

## **Staff Structure of NYYM and Role of General Secretary**

[NOTE: This report was given at NYYM sessions, July 27, 2005, to precede the report of the General Secretary's Task Group, which follows.]

In addition to the General Secretary, the staff structure of NYYM includes four paid office staff members; two of these are full-time and two are part-time. The part-time staff each work approximately 10 to 15 hours per week over a period of two days. The full-time office staff includes Helen Garay Toppins, our Administrative Secretary, and Paul Busby. The Administrative Secretary supervises and evaluates the work of the three other staff members, and is herself supervised by the General Secretary. An evaluation procedure for all staff members has been developed by the Personnel Committee and is spelled out in the Personnel Handbook. The Personnel Committee reports to the General Services Coordinating Committee, as does the General Secretary's Task Group.

The General Secretary will be expected to have a wide-angle view of the entire Yearly Meeting including the Monthly, Regional/Quarterly/Half-Yearly Meetings and the Yearly Meeting committees, in addition to having the ultimate responsibility for the overall good functioning of the Yearly Meeting office. This wide-angle view is expected to facilitate communications and activities among the various parts of the Yearly Meeting. It is the expectation that the General Secretary will "tend" all parts of the body of New York Yearly Meeting, encouraging the renewal now in process, helping to "grow" the Yearly Meeting in size and spiritual depth, and through personal contact and visitation serve as a "central switchboard" for the members of the Yearly Meeting and a "nerve center" for the various activities.

It is expected that after a period of introduction and orientation to the Yearly Meeting at the 15th Street Office, the General Secretary will spend approximately 60%-75% of the work time out of the office, visiting Meetings, attending Yearly Meeting committee meetings and events, and representing the Yearly Meeting at wider Quaker bodies. The General Secretary will communicate frequently and work closely with the Clerk of the Yearly Meeting and will be an ex-officio member of the Liaison Committee.

The General Secretary will have an Advisor who will be named by the General Services Coordinating Committee to serve for a period of three years. This Advisor will provide advice, encouragement and constructive feedback and will help the General Secretary develop program goals and set long and short-term work plans. It is expected that the General Secretary and the Advisor will confer frequently, either in person or by telephone to review the work plan.

The General Services Coordinating Committee will establish, appoint, and hold under its care a Task Group for the General Secretary. The General Services Coordinating Committee will appoint the Clerk of this Task Group, who will be

asked to serve for a period of three years. Also included on the Task Group will be the named Advisor, representatives named by the three other Coordinating Committees of Witness, Nurture, and Ministry and Counsel, the Clerk of the Yearly Meeting, and a representative of the Personnel Committee. Every effort will be made to insure that this is a diverse group representing many parts of the Yearly Meeting. This Task Group will be responsible for the orientation of the General Secretary and will help formulate and approve both long and short-term goals.

The Task Group will have a dual purpose: to review and evaluate the work of the person serving in the position of General Secretary and to evaluate the effectiveness of the position of General Secretary and how well it serves the needs of the Yearly Meeting.

Meetings should be held on a minimum three-month cycle for the first year and then on a minimum semi-annual basis for the approved three-year term of the General Secretary position. The Task Group will work with the Personnel Committee, following the 360° evaluation procedures previously determined by the Personnel Committee, as well as carrying out the policies and procedures contained in the Personnel Handbook of New York Yearly Meeting. Every effort will be made to insure that the General Services appointees will serve for the entire three-year period to insure continuity in the evaluation of this newly created position.

### **Report of the General Secretary's Task Group To General Services**

[NOTE: This report was given at NYYM sessions, July 27, 2005.]  
6/25/05

In the time since we last reported to General Services before Spring Representative Meeting, the General Secretary's Committee has met with Christopher at the beginning of the summer, and we expect to meet (without him) at Yearly Meeting Sessions in July.

We were impressed with how much he has accomplished in his short time with us. Christopher sees his work as encompassing three major areas: visitation, his work in the Yearly Meeting staff and committee structures, and representing NYYM Friends in the wider Quaker body. This report will consider each of these areas of his work in turn.

Christopher's visitation among us is continuing, and by the end of his first year he will have visited all the Regional/Quarterly Meetings and about a third of the monthly meetings and worship groups, some of them multiple times. In fact, his meetings with Friends have outstripped the efforts of this committee to follow up on each of them with the people he's met so that we can have a sense of how

these interactions are going; we're still working on that. Christopher says that he has "come to love the people of this Yearly Meeting," and his visitation with meetings (mostly on weekends) has raised in him a concern to help Friends deepen their experience of worship and business practice grounded in worship. He considers these efforts "a long-term investment in our future, and most of it will take years to bear fruit."

However, we're seeing some of the fruit of this effort already. Christopher has used his experience of visitation to focus the structures of Yearly Meeting staff and committees towards the needs of our constituent meetings. He calls himself a "two-way conduit of information and interpretation," helping meetings to understand the Yearly Meeting structure and vice versa. But of course he is more than just a conduit; he has worked with Yearly Meeting committees and staff to advocate for the concerns he encounters in monthly meetings. He proposed that Trustees fund more traveling ministry, and they agreed; there will be two more Friends traveling among us through the end of 2006. He also proposed that Trustees designate funds to the Farmington-Scipio Youth Program, and they agreed to substantial support over the next two years. He has worked with the Communications Committee to change the focus of *Spark* so that most issues will present a topic that addresses some aspect of monthly meeting faith and practice. He has worked with the Coordinating Committee on Ministry and Counsel to coordinate a series of workshops at Powell House designed to help Friends recognize and develop their gifts in ministry. Christopher is also working hard to provide child safety policies and procedures, and we will begin to see the outcome of this work at Junior Yearly Meeting. He continues to work with FGC, FUM and the wider body of Friends. He will be attending the FUM Triennial and the FGC Gathering this July.

Among staff, Helen Garay Toppins now has time for visitation and advancement work. She is beginning a pilot project for starting new worship groups; she is helping young adult Friends to regenerate the Circle of Young Friends; she is leading community-building workshops. Paul Busby is working to make the Yearly Meeting website, which gets over 450 visits per day, more user friendly to non-Friends.

Christopher asked us for help with pruning some of his responsibilities. We agreed that he could omit attendance at the Friends General Conference Gathering as a YM work responsibility, find someone else to clerk the Child Safety Task Group, and accept appointment to the Friends United Meeting Board with the proviso that he could only attend two meetings annually. In addition, he will rotate soon off the FGC Committee on Racism and thus off the FGC Central Committee. Several committee members expressed the view that visibility on YM committees, specifically attendance at meetings of the Liaison Committee and the Transition Working Group, the winter meeting of the Sessions Committee, and the Coordinating Committee Weekend, was critical to balance the administrative functions with the pastoral functions of the job. Making

connections among YM Friends, recognizing Friends' gifts, and matching gifts to the circumstances and places of need, are also important aspects of the work. The committee acknowledged the difficulty of balancing priorities and scheduling time among these – especially in the first year - and recognizes this “pruning” process as an ongoing activity.

At our meeting in July, we expect to discuss our follow-ups to Christopher's visitation and issues involving compensation.