

## **New York Yearly Meeting Worship and Action, July 2002 - December 2002**

*New York Yearly Meeting Friends call one another to sustained practice of shared worship and action for peace.  
(from minute # 61, 2002)*

*The gospel of Jesus is a gospel of peace. . . . The gospel of Jesus is also one of forgiveness and reconciliation.  
(from minute # 67, 2002)*

Mutual encouragement and support has been important to Friends in responding to our call from God to worship and to action. This is a brief overview from the Yearly Meeting Worship and Action working group. (Particular reports and documents, such as the guidelines for financial assistance, are available on the Yearly Meeting website or by request from the Yearly Meeting office.)

Communications. Minute #61 provided for a small working group charged with making available information and news of Friends' worship and actions. The working group (Linda Chidsey, Vicki Cooley, Fred Dettmer) has worked with Yearly Meeting office staff to post and circulate documents, plans, and news of activities, sending a once-a-week "Worship & Action Update" to Meeting and Worship Group contacts and other interested persons throughout the Yearly Meeting (and a few Friends in other areas). Accounts of Friends' witness and outreach and of Friends and interfaith local and State-wide activities have mixed with news of national campaigns, with some sharing of Friends' spiritual experience and written sources of inspiration. Generally Friends have expressed a sense of accompaniment or encouragement in response to these messages. The Updates are shared in whole or in part in many local meetings.

Finding the right methods, volume, content and tone of communications is a familiar challenge in New York Yearly Meeting and Friends Meetings. Suggestions for what is found useful in Yearly Meeting communications are welcome, as well as suggestions for alternatives (local calendars on Quarterly or Regional websites with a network of calendar editors?).

Friends have written readily about activities and plans, less frequently of how their actions are grounded in shared worship. Some Friends practice daily meditation and prayer at an appointed hour. One Friend made the case for the Spiritual Nurturance program as part of worship and action. Farmington-Scipio Region engaged in moving worship sharing about response to the call at its Fall Gathering. The working group hopes to receive and share more communications about shared worship and Friends' spiritual experience as we work for peace.

Difficult Questions. Working group member Fred Dettmer took the lead in researching and writing a cogent memo on the possible effects of peace actions on the tax exempt

status of meetings. Additional topics about which Friends might want to research and share information include:

- current arrangements in the United States for military recruitment
- current arrangements in the United States for conscientious objection to military service
- kinds and consequences of civil disobedience.

Varied concerns for acts of civil disobedience, including refusal to pay for war by refusing to pay taxes, are rising up among Friends; more information on these will be circulated soon.

Finances. Guidelines for financial assistance for peace actions undertaken by monthly or regional meetings were arranged by the working group in consultation with the Liaison Committee. Several meetings used money from the Yearly Meeting to help pay for newspaper ads, and some funds were used to facilitate the "Peace Action" page on the Yearly Meeting's website. The proposed Yearly Meeting operating budget for 2003 includes \$8500 for peace action expenses in a line under the Witness Section.

Gatherings. About 35 Friends attended a Worship and Action Gathering at Oakwood School, held August 23-25, 2002, where they were nourished by extended worship and learned from one another. The email discussion list Quaker Wanda was set up as a result of this gathering. Two further gatherings have been planned, one in Poughkeepsie in January and one in Perry City (near Ithaca) in February. Gatherings are convened as Friends feel the need and make arrangements, unlike regularly scheduled business meetings or committee meetings.

Next steps. Friends from New York Yearly Meeting will be attending the Friends World Committee Peace Conference at Guilford the third weekend in January 2003. Friends will gather closer to home, in Poughkeepsie and Perry City, and in our quarterly and regional meetings, over the next several months. Friends at home continue to meet and find occasion for actions for peace. The Yearly Meeting working group expects to continue to share news and encouragement, working in consultation with Liaison Committee, Witness Coordinating Committee, and Peace Concerns Committee. We plan to bring a report and possible recommendations to the Yearly Meeting at the time of April Representative Meeting.

Affirmative practice and action for peace. We have been grateful to listen and learn and worship together over these months. We must continue to say no to greed and violence in our hearts and on the part of our country. It seems that Friends may be moving toward a fresh call to walk in the Light and work for peace through particular, constructive actions and understandings.

Linda Chidsey, Vicki Cooley, Fred Dettmer  
New York Yearly Meeting Worship and Action working group