into breakout rooms to introduce ourselves to the smaller groups.

2020-07-05. Liseli Haines (Mohawk Valley) offered an Acknowledgement of the Land (attached, page 83). She reminded us that we humbly acknowledge that we, in New York Yearly Meeting, live on stolen land; whether it was the land of the Matinecock and Shinnecock on the eastern shores, the Lenni Lenape in the south, the Haudenosaunee to the west, the Abenaki to the north or many others who took care and shelter in the thousands of miles of these broad, fertile lands, forests, and waters.

2020-07-06. Robin Mallison Alpern (Amawalk), NYYM Reading Clerk, noted we are participating in our first virtual

roll call. We aim to capture as much joy now as we do with the physical roll call. Robin called the monthly meetings by region as Friends shared our videos in turn.

2020-07-07. The clerk introduced our many visitors:

- Friends Committee on National Legislation: Bobby Trice, Quaker Engagement Associate; Alicia McBride, Director for Quaker Leadership; Riley Robinson who is presenting on July 23 and offered a letter of introduction.
- Friends United Meeting: Kelly Kellum, General Secretary who is presenting on July 27.
- Friends General Conference: Barry Crossno, General Secretary
- Right Sharing of World Resources: Jacqueline Stillwell, General Secretary who is offering an interest group.
- Gardner Documentary Group: Janet Gardner, Richard Nurse, producers, who are offering an interest group on their film Quakers: the Quiet Revolutionaries
- New York State Council Of Churches: Peter Cook, Executive Director who is presenting on July 30.
- Baltimore Yearly Meeting: Jolee Robinson who has a travel minute for the purpose of intervisitation.

2020-07-08. Melanie-Claire Mallison (Ithaca), Clerk of Sessions Committee, attempted a “call and response” to remind Friends to look at the on-line Summer Sessions Calendar 2020 to find all the session activities and their Zoom links.

Dawn Pozzi (Rochester) named the Junior Yearly Meeting (JYM) activities that we can also find on the same Summer Sessions on-line calendar. She introduced Ellie Rosenberg who is co-facilitator with Dawn for JYM.

Plans are underway for the Café Night talent show. Young people can register for JYM for no fee without their parents having registered for Summer Sessions.

2020-07-09. Laura Higgins (Wilton) read the minutes from the opening meeting for business. Additions were made to the minutes, after which Friends approved the minutes.

2020-07-10. The Interim Young Adult Friends Field Secretary, Marissa Badgley, led the assembly in a Joyful Activity to close the evening. In small groups, we wrote “rap-like” rhymes to words we were given.

Online via Zoom

Tuesday, July 21, 2020; 7:30 p.m. EDT

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

2020-07-11. Matt Venhaus (Buffalo) 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, page 84) and Christopher Sammond (Poplar Ridge, attached, page 85)
- Approval of the 2nd presentation of the NYYM Trustees Handbook revision (see attachment from Fall Sessions 2019, page 45)
- 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, page 166), 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 (see page 128), 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, page 86) 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, page 88). 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, page 140), 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 (page 145).

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, page 91) 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, page 94), 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 Yearly Meeting Update emails.

Online via Zoom

Thursday, July 23, 2020 2:30 p.m. EDT

*Clerk pro tem, Elaine Learnard*  
*Assistant Clerk pro tem, Jeffrey Aaron*  
*Recording Clerk pro tem, Lu Harper*  
*Reading Clerk, Robin Alpern*

2020-07-22. Friends gathered into a period of waiting worship.

2020-07-23. Gina Varrichio (Ithaca), reminded Friends of our Zoom participation practices.

2020-07-24. The clerk acknowledged that we may experience longer pauses between items of business or between messages. She invited us to experience the closeness possible to be found in this virtual session, with patience for pauses and technical difficulties. She let Friends know that clerks and recording clerks may need to go into a "clerk's huddle" breakout room to confer. She asks that Friends hold the clerks in the Light should this occur.

2020-07-25. The clerk noted that the minute from Monday on the reading of the FGC pre-gathering epistle from Friends of Color is being revised and will be brought to a subsequent meeting for business.

2020-07-26. Pamela Wood (Morningside), Clerk of Prisons Committee, spoke of the impact of the coronavirus pandemic

upon incarcerated people. She presented a proposed letter, which has been endorsed by both Morningside Meeting and New York Quarterly Meeting, to New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo encouraging him to “give people hope in a time of despair and grieving” by taking steps to protect prisoners and prison staff during the Coronavirus pandemic, including increased coronavirus testing for prisoners and staff, compassionate release, clemency, and bringing the HALT Solitary Bill to a vote. Clerk Elaine Learnard invited questions and thoughts. Witness Coordinating Committee, in its June 2020 meeting, was clear to recommend sending the New York letter in its current form, with the understanding that the basic letter might be revised appropriately for Connecticut and New Jersey later. A formerly incarcerated Friend expressed his gratitude for the yearly meeting’s work in support of incarcerated people. A Friend suggested that we strengthen this and/or later letters by emphasizing more strongly our testimony that we have witnessed and experienced the power of the Light to change lives. With possible revisions to be brought by the Witness Coordinating Committee, Friends approved sending the letter to Governor Cuomo (attached, page 96).

The Clerks heard Friends’ support of the Clerk sending amended letters (as interim actions) to New Jersey and Connecticut should such letters be ready before we meet again at Fall Sessions.

2020-07-27. Melanie-Claire Mallison (Ithaca), Clerk of Sessions Committee, presented a first reading of a proposed revision to the Committee’s Handbook page (attached, page 98) to reflect the incorporation of Junior Yearly Meeting into Sessions Committee. Friends are invited to send comments and questions to Sessions Committee Clerk Melanie-Claire Mallison or to incoming Sessions Committee Clerk Dawn Pozzi (Rochester).

2020-07-28. Melanie-Claire Mallison (Ithaca), Clerk of Sessions Committee, announced changes to our practices of hosting Spring and Fall Sessions regionally to reduce the impact upon host regions. Beginning in 2021, Spring Sessions will be hosted by Oakwood Friends School, with nearby regions invited as led to supply volunteers during Sessions. Fall Sessions will

continue to rotate, but the Spring Fall Sessions Coordinator & Liaison and the Clerk of Sessions Committee will take on the responsibility of finding and booking venues, inviting appropriate regions to provide “day of” support as they are led.

2020-07-29. Recording Clerk pro tem Lu Harper (Rochester) read the minutes. The minutes were approved.

Online via Zoom

Saturday, July 25, 2020, 2:30 p.m.

*Clerk: Jeffrey Aaron (New Brunswick)*

*Assistant clerk: Elaine Learnard (Conscience Bay)*

*Recording clerk: Mary Eagleson (Scarsdale)*

*Reading clerk: Barbrea Bleecker (Montclair)*

2020-07-30. Friends gathered into a period of waiting worship. Jeffrey Aaron, clerk, introduced the Friends serving at the “clerks’ table.” Chad Gilmartin from the technical support team provided instruction on how to participate in the Zoom session.

2020-07-32. The clerk observed that the most frequent times when we as a yearly meeting struggle, it is with the wording of the minutes, particularly when they record a deep and moving experience. On July 21, such an occasion arose after the reading of the minutes, and the last two minutes from that meeting were not approved at the time. Mary Eagleson read the amended minutes 2020-07-20 and 2020-07-21 from that business session. The two minutes (pages 62-63) were approved.

2020-07-33. Riley Robinson, representing Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL), spoke about the work of that organization. He explained how FCNL determines its legislative priorities, by asking for input from monthly meetings across the country. This year there were over 200 responses.

William Penn House no longer has its own board but is directed by the members of the FCNL Education Fund. Their meetings to consider matters related to the Wm. Penn House are held separately from those related to the Education Fund. Yearly Meetings no longer name members to the Wm. Penn House board. (Riley’s notes are attached, on page 101.)

2020-07-34. Jean Doneit, clerk of Poughkeepsie Monthly Meeting, read the attached memorial minute (see page 105) for Richard D. Hathaway, a member of her meeting, who passed away on January 29, 2020. Dick was known to many who visited the book table at summer sessions at Silver Bay. He came to the Religious Society of Friends as a young adult in the early 1950's, and was dedicated to peace concerns. He worked for three years as the executive director of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (1952-1955). He was active for many years in the Civil Rights Movement, marching in Selma in 1965 and chairing the legislative committee of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference Poor People's Campaign in 1968. On Easter Sunday, 1967, he led approximately 300 participants across the Peace Bridge at Niagara Falls to deliver cash to Canadian Quakers to send aid to North Viet Nam. In the summer of 1971 he was chief organizer of a 3-month silent peace vigil in front of the White House.

Dick's deep engagement in service was manifest in his practical participation in and support of Poughkeepsie Monthly Meeting and yearly meeting committees. He became a person to whom others could turn when in need of an answer, or spiritual conversations which often resonated with others' faith journeys. In the last hours of his life, he spoke the word "infinity," over and over, expressing a final experience of finding the Divine.

Ministry followed. Dick was beloved by many. The words "faithful, inclusive, community" apply especially well to him. He planted many "seeds," which have spread far and wide and have taken root and grown. In his absence, his continued presence is felt in Poughkeepsie Meeting. He could be counted on to speak his mind and heart.

2020-07-35. Marissa Badgley, serving as Interim Young Adult Field Secretary, gave her report. She is grateful for the opportunity to serve as part-time staff. This has been a strange year, sometimes marked by frustration and pain, but also blessed. She reviewed the 8 points presented by young adults a year ago, and reported on the work she has done to address them, using a graph to highlight the various parts of it. She reminded us that her work week is only 20 hours per week, and urged us to consider what might be accomplished by a full-time young adult

field secretary. She listed the increases in numbers of young adults now connected to the yearly meeting. She compared the results of the COVID 19 survey taken by the yearly meeting, which show that the pandemic has hurt young adults more severely than it has older Friends. They were more likely to have lost their jobs, or to have taken pay cuts, or suffered psychologically. Worse, these setbacks have occurred when they are in a vulnerable stage of life. What's next? Marissa has no idea. She sees many opportunities for connecting with young adults and urges all Friends to reach out to them. Further, she urges the yearly meeting to find the funds to support a full-time young adult field secretary.

Ministry followed. One Friend affirmed the power of feeling connected to the YM community, which has been brought about by the young adult field secretary. Another noted the importance of joy in life, and lifted up the joy of having a young adult field secretary. A Friend mentioned that young adults are the "growing edges" of our yearly meeting. Another commented on how important is the work both to the future of Quakerism as well as to the young adults themselves, and explained that the Development Committee is working now to raise money to continue the young adult field secretary position. One Friend said, "Remember our youth now, treat them well, they are the future of the yearly meeting."

2020-07-36. Anne Liske read a second section from the State of Society (see page 166). Each of the individual meetings' reports will be available in a folder on the yearly meeting website.

2020-07-37. The minutes were read and approved.

Online via Zoom

Monday, July 27, 2020, 7:30 p.m.

*Clerk pro tem, Elaine Learnard*  
*Assistant clerk pro tem, Jeffrey Aaron*  
*Recording Clerk pro tem, Lu Harper*  
*Reading Clerk, Barbra Bleecker*

2020-07-38. Friends gathered into a period of waiting worship. The Clerk reviewed the agenda.

2020-07-39. Matthew Venhaus (Buffalo) reminded Friends of our Zoom participation practices.

2020-07-40. Reading Clerk Barbra Bleecker read an obituary for John Perry (Bulls Head-Oswego) while a photo of John and a poem by John's daughter-in-law Jen Perry (Farmington) was shared on screen. A memorial minute will be brought to a later Session.

Ministry followed. Friends spoke of their gratitude for the depth of John's Quakerism, his good-heartedness, and how he served as mentor and teacher for many. A Friend shared how she can still hear his voice and see him in his seat in the Auditorium at Silver Bay. He had a way of getting his message across. A Friend reflected that John was also a troublemaker. In meeting for Business at Bullshead-Oswego, his ministry might be contrary, challenging and deepening. He valued each person's individual gifts and held a desire for meetings to nurture, support and cherish Friends' gifts. A Friend shared that she became a member of Bullshead-Oswego because of John directing her to the writings of Quaker contemplative Thomas Kelly. John taught us how to continue to share our gifts even with the inevitable diminishment of age and disease: he found new ways of reaching out with each diminishment, becoming an AVP volunteer, a hospice volunteer, making art and other creative activities. In his last days, he was still immersed in keeping up-to-date on the problems facing the larger world.

2020-07-41. Anita Paul (Schenectady) and then Jeffrey Aaron read excerpts from the State of Society reports (attached to the July 21 minutes). The excerpts 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.

2020-07-42. Steve Mohlke (Ithaca) presented the General Secretary's report (see page 109). Steve reflected on the frequently asked question, "How can we support the Friends Center for Racial Justice (FCRJ)?" In the spirit of "Wear thy sword as long as you can," Steve reflected on why it no longer makes sense to him to ask that question; he noted that the question assumes that those who ask the question are the giver and FCRJ is the receiver of the support. FCRJ's mission is to address racism within the Religious Society of Friends. We are the work, the givers and the receivers. Racism has infected all of us and it isn't going to go away on its own. Steve lifted up 3 quotes from the Friends General Conference Friends of Color pre-Gathering epistle that we heard read last week. "We enjoyed the rare opportunity of not being othered in Quaker space;" "Friends of Color need respite from the systemic racism too often found in our American Quaker community that often goes unseen by white friends;" and "Friends of Color are fatigued from being asked to teach white folks." Flipping the question, Steve asked, "How can FCRJ support me?" Angela Hopkins of FCRJ welcomes conversations with Friends exploring gifts and leadings around working to become a more anti-racist society. You can contact her at [angela@fcrj.org](mailto:angela@fcrj.org). Steve encouraged Friends to think about what kind of commitment you can make to support FCRJ.

Continuing to speak about racism, Steve noted that as Friends talk to one another about systematic racism in our society, about the murders of black and brown people by police, we are building a shared vocabulary. With shared vocabulary, and with each other, we can take on the work of anti-racism. Steve encouraged Friends to expand our thinking about "racism" from "interpersonal bigotry" to structures, institutions, and systems. He offered up his understanding that "I understand myself as acting racist when I comply with a racist system and acting anti-racist when I resist it. Sometimes I do both almost at the same time." Steve spoke about why and how becoming anti-racist matters to our faith. He emphasized that our faithfulness depends on a diversity of perspectives. He spoke of patterns of whose voices get heard; how Friends of Color are discounted by the words and

actions of white Friends; a pattern of extra scrutiny of Friends of Color; and how as a body, many Friends feel free to ignore community rules. When the community feels free to ignore its own rules, Steve noted that a person of color, particularly someone new to Friends, has to wonder if this is a safe space. When rules are applied unevenly, it is people of color who lose. He noted that fewer than 30% of the people who registered for Summer Sessions accessed the web page with the community agreements we agreed to live by when we registered.

Steve also held up how our Quaker “superpowers” can be used in the work of anti-racism: listening to and for Spirit in the voices of Friends of Color; paying attention to, finding it important and supporting strategic anti-racist actions discerned by Friends of Color; examining our yearly meeting words and practices with a diversity and equity lens; leaning into our diversity of belief as a “big tent” skill in building a multicultural community; and our practice of connecting inward leadings with outward action. Steve wondered about the statement some Friends make, saying that they don’t see color. He asked us to consider how that statement lands for Friends of Color, and that it might be heard as “I feel invisible.”

Moving to the structure of the yearly meeting, Steve described the staffing structure and budget realities. With 5.5 full time staff equivalents, most of the work of the yearly meeting is done by volunteers. Personnel is  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the yearly meeting budget. Just to keep doing what staff do now will require an additional \$5,000 increase each year going forward. Steve noted that this number gives him a sinking feeling when he faces it. Most of our yearly meeting budget comes from monthly meeting covenant donations, which overall have not increased in a decade. We have kept up with staffing costs largely because the Trustees have directed unrestricted investment income to the operating budget.

Steve reported that this Fall, NYYM needs to make a decision about what level of staff support we want to commit to children, youth and young adults for 2021 and beyond. It would take an increase of tens of thousands of dollars annually to broaden the young adult support from this past year to include children and youth. The most likely source of this increased income is from

individual donors who want to see the work of NYYM thrive. Friends were invited to talk with the Development Committee, which is having an Interest Group Wednesday evening.

Steve announced that after decades of working in her NYYM staff position, beginning September 1, Helen Garay Toppins will transition to working 3 days per week, with hopes that the staff savings will make it more possible to support children, youth and young adults. From the body, Helen Garay Toppins (Morningside) affirmed her absolute dedication to the future of the yearly meeting, by pleading for support for funds to support our young adults and our children.

Friends spoke in response to and in gratitude for the General Secretary's report in bringing us to a grounded place of faithfulness. A Friend asked the yearly meeting to help monthly meetings to engage in the questions about how we as individuals treat one another, particularly how we treat people of color; coming under the weight of the work that needs to be done to change systemic racism in our country. Another Friend spoke about how she has heard a lot about race and racism, looking outwardly. Steve has named patterns of how this manifests within the yearly meeting. She named another pattern: if we want to be faithful, it is important to look at the composition of our staffing, especially since, with Helen's cutting her hours, we may be becoming even more white in the makeup of our staff.

Friends spoke to funding for children, youth and young adults. A Friend raised a message she has heard from young adult Friends and Friends of Color: we are not only your future, we are your present. We are here, and we are already doing really big things. Another Friend said that it doesn't feel true to her spiritual condition that we are still asking ourselves where the \$5000 are, or how we can consolidate yearly meeting staff positions for youth and young adults. For years the Young Adult Field Secretaries have told Friends that Spirit needs them to do this work. What is the divine asking of us?

A Friend named the connection between our discussions of racism and the funding in support of children, youth and young adults in our meetings as "othering."

A Friend reminded us to trust the Light as we continue to struggle to find way forward. When we are covered, when

compassion and love unite us in communion with the Eternal, nothing is too great an obstacle to overcome in that moment when we become one, when Love resolves everything.

2020-07-43. Interim Young Adult Field Secretary Marissa Badgley reported on the Pilot Mentoring program. Marissa expressed gratitude for the work of the initial planning group, the Advisory Committee, the mentors and seekers themselves, and the yearly meeting as a whole in supporting the program. The program was requested last year by Young Adult Friends at Summer Sessions, and the body heard that request. The pilot program began in January 2020. Twenty-four initial matches were made between seekers and mentors; 10 virtual gatherings took place, from a virtual kickoff weekend delayed by snow through gatherings moved into virtual mode by the pandemic. Twenty out of 24 mentor/seeker matches completed the 6 ½ month program. Seekers overwhelmingly felt that the program was a good use of their time and energy this year; that it strengthened their spiritual practice and self-awareness; that they have a stronger connection to Quaker community; that they took steps to change something in their life that wasn't working; and that they built skills in Quaker process. Ninety-six percent of seekers plan to continue connecting with their mentors. Due to the virtual events, the only thing that cost money in the program was Marissa's time. From the body, Friends read reflections from participants in the program. One Friend wrote: "This program and the support I got from it saved my Faith and likely my life." Marissa noted learnings from the pilot program: mentoring relationships across distance are possible; mentors/seekers alike need training and support in community; going through the program as a cohort was powerful; there are opportunities to expand the program beyond Young Adult Friends; and continuing administration and facilitation of a mentoring program will require a team, not just one person. The Advisory Committee is in discernment about how to take what we have learned and build a sustainable program, with a tentative launch of Phase 2 in October 2020. Friends were invited to contact Marissa at [yafs@nyym.org](mailto:yafs@nyym.org) if they wish to serve on the Advisory Committee or wish to involve members of their Meeting.

Friends responded to the report, and thanked Marissa and

all involved in the work. A Friend wondered whether guidelines for the program have been written somewhere that Friends can access. Marissa noted that there will be more to share when the work for this pilot is modified and edited for the next iteration of the program. On average, mentors and seekers met more than twice a month. A Friend who participated in the program as a seeker stated that this has been the most powerful, collective movement of Spirit through the body that she has ever experienced. This program was very particular to the yearly meeting, which made it accessible to her, filling a hole in her Quaker community, where she had not yet been reached. A friend saw the possibility of a collaboration emerging between young adult Friends and Friends of Color (via FCRJ and/or other yearly meeting committees). A Friend serving on the Advisory Committee named one aspect of the work of the committee: checking in with mentor/seeker dyads. Another Friend noted that both mentors and seekers learned from one another. She named the value of bringing together a critical mass of young Friends that would have been difficult within a monthly meeting. A Friend lifted up the power of the program, speaking from their own experience of being accompanied through a “dark night of the soul,” discerning their own path and living into that.

2020-07-44. The minutes were read and approved.

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 (page 114). 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, page 115) 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.

Online via Zoom

Thursday, July 30, 2020, 7:30 p.m.

*Clerk pro tem, Elaine Learnard, Conscience Bay*  
*Assistant Clerk pro tem, Jeffrey Aaron, New Brunswick*  
*Recording clerk, Laura Higgins, Wilton*  
*Reading clerk, Barbra Bleeker, Montclair*

2020-07-53. Friends gathered into a period of waiting worship.

2020-07-54. Clerk Elaine Learnard reminded Friends how to participate in the Zoom meeting. Elaine said we would take the time to discern as we need to speak.

2020-07-55. Peter Cook, Executive Director of the NY State Council of Churches (NYSCoC), began by recognizing the contributions of John Lewis, urging that all retain concern for his legacy. Peter welcomed Friends partnership and ministry out in the country and out in the world. He recognized NYYM's representatives to NYSCoC. Peter described an extensive number of social justice initiatives being led by NYSCoC.

2020-07-56. Cai Quirk (Ithaca), Co-Clerk of Witness Coordinating Committee (WCC), introduced Glenn Josey to bring a minute advocating a change to the 13th Amendment of the US Constitution to the Yearly Meeting body at Summer Sessions floor. WCC endorsed the minute approved by Fifteenth Street, Brooklyn, and Morningside Monthly Meetings, and New York Quarterly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends.

2020-07-57. Glenn Josey (Fifteenth Street) presented the minute through a PowerPoint presentation.

The Thirteenth amendment to the Constitution, ratified in 1865, abolished slavery "except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted." This clause has allowed slavery to continue in the United States. The minute asks for a new amendment to the United States Constitution that replaces the current 13th amendment. The Minute is seeking to remove the exception clause that allows the continuation of slavery to continue in the United States through the disproportionate imprisonment of people of color and involuntary servitude of incarcerated persons.

Minute 2020.6.3, Fifteenth Street Monthly Meeting

Friends considered a statement regarding the 13th Amendment to the Constitution:

Section 1 of the 13th amendment of the US constitution states:

Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.

We propose a new amendment to the constitution that amends section 1 to state the following:

Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.

Friends support the spirit and intention of this proposal and approve the suggested amendment.

Glenn introduced a Congressional Delegation Letter. New York Yearly Meeting was asked to endorse this minute and authorize the Clerk and the General Secretary to sign the attached letter to send to the congressional delegations of New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut introducing bills seeking two thirds approval from the House of Representatives and the Senate to begin the process of abolishing slavery in the United States. We also ask the Clerk to send this letter to other yearly and national meetings and other organizations as necessary to complete this work. We ask each local meeting to consider endorsing this minute and sending letters to their own representatives.

Documents read and referenced:

13th Amendment Cover Letter (see page 118)

13th Amendment Congressional Delegation Letter (see page 120)

Friends approved endorsing the minute and sending the letters as described. Friends were urged to get under the weight of supporting the work necessary to bring the proposed constitutional amendment to completion.

2020-07-58. Clerk presented Nominations (see Friends Under Appointment section) in two parts.

The first part is the nominations that have been posted in advance. These nominations would have been on the Seasoned Business Items (SBI) list. Nominations are the only item on the

SBI list for Summer Sessions. Because they have been posted in advance and Friends have had the opportunity to consider them and ask in advance for any changes to the list, there is no discussion of these nominations.

There were four people listed on what was posted who were already approved through the SBI process that took place after Spring Sessions was canceled.

These people are already serving in their rolls and should not have appeared on this list:

- Laura Higgins, Recording Clerk;
- Dawn Pozzi, Sessions;
- Mary Harpster and Peter Phillips, Trustees;

Additionally,

- Carol Holmes Alpern's name is removed from FUM Board nomination because our YM membership numbers now allow only two representatives and the two already serving are continuing, and Carol understands;
- Emilie Gay's name is removed from reappointment to Oakwood Board at her request;
- Robin Mullaney is removed from the list because she is on the separate approval list as an attender.

Friends approved these nominations.

2020-07-59. The reading clerk read the names of additional nominations, which must be considered individually.

Requiring separate approval are:

**Elsie K. Powell House Inc.**

Matthew Lindop          Saratoga (attender)          class of 2021

**Communications Committee**

Jennifer Swann ('17)          South Berkshire, NEYMclass of 2021

**Sessions Committee**

Robin Mullaney          Old Chatham (attender class of 2021

Ann Nunes ('18)          Wilton (attender)          class of 2021

\*Deborah B. Wood ('17)          Purchase          class of 2023

\*Accidentally omitted from regular list

## **Supervisory Committee for General Secretary**

Ileana Clarke ('17) Cornwall (attender) class of 2021

Anne-Marie Scheidt, Conscience Bay, was released from service on the Indian Affairs Committee.

These nominations and release request were approved.

2020-07-60. Julia Giordano (Bulls Head-Oswego) presented the final reading of the Epistle (see page 125).

Ministry followed. Necessary clarifications and corrections were brought to the Epistle Committee.

Friends approved the Epistle with minor revisions that will be accomplished by the Epistle Committee, Clerk, Assistant Clerk, and General Secretary.

Online via Zoom

July 31, 2020 at 7:00 p.m.

*Clerk, Jeffrey Aaron  
Assistant Clerk, Elaine Learnard  
Recording Clerk, Lu Harper*

2020-07-61. Friends gathered into a period of waiting worship. Jeffrey Aaron (New Brunswick) reviewed Zoom participation practices.

2020-07-62. Marissa Badgley shared a video celebrating Friends' milestones of the last year. Friends re-centered into worship, and shared ministry. Friends expressed gratitude; spoke to the love they have for the yearly meeting; and testified to the living Spirit that has infused our Sessions.

2020-07-63. Clerk Jeffrey Aaron (New Brunswick) made closing remarks (attached, page 121). He noted that the documentary we watched has helped us look back at our history, and that we are moving forward to address current concerns. In our Meetings for Business, Friends addressed the remnants of legal slavery still embedded in the US Constitution, raised concerns about unsafe prison conditions in this time of pandemic, passed a budget and made important structural revisions. We remembered dear Friends who recently passed; we wept and laughed

and celebrated together in a meeting for grieving and healing and in our worship sharing groups; and we were blessed by the participation of many first time participants.

Jeffrey invited us, quoting Eleanor Roosevelt, to believe in the beauty of our dreams, and to take heart from George Fox's vision of an infinite ocean of light rolling over the ocean of darkness. Jeffrey spoke of Friends' history of leadership in movements for equality, peace and justice, and encouraged us to get into "good trouble," taking inspiration from John Lewis, Bayard Rustin and Martin Luther King, Jr., and to continue to do our part to help build the Beloved Community.

Jeffrey announced that we will gather again as we are able, in-person, virtually or a hybrid of both, at Fall Sessions on the first weekend in November.

2020-07-64. We welcomed Elaine Learnard (Conscience Bay) as our new clerk. Elaine noted that although we were not gathered in one place geographically this year, we were certainly gathered and the Spirit moved powerfully among us. She expressed her hope that the things we have learned that allowed us to be more accessible, more inclusive, and more focused, will not be lost as we go forward. Elaine asked Friends for their prayers, love & support in this new role. She understands support as talking to her "when something is not right or clear or when a need is unmet or an injury unacknowledged, not just when things are smooth."

2020-07-65. Melanie-Claire Mallison (Ithaca) presented the final Sessions Committee Report. Cafe Night has raised over \$2800 so far. There were 401 Summer Sessions registrants: 18 youth, 61 young adult friends, 44 returning after a time away, and 117 first time attenders. A Summer Sessions evaluation will be sent out in mid-August. Melanie-Claire introduced the incoming clerk of Sessions Committee, Dawn Pozzi (Rochester).

2020-07-66. Dawn Pozzi (Rochester) presented a report from Junior Yearly Meeting (attached, page 123). While registration of youth was low and attendance was sporadic, there were still deep conversations. Facilitators heard what it was like to shelter at home, go to school online, and not be with friends. We heard what the young folks thought about the pandemic,

about the divisions in our nation and about the protests in the streets. Dawn expressed optimism for having JYM at Summer Sessions in 2021. She stated that she was glad we offered JYM sessions this year. It is important for the yearly meeting to tell our youngest Friends that we care about them and that we are here for them.

JYM coordinators will be appointed by the Sessions Committee later in the year.

Melanie-Claire shared a list of the Friends who created and made Summer Sessions happen, who helped behind the scenes before and during Summer Sessions, all facilitators and participants, and shared statistics for attendance at events.

2020-07-67. Powell House co-director Regina Baird Haag reminded us that Powell House is still here and eagerly awaiting Friends' return. Due to the pandemic, Powell House has lost \$250,000 in income from programs and rentals. Powell House expects to remain closed until at least November 2020. She introduced our new Powell House Youth Directors, Martin and Sarah Glazer, who bring wonderful energy and gifts to Powell House. Sarah and Martin, members of Rochester Meeting, shared their enthusiasm for the youth program, and announced some upcoming and ongoing events, including Zoom check-ins, guided meditations and virtual conferences.

2020-07-68. The minutes were read and approved.

Before closing, Friends moved into small breakout groups where we reflected on Summer Sessions and envisioned our future; we re-gathered together to share goodbye wishes.

# Attachments

## Why We Meet—An Opening Message From the Clerk

*See minute 2020-07-02*

So, why do we still meet? Let me quote Quaker author Parker Palmer, speaking at Friends General Conference in 2015. Palmer said, *I want to testify to all that Quakerism...has to offer to a world in deep need. Over the past...weeks, as I've told my Jewish, Catholic, Protestant and Muslim friends that I would be speaking at this Gathering, every one of them has said something like, "Please tell the Quakers how much we need them these days."...The underlying key to our renewal, I believe, is not in...repackaging...ourselves. It's naming and claiming and sharing with others the spiritual treasures we've always possessed...too often hidden from others by our reluctance...to talk about them. We must not let our declining numbers diminish our sense of the spiritual gifts we have to share with a world in great need.*

Through our history, Friends have worked tirelessly to relieve human suffering....If we have been ahead of the times concerning the plague of racism, we could still have done far better, and can do better, and we own that. I share with you query #1 of 6 from the epistle of Friends of Color and their Families at Friends General Conference of this month. *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?* Friends, this is why we meet.

During these sessions, we will meet to confront existing legal slavery in our vast, hidden prison system, disproportionately populated with people of color. Today we are witness to historic developing awareness of many critical concerns. Much of the world has begun to understand that black lives matter, that vast social and financial inequality is unjust and therefore socially unstable, that the health of our environment is a critical concern, that a person's culture or sexual identity is no reason for separation or fear and hatred. We are all different and in that we are all the same, traveling together on the same planet...

The perpetual job of godly people is to make the needed repairs as we are able. This—and joyful laughter together as Friends—is why we meet.

At Fall Sessions 2019, I quoted from the Talmud. It is all the more pertinent today: *Do not be daunted by the enormity of the world's grief....You are not obligated to complete our work, but neither are you free to abandon it.* And so we gather for the 325th time. And still, we rise.

We are fortunate to have the technology to gather today, even though we are not able to reach out to hug each other. But for the first time, through technology, our gathering is available to our entire yearly meeting, in homes everywhere. This year, as we celebrate being together, we balance our joy with compassion for those Friends who cannot be with us because of the losses they are suffering from the pandemic—illness, illness of loved ones, bereavement, economic devastation, mental and emotional distress from loss of contact with family and friends, losses of so many kinds. We will work to find ways to provide relief as we are able.

So, as we gather this week, we will take care to maintain a balance of laughter and joy in our togetherness while we make room for grief and compassion for those who are struggling. Let us hold that critical balance as we rededicate ourselves to our beloved community.

## **Acknowledgement of the Original Inhabitants**

*See minute 2020-07-05*

We humbly acknowledge that we, in New York Yearly Meeting, live on stolen land; whether it was the land of the Matinecock and Shinnecock on the eastern shores, the Lenni Lenape in the south, The Haudenosaunee to the west, the Abenaki to the north or many others who took care and shelter in the thousands of miles of these broad, fertile lands, forests, and waters.

These peoples, with their tradition of hospitality, welcomed us as guests to these, their lands. Many of us did not know how to share and our greed caused us to take and take and take until there was almost nothing left for our hosts.

In spite of this, their strength and resiliency have enabled

them to regain their presence and to be an example of the need for connection. Their ongoing care and stewardship of this land and their communities is a timeless spiritual practice and model for sustainable living.

May we have learned in the several hundred years of living on this continent, the abundance that is still here, the meaning of enough, the hospitality that is still offered by our hosts, and respond in gratitude for their enduring love and the care of this land. May we join them in loving care for Earth and each other that will take us into the future.

## **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

## **Email from Friends Fiduciary**

*See minute 2020-07-16*

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 Coordinat-

ing 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.

**The Revised 2020 NYYM budget is on page 140.**

## **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 worshiping 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 spir-it 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 COVID-19, 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 COVID-19, 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 COVID-19 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 COVID-19, 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*

## **Prisons Committee Letter to NY Governor Andrew Cuomo (as sent from NYYM)**

*See minute 2020-07-26*

July 27, 2020

“Blessed are the merciful for they will be shown mercy.” Matthew 5:7

To Governor Cuomo,

This time of sickness and sadness is indeed a time we need to show mercy to one another. In that spirit, we urge you to consider showing mercy to those who are incarcerated, especially those who are particularly at risk of COVID-19. As Governor of the State, there are many steps you have the power to take; we urge you to take this moment to give people hope in a time of despair and grieving.

You could encourage the use of compassionate release for

people who are elderly and people who have health issues, thereby saving lives.

You could use the power you have to grant clemency.

We encourage you also to consider clemency for the many incarcerated people who are eligible for parole but are denied parole solely because of the “nature of their crime.” As members of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), we have witnessed and experienced the power of the Light to change lives. It is important for you to acknowledge that change.

If people in prison have been granted parole, and they have a place to go in the community, you could encourage their immediate release rather than exposing them to the virus while in transitional correctional facilities.

New York State has a very high re-incarceration rate for minor parole violations. Currently this exposes the formerly incarcerated to a greater possibility of infection from the virus. You have the ability to bring a halt to this.

Testing those over 55 years of age is a very positive step, and making this public is reassuring to those on the outside. Because many are being moved to different facilities, it is important that testing continue, not only for those over 55 years of age but for all who are incarcerated. Younger people also have health conditions that make them vulnerable to COVID-19, and they can transmit the virus to staff and others incarcerated with them. This protects everyone associated with these facilities. We urge you to be more transparent and active in this area.

You could encourage the HALT Solitary Confinement Bill to come to a vote as soon as possible. To experience solitary is to experience torture. In this time of COVID-19, people in solitary are also at greater risk of not receiving the medical care they might need if they are infected.

As members of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), we know that there are many non-violent ways to address violence that do not escalate into further violence. Programs such as the Alternatives to Violence Project, already offered in many correctional facilities for those inside, could be used for staff as well. Training Correctional Officers in de-escalation strategies has the potential to improve outcomes for all who live and work

in these facilities.

Jeffrey Aaron, Presiding Clerk  
New York Yearly Meeting

## **Proposed Revision to Sessions Committee's Handbook page**

*See minute 2020-07-27*

### **SESSIONS COMMITTEE**

### **GENERAL SERVICES**

#### **History**

NYYM Sessions Committee evolved from the former Administrative Committee. A major change was made to the constitution of the committee when Nurture Coordinating Committee was laid down in 2018. Subsequently, the Junior Yearly Meeting Committee was put under the care of Sessions Committee and is now incorporated into the committee structure.

#### **Purposes & Objectives**

Sessions Committee is responsible for organizing the logistics of Spring, Summer, and Fall Sessions of Junior Yearly Meeting (JYM) and New York Yearly Meeting (NYYM). Sessions Committee stewards the right use of the Equalization (EQ) Fund and the process of Pay as Led (PaL), sets sessions registration fees and forms, and manages the committee's finances in accordance with the NYYM Operating Budget.

#### **Functions & Activities**

The functions and activities for Sessions Committee are detailed in three separate committee manuals; one for the committee, subcommittees and appointments, one for Spring and Fall Sessions, and one for the JYM Program. All manuals, which include job descriptions of committee members, subcommittees, and various volunteer positions for YM session activities, and timelines and forms for JYM, can be found on the NYYM website, along with the committee's minutes, and the schedule of upcoming NYYM Sessions.

In summary, the committee works, as appropriate, with the NYYM Clerk and Assistant Clerk, the YM staff (Associate Secre-

tary, Communications Director, Digital Communications Director, and General Secretary), YM treasurer, General Services Coordinating Committee, NYYM Trustees, Liaison Committee, and the NYYM regions to handle all operational details of each session including, but not limited to:

- Research, contact, negotiate, and contract services with venues, following current YM guidelines for processing contracts.
- Update sessions forms, including registration, medical forms for youth, evaluations, etc.
- Arrange for the printing and distributing of advance publicity.
- Set all registration fees and assist the YM staff in creating all registration forms.
- Set and distribute session themes and schedules.
- Invite guest speakers and arrange for their needs.
- Invite f/Friends to serve as JYM volunteers and arrange for the needs of Junior Yearly Meeting Program and its participants.
- Assist and report to the NYYM Liaison Committee and General Services Coordinating Committee when requested.
- Respond in a timely manner to concerns and changes in process, focus, and requirements for all NYYM sessions.
- Ensure that all sessions-related expenses are accounted for and paid in a timely manner, keeping within the parameters of the YM-approved Sessions Committee budget.

### **Organization & Method of Appointment**

Sessions Committee includes four routes to membership; [1] at large members, [2] ex officio members, [3] representatives named by the YM Coordinating Committees, and [4] the persons named by the committee to be coordinators and liaisons, who may not be part of any of the other three options.

- [1] **at large**; nine to twelve at-large members appointed for three-year terms, approximately one third named each year, upon the recommendation of the YM Nominating

Committee and the approval of NYYM.

- [2] **ex officio members**; the clerk and assistant clerk of Yearly Meeting, and one or two Yearly Meeting staff, currently the Associate Secretary and General Secretary.
- [3] **representatives**; one representative named by each of the NYYM Coordinating Committees, currently General Services, Ministry, and Witness.
- [4] finally, Sessions Committee names a Spring Fall Sessions Coordinator & Liaison, a Summer Sessions Liaison, and the JYM Coordinators (two) and JYM Registrar (one). These five persons do not need to be part of the other three options above.

All Session Committee members, listed in these four categories, are expected to not only attend meetings of the entire Sessions Committee, but also to serve on one or more subcommittees. Current subcommittees (2020) include Finance, Handbook & Manuals, Internal Nominating, Junior Yearly Meeting, Summer Sessions Arrangements, and Summer Program. For the good functioning of the committee as a whole, Sessions Committee names a clerk, assistant clerk, recording clerk, and a representative to General Services Coordinating Committee. Again, see the committee manuals for the complete descriptions of the subcommittees and individual job descriptions.

Sessions Committee is an open committee and all Friends are welcome and invited to attend as led.

### **Meeting Times & Places**

Sessions Committee typically meets in early fall, mid-winter, early spring, and at all NYYM sessions. Subcommittees meet as necessary. The clerk of Sessions Committee will especially ensure time is allotted for subcommittees at the fall and mid-winter committee meetings.

### **Finances**

The committee is funded from the YM Operating Budget. Expenses covered include, but are not limited to: committee expenses and travel; venue fees; costs for session needs (advance reports, JYM program materials, name tags, Summer Sessions Programs, etc.); room, board and travel for invited speakers to

Summer Sessions; financial support for Junior Yearly Meeting volunteers, the Sessions Committee clerk, the Summer Sessions Liaison and the YM Office Assistant; copying of materials during sessions; a thank you gift to the venue. Expenses for Spring and Fall Sessions include, but are not limited to, deposits for and donations to venues, volunteer support for the Spring Fall Sessions Coordinator & Liaison, and any Spring or Fall Sessions expenses not covered by the monies collected via registrations.

See the Sessions Committee Manual for a comprehensive description of the Sessions Committee budget and expenses.

## **FCNL's Riley Robinson's Notes for his Report to NYYM**

*See minute 2020-07-33*

About 10 years ago I participated in an interfaith group studying emergency preparedness for religious groups. Each health care expert that we spoke to said that it was not a matter of if there was going to be a pandemic, but when. They told us that preparedness would make congregations more able to help their members and more able to help others as well. I didn't have much luck talking to Quakers about this and other preparedness problems. But this March a faint memory of this came back to me. I went to look in a dusty corner and was glad to find that I owned two boxes of N95 masks that I hadn't thought about in years.

Some situations are so big and complicated that they are hard to see, but that doesn't make them any less real. So all Quaker organizations, all of us, are facing the realities of today, and whatever else is coming. Quakers work well with queries and questions. So I'm going to ask three provocative ones. And I certainly don't know the answers to these:

1. What if, knowing that we are heading to a Niagara Falls of an environmental crisis, New York Yearly Meeting and Friends Committee on National Legislation had both decided a year ago to have annual meetings by Zoom because the environmental cost of meeting in person was too great, and then made a public witness of it?

2. What if, a year ago, knowing that this nation was under severe racial stress, both organizations had dedicated ourselves to bringing a plan to the next annual gathering for being authentically and thoroughly antiracist organizations, ready to work in our respective communities as well?
3. What if both organizations had readied plans to deal with the militarization of government and society, knowing the both President Dwight Eisenhower and Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. had publicly warned us decades ago that all the public services in the nation would suffer if we did not?

I'm serious about the questions. But in each case, last year I might have said to myself, "No, that's too hard! Or, "No, we'll never agree to that!" But I recall a conversation long ago with a non-Quaker staffer of a Quaker organization, warning, "If you don't make decisions, they will get made for you."

But these are also trick questions. Because in each case, there was a Quaker organization available to help us with the problem. For the first, Quaker Earthcare Witness. For the Second, Friends General Conference. And for the third, Friends Committee on National Legislation.

My larger points? There is no more time to put off facing the big hairy realities. And this is no time for Friends and Quaker organizations to even think of trying to go it alone. Friends, we need each other!

Here is FCNL's vision:

- We seek a world free of war and the threat of war.
- We seek a society with equity and justice for all.
- We seek a community where every person's potential may be fulfilled.
- We seek an earth restored.

This is not just a poetic vision. These are the actual headings for FCNL's much longer Legislative Policy statement, renewed just last year.

Who decides what we work on? Well, actually you have a lot to do with it. In every year in which there is a congressional election. FCNL prepares a set of legislative priorities for the coming new congress. To do this, FCNL starts by asking for

input from Friends Meetings and churches. And this spring, even with all the disturbance going on, Friends sent in more than 200 responses, which is terrific. Thank you! This will be approved at the November annual Meeting by the General Committee, on which 10 NYYM members currently serve.

So how is FCNL doing?

Well, like every year, FCNL sent out an annual report this spring. (Iran and Yemen, Root Causes of Violence, Native American Crime Victims, Gun Violence Research, four young adult programs...). (But so much has happened since then!)

So this is not been the year that anybody planned for but it's the year we all got. Having said that, in recent times, FCNL developed its Human Resources capacity, developed a full-fledged communications department, and strengthened its computer network capacity. When DC shut down in early March, FCNL already had a work-from-home policy which all staff suddenly had to use. The computer system had to rapidly adapt to that as well, which happened. And FCNL has been able to get its message out to the public with pieces in public media, even in some military-related publications, on radio networks, and on TV like BBC and Al Jazeera.

Even more to the point, we'd been planning our annual young adult Spring Lobby Weekend for late March. It moved from a D.C. event to online in three weeks! 500 young adults made approximately 127 congressional visits online to lobby on climate change.

FCNL's nationwide network of Advocacy Teams continues to work on legislation involving war powers. This year so far, there are 123 teams who have made 187 lobby visits and gotten 98 press clips. Nine teams are in the NYYM region. Last November NY Senator Kirsten Gillibrand spoke at the Advocacy Teams Retreat at annual meeting.

Quote from Mass. Rep. McGovern on one of their recent calls: "There is an urgency to the work that you are doing that is greater than any time in my lifetime. So much is riding on the work that you are doing. What I like about FCNL is I always feel you are speaking with moral authority.... And sometimes when it's uncomfortable you're annoyingly right on some of these issues."

I won't be able to talk about the many issues that FCNL works on, or how, but please come to the FCNL interest group for more, on Wednesday evening at 7 p.m.

Financially, FCNL is cutting 13% from its budget for the coming year.

Meanwhile, just on Wednesday, FCNL:

- Issued a piece entitled: The United States Needs to Issue National Use of Force standards - (about policing).
- On our web site home page is the article "One Last Chance: Congress is Preparing the Most Impactful Bill of the Year," telling you how you can help on the COVID bill.
- FCNL Young Fellow Ose Okooboh was named an Emerging Expert of the Forum on the Arms Trade.

We're passionate and we're patient, and we're just going to keep on going.

William Penn House is still a separate 501c3 organization. The board has the same composition as the FCNL Education Fund, but they meet as a separate entity to consider WPH decisions. Meetings/YMs no longer appoint board members. Right now we are moving forward with the extensive repairs the house needs. Originally we had planned to reopen the House in the fall of this year, but COVID19 has delayed that goal. We are looking forward to re-opening when it's feasible and offering hospitality and advocacy training and programming. We're very grateful for the many Friends who have been involved and supportive of William Penn House's work and are excited to see what this next phase of WPH's life will bring.

Draft public announcement:

Friends Committee on National Legislation Education Fund (FCNLEF) assumed responsibility for the governance and management of William Penn House on September 1, 2019. William Penn House will remain a separate 501(c)(3) charitable organization. When the building re-opens in fall 2020, the house will strengthen and expand the Quaker presence on Capitol Hill by providing accommodation in four dormitory rooms and three private bedrooms, as well as daytime rentals of the conference room accommodating 30 people. For more information, email [wph@fcnl.org](mailto:wph@fcnl.org).

Staying in touch:

- FCNL.org – what’s happening on issues, upcoming events, etc.
- Join Friends from across the country every Wednesday at 5:15pm Eastern for silent reflection – <http://fcnl.org/ww-stream>
- [Fcnl.org/lobbyfromhome](http://Fcnl.org/lobbyfromhome)
- [Fcnl.org/donate](http://Fcnl.org/donate)

Video events: [www.fcnl.org/action/events](http://www.fcnl.org/action/events)

- August 6 at 4:00 p.m.: Thursdays with Friends—75 Years After Hiroshima with Anthony Weir on the 75 anniversary of the US dropping atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Join us for our Annual Meeting online, November 14-17.

Riley Robinson

Major Gifts Officer

Friends Committee on National Legislation

## **Memorial Minute for Richard Hathaway**

*See minute 2020-07-34*

RICHARD D HATHAWAY, beloved member of Poughkeepsie Friends Meeting for many, many years passed away on January 29, 2020. He had a vibrant, life-long devotion to Quakerism and let his life speak from the core of his being. Next to his photograph in the Poughkeepsie meeting house, he said: “I made a career out of words but what speaks to me here is the silence.”

It is impossible to truly summarize Dick’s life by listing his accomplishments, though his life’s work says much about who he was. It was a life well lived, a life that spoke. Most of those who spent time with him, worked with him and worshiped with him knew little or nothing of those things. What we knew was his presence. We knew and treasured his smile, his meticulous attention to detail, his insights and his ability to offer his leadings as a member of our body. We knew a man who turned to Quakerism early in life and then let his life speak in adher-

ence to its principles. He was most of all a dear Friend.

The son of Dale and Edith Hathaway, Dick was born in Chillicothe, OH. After college he married and had two children with his first wife Shirley: Bruce, who predeceased him in April 2019 and a daughter, Linda Ellis whose family includes Dick's three grandchildren and six great-grandchildren. His wife since 1978, Viola Sabia Hale Hathaway who worked for the American Friends Service Committee when they met, remains a cherished member of Poughkeepsie Meeting which they joined together after their marriage.

Dick came to the Religious Society of Friends as a young adult and joined Cambridge Meeting in the early 1950's, after serving with the US Naval Reserve from 1945-46 and graduating from Oberlin College in 1949. He was particularly drawn to how God is expressed in the Quaker testimony of non-violence and the practice of taking peace concerns into actions and service. He worked for three years as the Executive Director of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (1952-55) and continued to support them throughout his life. He was active for many years in the Civil Rights Movement, marching in Selma in 1965 and chairing the legislative committee of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference Poor People's Campaign in 1968.

Many people have been inspired by his work for peace that included risk, a strong personal integrity, a deep caring for all people, and a steady love for Quaker ways. Throughout his life Dick served on many Peace Concerns committees and organized or participated in Peace vigils for peace from the White House to the Poughkeepsie meeting house. He often spoke about the profound self-searching and lasting impact of participating on Easter Sunday 1967, in an act of civil disobedience, leading approximately 300 participants, including many non-Quakers, across the Peace Bridge at Niagara Falls to deliver cash to Canadian Quakers to send aid to North Viet Nam. In the summer of 1971 he was the chief organizer of the 3-month silent peace vigil in front of the White House. Dick was involved in mediation for peace in Ireland and numerous other life commitments to outreach. In a 2004 talk, he said "The Quaker message is that peace begins with an individual, an individual in communion with the Holy Spirit, an individual living peace, and exemplify-

ing it at all costs. In 1651, George Fox, the founder of the Quaker movement, was offered a commission in the Puritan army. He refused it. Then he went home and wrote in his journal, ‘I told them I lived in the virtue of that life and power that took away the occasion of all wars.’ Peace must be inward before it can become outward. Then you have to do something about it.”

In his vocation as a professor of English many of his gifts found expression. He taught at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Millsaps University, and SUNY New Paltz (1962-2011), wrote about early American literature and modern style in the craft of writing, and published numerous articles. Friends remember that he also wrote and published poetry and occasionally shared it in Quaker worship or discussion groups, bringing his and other poems life and depth. He self-published two thoughtful pamphlets on Quakerism as well (*Balancing Act—The Literary Artist as Contemplator* and *Reflections from Silence*). In meeting for worship his leadings to offer vocal ministry were honed through time to become brief, evocative messages.

Over time he gravitated to committees of New York Yearly Meeting that required a comprehensive and sensitive way with words, or a sure grasp of financial matters. He served in many capacities over the years. [We have not been able to track down a comprehensive list of Dick’s NYYM committee service, 1978-2008, some could be added here, now or later.] His love of books led him to manage the book table for years during NYYM sessions at Silver Bay. He had many friends throughout the Yearly Meeting and was often hailed by them as he walked across the campus wearing his familiar sun hat!

Dick had an amazing talent and attentiveness for details embedded in our immediate world that could bring a richness to the most seemingly mundane things. He was meticulous and brought that talent to being treasurer of both Poughkeepsie Monthly Meeting and Nine Partners Quarterly Meeting and the NYYM Budget Weekend. His broad understanding of financial matters and his ready and extensive understanding of computers, programming and electronic media helped him counsel the Meeting in matters ranging from building a website to investments to contractors’ estimates.

His support of committees was also very practical. Dick

contributed enormous energy to the workings and running of Poughkeepsie Friends Meeting, serving on the Building and Grounds and Planning and Finance committees. Often during the week, driving past the Meeting House, one might see Dick's car parked in the car lot and know that he was inside doing some job for the Meeting. On occasion, he was seen on the roof of the building removing ice or fixing shingles. In these years, the energy, time, and contributions Dick devoted to the Meeting seemed endless. Let us not forget his homemade ice cream at the socials!

Deep engagement in service and the Quaker way of life led him many times to new endeavors, including on Poughkeepsie's Ministry and Counsel. Originally feeling that new attenders should not be intruded on with too many questions, during committee worship he had a profound leading to welcome them. Since that moment, he offered enthusiastic greetings over and over to many newcomers! He was joyful they happened to visit and was boundlessly interested to learn about them. Many remember with gratitude this spiritual hospitality and kindness "welcoming in a stranger" who otherwise felt rather shy and new. This connection left people with a happy impression and often created lasting bonds. He expanded that role to facilitate book and discussion groups that started with a text, but ended up exploring anything that was on the participants' minds, sharing his Quaker perspective on life. Dick became a person to whom others could turn when in need of an answer, some advice about the Meeting, or spiritual conversations which often resonated with others' faith journeys. In the last hours of his life, he spoke the word "infinity," over and over, expressing a final experience of finding the Divine.

Music was also Dick's constant companion and his life work. As a youth he played violin and came to love many types of music, opera high among them. Throughout his life Dick encouraged music in others and after the death of his son, he shared with many Bruce's beautiful and compelling compositions. Dick supported the gifts of other people, especially in the areas of literature, art and music. He attended many concerts and art shows as well as other programs members were involved in. He encouraged the projects and the project-makers and expressed

his gratitude freely.

An especially poignant way that Dick's life touched us was by witnessing the devotion he had for Viola and his family. He often spoke about Viola with abiding love. His eyes would fill with Light with the mention of her name—an unmistakable expression of the love he felt for her. His hardest final good-bye was the parting from his deepest earth-love. This love will always be fresh, and vibrant, and beautiful.

Dick was a regular at business and committee meetings and always had ideas and advice on what would be best for the Meeting. Late in his life he became less physically able, but he was always at Planning and Finance when held at his building, and came to Meeting for Worship even when it was difficult for him. He didn't let his disabilities get him down. We found his messages in the last year thoughtful, intelligent and spirit-filled. He continued to have a smile for everyone and was always encouraging to others. He really appreciated what others did for him. Dick loved his Meeting and the people in it. He is greatly missed.

Approved by Poughkeepsie Monthly Meeting, 6/21/20.

Signed, Jean W. Doneit, clerk

## **Report from General Secretary**

*See minute 2020-07-42*

### **General Secretary's Report—Summer 2020**

When William Penn became a Quaker, he asked George Fox, "Now that I'm into this movement, how long should I keep wearing my sword?" George Fox replied, "Wear it as long as you can." Which I interpret as: "You are going to come to know things and it just won't make sense to wear the sword anymore."

Last Wednesday's plenary was given by Angela Hopkins, Director of the Friends Center for Racial Justice in Ithaca. At the end of the plenary, someone asked, "How can we support the Friends Center for Racial Justice?" I'd like to take a couple minutes to explore that question. It's a question that gets asked a lot. I used to ask it. But I've come to know things and it just doesn't make sense to me to ask it anymore.

That question contains an assumption: that we, the askers, are the giver and FCRJ is the receiver of support in order to do its good work. Friends, we are the work. The FCRJ's mission is to address racism within the Society of Friends. Racism has infected all of us. It is different for Friends of Color and for white folks. We can all be forgiven for not wanting to deal with it. But it isn't going to go away by itself.

In our opening session, we heard the epistle from the FGC Friends of Color gathering. I want to lift up three quotes from that epistle:

- “We enjoyed the rare opportunity of not being othered in Quaker space.”
- “Friends of Color need respite from the systemic racism too often found in our American Quaker community that often goes unseen by white friends.”
- Friends of Color are fatigued from being asked to teach white folks.

How can FCRJ help within the Society of Friends? Angela Hopkins would welcome a conversation with you. She loves to explore gifts and leadings with people, particularly around becoming a more anti-racist Society of Friends. Her email is [angela@fcrj.org](mailto:angela@fcrj.org). And if you plan to spend some time with Angela, think about what you can commit to to make it worth her while. Note that, like others, due to current events the FCRJ is making the transition to online programming.

I'm going to keep talking about racism. Some of what I'm saying could apply to other forms of oppression, but I'm keeping my attention on racism. The murders of black and brown people by police and recorded on cell phone video have more of us talking about racism. This is good, because we can't address something without talking about it. And as we talk, we build a shared vocabulary. With a shared vocabulary, and each other, we can take this on.

Some thoughts on vocabulary. When you hear the word “racism” do you just think about the interpersonal bigoted statement? Do you think about structures, institutions, and systems? What about the term “a racist”? Personally, I don't use the term “a racist” anymore. It seems to imply that a person is or isn't.

I draw a parallel to the positive experience we have of trying to name elders. When we try to talk about somebody being an elder or not, where do we draw the line? Who is and who isn't? It seems to work better if we talk about serving as an elder as in, "I'm serving as an elder for the Meeting for Discernment." I understand myself as acting racist when I comply with a racist system and acting anti-racist when I resist it. Sometimes I do both in a very short time period.

Why does this matter to our faith? Our faithfulness depends on a diversity of perspectives. We Quakers believe actions speak louder than words. Our actions arise from a decision-making process that depends on a community of participants grounded in the spirit. And the unity of our decision-making is more reliable when the process includes a diversity of perspectives.

It is more difficult to ground ourselves if we are hungry, tired, or trying to smile our way through the latest othering. White Friends, even if there are few or no People of Color in your monthly meeting, are you ready for newcomers? Are you ready to partner with other churches and community organizations?

One of the ways I understand racism is as a series of patterns. For example:

- Whose voices get heard the most? We heard this at the opening business session when a Friend observed that the minutes did not mention the ministry of any of the three Friends of Color who spoke.
- Timing. Saying "there is that of God in everyone" is a wonderful statement that helps define who we are as Friends. It is great on its own. But if someone says "Black Lives Matter" and I follow with "There is that of God in everyone," I've discounted their statement.
- Extra scrutiny. I was in a meeting selecting people for two leadership positions. The first had been chosen and we were considering who might fill the second. The questions being asked about a person were good ones: Does she have leadership experience? Has anyone seen her in action? Does she have experience with the content? The only problem was that these questions hadn't been asked about the person already selected. The first was a White man and

the second was a Black woman.

- Feeling free to ignore the rules. When the community feels free to ignore its own rules, a Person of Color, particularly a new Person of Color, has to wonder if this is a safe space. When rules are applied unevenly, it is People of Color who lose. I have a count of how many people registered for these sessions and a count of how many people accessed the web page with the participant agreements. Fewer than 30% of us took the time to look at the agreement that we agreed to live by.

Luckily, Quakerism has some skills and abilities we all have inherited and honed that help with anti-racism work:

- Listening. We regularly practice listening to the still small voice of Spirit within. Can White folks use that to listen to the voices of Friends of Color? The Black Concerns Committee and the Barrington Dunbar Fund for Black Development discerned three action teams that Friends can join, to listen and learn: Advocating for College Behind Bars, Disrupting the School-to-Prison Pipeline, and Racial Justice and Anti-Racism Resources. Contact [office@nyym.org](mailto:office@nyym.org) to join.
- Words. We are a people able to wrestle with words until we get them just right. Start by writing down procedures—what we do and why we do it. For our monthly meetings, this could range from what constitutes acceptable budget requests to ministry in meetings for worship. For our yearly meeting, it means things like contracts and personnel policy. Then, share that document with others. Examine it with a diversity and equity lens.
- Diversity of belief. We have non-theist Quakers, Christ-Centered Quakers, Buddhist Quakers, etc., and though there are occasional skirmishes, we generally manage to make the tent big enough to welcome each other's ministry. We can use those same skills to build a multicultural community. Note that the idea "I don't see color" is not the way to build a multicultural community, as it can make people feel invisible.

- Connecting leadings from spirit within us with outward action. We need both the inward and outward in order to make this fundamental change.

Now I'd like to make a transition and talk about staffing. Right now, the yearly meeting has the equivalent of 5.5 full time staff positions: 3 full time staff members, 4 half time, and 7 ARCH Coordinators at 10-12 hours per month. Most of the work in NYYM is done by volunteers. The personnel budget makes up roughly 2/3 of the current NYYM budget. For a couple of years, this body has been talking about increased staff support for children, youth and young adults.

Just to keep our current level of staffing, and making some standard assumptions about rising costs, we need an additional \$5,000 increase each year going forward. A \$5,000 increase each year just to keep doing what we are doing gives me a sinking feeling when I face it. NYYM's primary source of income has always been covenant donations from local meetings. On the whole, those have not changed in more than a decade. Some meetings have increased their donations, and others have decreased. We have managed to keep up with staffing costs largely because the Trustees have stopped using unrestricted investment income for grants and have directed unrestricted investment income to the operating budget.

This fall, NYYM needs to make a decision about what level of staff support we want to commit to children, youth and young adults for 2021 and beyond. It would take an increase of tens of thousands of dollars annually to broaden the young adult support from this past year to include children and youth. The most likely source of increased income is from individual donors who want to see the work of NYYM thrive. If you want to talk with the Development Committee, stop by our Interest Group Wednesday evening.

One more thing. We are making a staff transition. After decades working full time for NYYM, Helen Garay Toppins will be working 3 days per week starting September 1. She is very clear about her motivations. This is not about retirement. She hopes this change will help make it possible to support children, youth and young adults.

## **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 Bleecker  
Lu Harper  
Angela Hopkins  
Caroline Lane  
Elaine Learnard  
Steve Mohlke  
Chloe Tomlinson

## **13th Amendment Cover Letter**

*See minute 2020-07-57*

Witness coordinating committee endorsed a minute approved by Fifteenth Street Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends. The minute asks for a new amendment to the United States Constitution that amends the 13th amendment. The minute is seeking to remove the exception clause that allows the institution of slavery to continue in the United States through imprisoning people.

### **Minute 2020.6.3, Fifteenth Street Monthly Meeting**

Friends consider a statement regarding the 13th Amendment to the Constitution. Section 1 of the 13th amendment of the US constitution states:

*Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.*

We propose a new amendment to the constitution that amends section 1 to state the following:

*Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.*

Friends support the spirit and intention of this proposal and approve the suggested amendment.

It is important that we begin this work now as the foundational documents of our country continue to allow for the inhumane

treatment of imprisoned people. As is apparent in the current cases of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, along with the thousands of other deadly and nondeadly cases across the US, people of color are treated differently than non-people of color. This leads to disproportionate rates of arrest and incarceration of people of color. According to the June 20, 2020 Federal Bureau of Prisons Inmate Statistics on Race, African-Americans make up 38.1% (61,274 people) of all federally incarcerated people, while, according to the Federal Bureau of Prisons Inmate Statistics on Ethnicity, Hispanics make up 31.1% (49,874 people) of all federally incarcerated people. These people are considered slaves.

Efforts to change state Constitutions have started to occur around the country. Prior to 2018, the state of Colorado's Constitution read "there shall never be in this state either slavery or involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime, whereof the party shall have been duly convicted." Efforts to change the state Constitution began in 2016 to remove the exception. In the 2018 election, 66% of voters voted to change the state Constitution to state "there shall never be in this state either slavery or involuntary servitude." Vermont and Utah have also introduced measures to ban all slavery in their state Constitutions. New York, New Jersey and Connecticut State's Constitutions do not mention slavery.

There are many steps that must occur to pass an amendment to the US Constitution. Article V of the Constitution states the process as follows:

The Congress, whenever two thirds of both houses shall deem it necessary, shall propose amendments to this Constitution, or, on the application of the legislatures of two thirds of the several states, shall call a convention for proposing amendments, which, in either case, shall be valid to all intents and purposes, as part of this Constitution, when ratified by the legislatures of three fourths of the several states, or by conventions in three fourths thereof, as the one or the other mode of ratification may be proposed by the Congress; provided that no amendment which may be made prior to the year one thousand eight hundred and eight shall in any manner affect the first and fourth clauses in the ninth section of the first article; and that no state, without

its consent, shall be deprived of its equal suffrage in the Senate.

We ask New York Yearly Meeting to endorse this minute and authorize the Clerk and the General Secretary to sign the attached letter to send to the congressional delegations of New York, New Jersey and Connecticut introducing bills seeking two thirds approval from the House of Representatives and the Senate to begin the process of abolishing slavery in the United States. We also ask the Clerk to send this letter to other yearly and national meetings and other organizations as necessary to complete this work. We ask each local meeting to consider endorsing this minute and sending letters to their own representatives.

## **13th Amendment Letter to Congressional Delegation**

*See minute 2020-07-57*

7 July 2020

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

Since the 18th Century, the Religious Society of Friends, Quakers, have advocated for the abolishment of slavery in the United States. The Thirteenth amendment to the Constitution, ratified in 1865, abolished slavery “except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted.” This clause has allowed slavery to continue in the United States.

It is important that we complete the work of abolishing slavery now as the foundational documents of our country continue to allow for the inhumane treatment of imprisoned people. As is apparent in the current cases of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, along with the thousands of other deadly and nondeadly cases across the US, people of color are treated differently than non-people of color. This leads to disproportionate rates of arrest and incarceration of people of color. According to the June 20, 2020 Federal Bureau of Prisons Inmate Statistics on Race, African-Americans make up 38.1% (61,274 people) of all federally incarcerated people, while, according to the Federal Bureau of Prisons Inmate Statistics on Ethnicity, Hispanics

make up 31.1% (49,874 people) of all federally incarcerated people. These people are considered slaves.

We ask you to sponsor a new amendment to the constitution that removes the exception clause in section 1 of the 13th amendment. The new amendment would state the following:

Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.

Sincerely,

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## **Clerk's Closing Comments**

*See minute 2020-07-63*

Friends, we have looked back at our history, with the help of a wonderful, informative and unvarnished documentary. We have also dealt with many current concerns and done good work these two weeks despite adverse conditions. We have addressed remnants of legal slavery still in the US Constitution, a concern about unsafe prison conditions in a time of pandemic, passed a budget and made important structural revisions. We have heard inspired and inspiring reports from committees, staff members and affiliated Quaker organizations, and an inspiring epistle from Friends of color. We have memorialized dear Friends who recently passed; we wept and laughed and celebrated together in a meeting for healing and grieving and in our worship sharing groups. And we did much more, with the welcome participation of large numbers of first time participants.

A great American hero once said, "The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams." That hero, Eleanor Roosevelt, contributed significantly to world peace and to gender and racial equity during and after World War II, another harsh era in our history. During a much earlier era of struggle in a harsh and punitive world, George Fox was nevertheless able to see an infinite ocean of light rolling over the ocean of darkness.

As we struggle to see our way through so many troubles in the world, we need to remember these great leaders and take inspiration from them and from many others, including in our midst. When we are at our best, we find ways to inspire the world with our work. Even in a time of great difficulties, we walk cheerfully

across the earth, answering to that of God in everyone. We teach ourselves and the world that there are no “others” by group to fear and hate; that is a human illusion, a disease of the Spirit. There is much to inspire us in our history and among Friends today. We have raised great leaders, disproportionate to our small numbers, in the abolitionist movement, the women’s suffrage movement, the civil rights movement, the LGBTQ movement, the indigenous rights movement, the prisoner rights movement, the peace movement, the equal rights movement and the earth justice movement. Quaker insights have been critical to the advance of human society for three and a half centuries. We have stumbled along the way, and we may not yet have attained the blessed community that we aspire to, but we move forward and challenge the world. We must hold to the Spirit, even in the face of rising authoritarianism at home and across the world, even while facing the difficult struggles of our own, in particular our Friends of color and our young adults, our future and present.

And yet our numbers dwindle because most people are not the committed idealists that we are. Too many in the world choose the false security of power and rank, financial inequality, white supremacy, and a tenuous sense of control, coupled with fear of its loss as its motivation. How do we change that way of thinking? We gather, we labor together, we commit to the Spirit reflected in our testimonies, we stand tall like John Lewis, who spoke of “getting in good trouble”, and like our own Bayard Rustin, who spoke of “angelic [Quaker] troublemakers”. In John Lewis’s final words published yesterday, entitled “Together, You Can Redeem the Soul of Our Nation”, he referenced Martin Luther King as saying that “we are all complicit when we tolerate injustice....each generation must do its part to help build... the Beloved Community.” We are currently in the midst of great cultural change. We may not have yet fully achieved all that we envision, but the world would be significantly worse off without Quakers, few that we may be in number, and we continue to do our work.

In the book *Beauty* by Sheri Tepper, the main character observes that “God has given us the earth. He is not waiting in the next room, ready to fix it for us if we ruin it. If we do not care

for it, no one will....He cares for us, but he does not control what we do.”

Friends, let us continue to spread light wherever we walk, fixing the world. The values that we espouse are of the Spirit; they make us better and stronger when we work together, lifting each other up. We welcome all who would walk with us along the path toward the blessed community. I have been honored to serve as your clerk, to have worked with the many remarkable people who pulled these sessions together. And I honor all those powerful Friends working out there every day. I regret that I was not able to accept a nomination for another term as servant clerk at this point in my life, but as was evident these weeks, you will be in good hands.

We look forward to gathering once again at Fall Sessions on the first weekend in November, at Rahway and Plainfield Monthly Meeting if we are able, but with continued online access, however we may meet.

Jeffrey Aaron

## **Report from Junior Yearly Meeting**

*See minute 2020-07-66*

Friends,

Ellie Rosenberg and I, as co-coordinators, were part of the Reimagining Summer Sessions work group. Plans were put in place to have sessions for each of our traditional age groups. Because of low registration, some groups were reconfigured.

Attendance was sporadic. We did not have the groups and the spaces we enjoy at Silver Bay. We could not play games they love, like duck, duck goose, elbow tag, or wizards and giants and elves. We did not have the numbers we would need for wagon wheel or concentric circles. But there were some deep conversations.

Facilitators heard what it was like to shelter at home, go to school on line, and not be with friends. We heard what the young folks thought about the pandemic, about the divisions in our nation and about the protests in the streets. Some shared how they and their families had been part of protests in their

home towns. Some children talked about prayer and drew prayers for Gabi's heart. Three generations in one family heard Jake Swamp's prayers of thanks to Mother Earth. The Senior High collaboratively solved a crossword puzzle.

We certainly are optimistic that we can be together playing in the fields at Silver Bay in 2021. I, for one, am glad we offered JYM sessions this year. It is important for the yearly meeting to tell our youngest Friends that we care about them and that we are here for them.

I guess my time working directly with JYM has come to a close. It feels like it has been off and on forever, when it's really only been 36 years. It has been an honor and a joy and I thank you for trusting me to do well by our young Friends.

Usually at this time, you would hear who next year's coordinators will be. We can't tell you that yet. Those appointments are made by Sessions, typically during our week together, but Sessions has not yet met to take that up. Rest assured that we will have JYM next year, and, as always, I ask that each of you look into your heart for the leading to join this very important work. As we heard this week, our young Friends are not just our future, they are our present.

I have been hearing a song from my youth in my head for the past weeks. I will paraphrase.

*You of tender years,  
Can't know the fears  
That your elders grew by.  
And so please teach us with your youth.  
We seek the truth before we can die.*

Thank you. Blessed be.  
Dawn Pozzi

## Epistle

### **The 325th New York Yearly Meeting Summer Sessions • July 22–28, 2018**

To Friends Everywhere,

We send our love to you from the ancestral lands of the Matinecock and Shinnecock, the Lenni Lenape, the Haudenosaunee, and the Abenaki peoples before the genocide that followed European settlement. New York Yearly Meeting (NYYM) met online for two weeks this July with a full schedule of events: meetings for business, social meals, affinity groups, interest groups, worship sharing groups, young adult Friends groups, activities for children. We began our Summer Sessions with a full day of extended worship we call Meetings for Discernment, which this year was made a permanent function of NYYM. Registration did not require a donation. Four hundred one people registered, of which 117 were first-timers, 18 were youth, and 61 were young adults.

We gathered this year during the pandemics of racism and the coronavirus from our homes, where COVID-19 keeps most of us sheltering in place. Many can't go to school; many have lost jobs. We're listening to the radio, watching the news, seeing protests and demonstrations in our streets against systemic racism. We do our daily chores, and we sit down at our electronic devices to meet together. We have found that God covers our meetings here online too and allows us to enter into a profound space of spiritual nourishment and transformation.

Each of our business meetings was preceded by a full hour of worship, which centered us in the Divine Light and allowed us to attend to our concerns with enough patience and quiet to stay in touch with each other in this new virtual space. We needed that time. Friends found ourselves deeply moved by the Epistle from the Friends General Conference Virtual Pre-Gathering of Friends of Color and Their Families, a community which allows People of Color “the rare opportunity of not being othered in Quaker space.” European American Friends have so much work to do, and this epistle gave Friends some queries to wrestle with: “How can we encourage the support of Friends

of Color in Quaker worship and meetings around the world? How can Friends de-center themselves in order to listen to and hear Friends of Color? How can I support respite for Friends of Color?”

At our plenary Friend Angela Hopkins, founder of the Friends Center for Racial Justice (FCRJ) in Ithaca NY, asked NYYM to consider the query, “How can we contribute to building a faithful, more inclusive community?” She showed us that building an anti-racist structure requires inward work as well as outward. Our General Secretary Steve Mohlke asked us to consider the assumptions behind the question, “How can I help the Friends Center for Racial Justice?” He wanted us to consider how our understanding changes when we ask, “How can the FCRJ help within the Society of Friends?” We can build a multicultural community that does not center whiteness and privilege, but it will take time. Some of the ways our practices “other” people among us were pointed out to us during these sessions, for which we are grateful as we look to ways we desire to change. In the minutes of our business meetings, we were asked to include substantive vocal ministry. This practice evokes a truer sense of our experience and our commitment to continuing revelation.

Marissa Badgley, NYYM’s Young Adult Field Secretary, reported on her work. In 2019, when we began Pay as Led for Summer Sessions and thanks to a year-long Young Adult program by Marissa, there was the largest ever YAF registration for summer sessions—70 young adults. Despite being online in 2020, 61 registered. The interest is there. One new initiative, a Mentoring Program, created intergenerational pairs to nurture each other’s spiritual lives. She told us that 26% of the 83 NYYM young adults who responded to her survey have lost their jobs due to the coronavirus pandemic. We have been trying for three years to allocate enough money for a full-time position for children, youth, and young adults, so far only successfully funding a part-time Young Adult Field Secretary position. Young Adult Friends are not only our future; they are also our present. Can we trust the Light to lead us toward unity?

We began some of the work we have before us. We authorized our clerk to send a letter to Governor Cuomo, asking for early release and clemency for people in New York State who are

incarcerated in crowded conditions in this time of COVID-19, and asking him to support the HALT Solitary Confinement Bill. There will be letters to follow to the Governors of New Jersey and Connecticut. Our Black Concerns Committee has formed three action study groups to address structural racism: Advocating for College behind Bars, Disrupt the School to Prison Pipeline, and Racial Justice and Anti-Racism Resources. Witness Coordinating Committee endorsed and forwarded a proposal that NYYM urge Congress to approve a new amendment to the United States Constitution to read, changing the 13th Amendment to read: “Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction,” omitting the exception for “punishment for crime,” thereby finally abolishing all slavery in the United States. We committed to this process, and NYYM will send such a letter to our members of Congress. We urge local meetings, individuals, yearly meetings, and community groups everywhere in the United States to do the same.

Friends, there is always more to do. As our Black Concerns Committee reminds us, “Our hearts are heavy but our Spirit is strong.” Our labors continue with trust in the Divine Presence that leads us to let our lives speak.