

**NEW YORK YEARLY MEETING**  
**Representative Meeting of December 4–5, 2004**

Saturday, December 4th, 2004

*Linda Chidsey, Clerk*  
*Ernestine Buscemi, Assistant Clerk*  
*Melanie-Claire Mallison, Recording Clerk*  
*Anne Wright, Reading Clerk*

1. Friends gathered in worship. The Clerk introduced William Morris, Head of Friends Academy. Bill gave us a brief history of the school, founded in 1876 by Gideon Frost. He then welcomed us to December Representative Meeting and wished us a gathered meeting.
2. The reading clerk called the roll by regional meetings, their constituent monthly meetings and worship groups. Friends rose in response.
3. Paula McClure (Montclair), clerk of General Services, brought forward the business of that section. Paula introduced Christopher Sammond, NYYM General Secretary. Christopher noted that a report on his work thus far is available for our reading. He was led to share a message here about what he has been hearing among Friends in New York Yearly Meeting. He has heard, from all corners of the Yearly Meeting and from all organizational levels, Friends talking in terms of "us" and "them." He has heard this from monthly meeting members who work hard to support the life of the meeting, regarding those who attend the meeting but don't seem to contribute much. He has heard this from Friends active in their quarterly/regional meetings about Friends who don't seem to grasp the importance of the business, and from others regarding those who just want to have business and don't understand the need for fellowship. He has heard "us" and "them" from those active in the Yearly Meeting, and from those who feel disconnected from the Yearly Meeting. He has heard it from those who have a particular leading toward those who don't feel that leading, and vice versa. He has heard "us" and "them" regarding the Christian right, Republicans, and other political leanings. But of course, Christopher pointed out, there is no "us" and "them" and we cannot create community from this standpoint, as "us" and "them" keeps everyone from living deeply in the Spirit. He offered a different vision for creating community, that of following the leadings of God and supporting each other in doing so. He sees the seeds of change in talking to those following their calling and helping one another to follow their calling. He asks that we move more intentionally toward that covenant community we all seek. He has felt welcomed and embraced by the Yearly Meeting, and he continues to look forward to working with Friends.
4. Paula introduced Harold Risler (Buffalo), NYYM treasurer, who presented the disbursements and income for 2004 up to October 31. Friends received the report.
5. Paula presented the following minute:

New York Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends in session December 4, 2004, approves that Christopher H. Sammond be an additional signatory for these Citibank accounts:

- A. Citibank New York Yearly Meeting Office Account, and
- B. Citibusiness Insured Money Market Account, New York Yearly Meeting.

Friends approved this minute.

6. Thomas Martin (Wilton) presented the proposed operating budget for 2005. This year, Financial Services brings forward a budget totaling \$545,625, having listened carefully to regional, quarterly, and monthly meetings, who offered what they felt they could commit to for 2005. Tom suggests we call these "covenant donations." He also pointed out that a budget is just a financial plan. It is what we do that counts. He noted that the proposed covenant donations do not meet the proposed expenditures, leaving a possible shortfall of \$33,625. But he cautioned that continuing with deficit budgeting is not sound practice, and that we must not set a precedent for future budgets. Friends spoke to the proposal. Friends approved the proposed operating budget for 2005.

7. Tom brought a proposal to transfer \$5,000 from the Peace Initiatives Fund into the unrestricted operating balance. Friends were not in unity with regard to this proposal. Instead, Friends approve asking that consideration of the Fund be brought to Advancement Committee, Financial Services, Worship and Action, and Witness Coordinating Committees, looking for leadings for the use of these funds in keeping with the original intent of the Peace Initiatives Fund.

8. Tom presented the proposed expected covenant donations for 2005, totaling \$476,000. Friends approved the proposal.

9. Christopher Sammond brought forward a draft report on policies and procedures to protect the health and spirit of our youth. In response to requests from NYYM's insurance carrier regarding child abuse, a task group was formed under General Services, with representatives from Junior Yearly Meeting, Powell House, Prison Concerns, Alternatives to Violence Project, Personnel Committee, and Trustees. The group is currently looking only at Yearly Meeting functions, but feel that their work will be a starting point for monthly meetings, and quarterly and regional meetings. Friends received the report.

10. The Clerk introduced Julia Giordano, clerk of the Powell House Committee. Julia reported on the work of Powell House and its committee. In the past year, Powell House has offered scholarships to 211 youth and 330 adult conference attenders. The committee is working on growing its endowment so that their small staff could be larger, so that they could offer more scholarship to more attenders, and so that they could lower their request from New York Yearly Meeting. Christine DeRoller (Old Chatham) reported on the purpose of the Powell House Youth Center. Chris noted that this Yearly Meeting has an amazing group of youth. At Powell House, youth conferences are all

about honoring diversity, caring for each other and themselves, and learning of each person's gifts. She spoke of a large camping trip up in the Adirondacks and the recent trip to Honduras with a dozen youth, where they were blessed in many ways. She felt very strongly held in the Light by Friends throughout this trip, by individuals and meetings. One of the blessings the young Friends say of their experiences at Powell House is that they receive the strength to take their Quakerism home with them and live it there, too.

11. The minutes of the afternoon session were read and approved.

12. Friends settled into gathered and heartfelt worship.

Session of Sunday, December 5, 2004

*Linda Chidsey, Clerk  
Ernestine Buscemi, Assistant Clerk  
Lee Haring, Recording Clerk  
Rima Segal, Reading Clerk*

The meeting opened in worshipful silence.

13. The reading clerk read a memorial minute from Montclair Monthly Meeting for Cheryl Doehler, who was active at Powell House, Junior Yearly Meeting, the Alternatives to Violence project, and, most of all, in her meeting. She devoted herself to religious education, the meeting's library, and the welcoming of newcomers, living always from a center of prayer. Toward the end of her life, she faced difficult health problems with courage and determination. Cheryl Doehler is remembered for her light, love, and compassion.

14. After introducing those at the clerks' table, the Clerk expressed the hope that we would remain at the depth to which we were brought in the meeting for worship preceding this session.

She introduced Anita Paul (Schenectady), clerk of the Witness Coordinating Committee, who drew the attention of Friends to the recent fund appeal of the Sharing Fund. This year's Sharing Fund goal is \$70,000. She mentioned recent activities the Sharing Fund has been able to support.

Anita brought forward a minute from Ithaca Meeting, endorsed by Farmington-Scipio Friends, which asks for Friends' support for the rebuilding of the meeting house in Ramallah (West Bank, formerly Jordan) into a Friends peace center. Friends agree that the Yearly Meeting shall send a letter of support to Ramallah Friends. The Clerk was directed to write a letter to monthly and regional meetings asking them to consider writing their own letters of support for the rebuilding project, and to consider making financial contributions to it, through the general secretary of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting.

15. Anita introduced S. Jean Smith (Manhattan), who suggested that because of recent judicial action, this is an opportune time to reassert Friends' historic opposition to the death penalty. As an example, she described one prisoner, David Hamer, who awaits resentencing on a charge of capital murder and is petitioning for life without parole. The New York State Assembly plans hearings to aid their rethinking of the death penalty, where Friends could testify. Jean then introduced Father Joe Towle, of the Cherish Life Circle and New Yorkers against the Death Penalty, who gathers together families of murder victims to share their experiences and their faith; Father Towle also works on behalf of wrongly convicted prisoners. He invited Friends to join in this interfaith work. **Friends were united in reaffirming their historic opposition to the death penalty.** Members in New York State were encouraged to testify at the hearings. The Clerk was directed to write a letter to monthly and regional meetings asking them to consider adding their own letters of support for the rebuilding project, and to take a copy of it to the New York State Council of Churches Collegium.

16. Richard Townsend (Fredonia) reported that Friends General Conference would appreciate local meetings in our area acting as hosts for FGC committee meetings. Three young Friends have been added to our FGC committee this year and have already become active. Rick read a minute from FGC Central Committee supporting the involvement in FGC's work of Friends who are part of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer community.

17. The following nominations were approved.

### **Junior Yearly Meeting**

#### Class of 2007

Amy White ('04)

Quaker Street

### **Oakwood Friends School Board of Managers**

#### Class of 2007

Sanford Segal ('01)

Rochester

### **Friends General Conference Representatives**

#### Class of 2006

Nathan Mallison ('04)

Ithaca

### **Epistle**

#### Class of 2006

Nancy Britton

Morningside

## **Prisons**

### Class of 2007

Charley Flint ('04)                      Rahway-Plainfield

## **Nurture Coordinating Committee**

### Class of 2007

Florence McAllister ('04)      New Paltz

## **Barrington Dunbar Fund**

### Class of 2005

Daisy Palmer, Convener      Westbury  
Carol Coulthurst              Somerset Hills  
Joseph Best                      Manhattan  
Rose Tiego                        Manhattan  
Marvea Thompson              Brooklyn

## **Friends United Meeting Triennial**

### Class of 2005

Ruth Bradley                      Poplar Ridge  
Christine Braun                  Old Chatham  
Jens Braun                         Old Chatham  
Ann Davidson                      Farmington  
Irene Goodman                    Westbury  
Carol Holmes                      Fifteenth Street

## **Young Adult Concerns**

### Class of 2006

Mathias Contois ('04)              Easton  
Alexander Haines-Stephan ('04)      Mohawk Valley  
Amy Savage ('04)                      Syracuse  
Alexandra Tsocanos ('04)      Wilton

Christopher Sammond (Twin Cities) was appointed to FUM Triennial Committee for a partial term, expiring in 2005. Violet Goncarovs (attender at Ithaca) was appointed as a

representative to Friends General Conference for a partial term, expiring in 2006. Abigail Kirsch (nonmember) was appointed to the Young Adult Concerns Committee for a partial term, expiring in 2006.

The following Friends were released from the services indicated: Janet Wile from the Oakwood Friends School Board of Managers (2006); Irene Goodman from the Alternatives to Violence Project (2007).

18. The minutes of the session were read and approved.

19. The reading clerk, for the Epistle Committee, read an epistle from Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative), held in July 2004. Iowa Friends feel joy at their intergenerational activities, the year-round retreats of young Friends, the vitality of Scattergood School, and the volunteer work that is done at the time of their yearly meeting. They conclude, "We are called to a practice of faith that takes us into the world. We walk in the company of God."

20. The meeting ended in quiet worship.