

**Worship & Action Working Group Report** to New York Yearly Meeting, July 10, 2003  
for consideration during NYYM annual sessions, July 20 - 26, 2003

*In these times New York Yearly Meeting Friends hear anew the call to pray and work for peace. We hear the murmur of a great people, ready to be gathered in peace. Grounded in shared worship, we experience fresh guidance and inward power to act.*

*Friends in New York Yearly Meeting call one another to sustained practice of shared worship and action for peace.*

. . .

*A small Yearly Meeting working group will set up a way of providing, on a continuing basis*

*\* current information about suggested actions and resources, including efforts of FCNL, AFSC, and QUNO; and*

*\* current news of Friends' worship and actions.*

*Liaison Committee is asked to form the small working group in consultation with Witness Coordinating Committee, Peace Concerns Committee, and Quarterly and Regional clerks as feasible. Resources include NYYM Friends and their activities; collaborative relationships with FCNL, AFSC, and QUNO; Yearly Meeting staff as available, and the Yearly Meeting website. The working group may contract for needed assistance. Finances will have to be worked out, drawing on existing funds or from new support.*

*Offers of help and inquiries may be directed through the YM office, using the telephone, the U.S. Postal Service, or e-mail.*

*approved by New York Yearly Meeting in session 7/26/02 (minute #61)*

Overview. Two Worship and Action working group reports (December 6, 2002 and March 27, 2003) outline activities and experience from August 2002 through March 2003. They are appended here (and available through the Yearly Meeting office and on the New York Yearly Meeting website). A report of worship and action expenses and financial assistance by the Yearly Meeting to local actions for peace will be available at annual sessions and is on the NYYM Web site. This third report of the working group adds several observations, asks a question, and suggests next steps for the coming year.

Activities and communications have generally continued as described in the earlier reports, including weekly Updates, financial assistance, the Quakerwanda email discussion group, and participation in wider Quaker and interfaith gatherings.

A joint retreat with representatives from the Quaker United Nations Office, the New York and Syracuse offices of AFSC, and NYYM Friends involved in peace work was held at Powell House in June. Initiated by the clerk of NYYM, this was the second such retreat and this year included members of the Worship and Action working group. Working relationships among these various Friends bodies have deepened and been enhanced as a result of time spent together in retreat setting.

There seems to be less energy for unprogrammed gatherings now (a fourth, originally planned for late spring in Purchase, was cancelled). On the other hand, serious, deeply challenging questions are being raised among us, questions about Friends and politics, the rule of law, empire and economics and privilege, local institutions, and more. Friends in Purchase Quarter have gathered to listen deeply to reflections on the Israel - Palestine situation, and they have held a series of workshops on civil disobedience; Friends in Long Island Quarter participated in a civil disobedience training day.

Question. Should the Worship and Action working group arrange for special gatherings with a focus in worship on serious questions which seem compelling for Friends?

Next Steps. In March the working group reported, "We have sought to name and share word of the quickening we have seen throughout New York Yearly Meeting. We reflect back to Friends that we see the Spirit moving in locally based activity, grounded in worship and care; in collaborative efforts and interfaith cooperation; and in the networking with a concern for peace of Friends and others around the world.

"We rejoice with Friends in the experience of receiving guidance through deep listening and openness. We believe that we will be guided as we respond where the Life is."

We continue to feel guided. On that basis, the Worship and Action working group suggests that the Yearly Meeting continue direct Yearly Meeting support of locally based activities, of Friends' communication, of gatherings and of outreach. Specifically:

1. Continue the arrangement for Yearly Meeting assistance to local meetings undertaking actions for peace following current guidelines for assistance.
2. Continue publication of Worship and Action Updates, postings on the Yearly Meeting website, and sharing news of Friends' worship and actions for peace in other ways.
3. Support further Worship and Action gatherings as Friends are ready to convene them, including gatherings with a focus in worship on specific concerns, such as civil disobedience and the rule of law, international institutions and a peaceable world, global and local householding (economics).
4. Pay for Worship and Action expenses associated with recommendations 1, 2, and 3, according to arrangements already in place, or as authorized by the working group, drawing on the Worship and Action line of the Yearly Meeting budget.
5. Continue the Worship and Action working group through NYYM annual sessions in July 2004, expecting interim reports. The working group will keep the Liaison Committee informed of its activities and consult with Liaison Committee or the Yearly Meeting in session if new directions emerge.

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

Worship and Action Working Group Report for July to December 2002  
December 6, 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

## Worship & Action Working Group

Report to New York Yearly Meeting, March 27, 2003

[intended for consideration at NYYM Representative Meeting, April 5 and 6, 2003]

Friends in New York Yearly Meeting have called one another to sustained practice of shared worship and action for peace. (7/26/02, minute #61)

The small Yearly Meeting working group formed in accordance with minute #61 reported to Representative Meeting (12/6/02) on communications; information on tax exempt status of meetings and questions such as conscientious objection to military service, to the payment of war taxes, and civil disobedience; finance arrangements; and special gatherings (report available on the Yearly Meeting Web site with the Worship and Action Updates or on request from the Yearly Meeting office).

Activities have continued since then:

- \* Worship and Action Updates have been sent each week, usually on Thursday or Friday. The Updates are generated by the Worship and Action working group and sent out by Paul Busby, on staff in the Yearly Meeting office. The Updates have included information about planned events and reflection and reports of Friends' experiences. Friends have expressed appreciation for the tone and content of these communications.

- \* Two more open gatherings for Friends to meet for worship and mutual support and discernment were held, one in January in Poughkeepsie and one in February in Perry City.

- \* Friends meetings, sometimes collaborating with others, have sponsored vigils, opened meeting houses for special times of worship, sponsored sessions on conscientious objection, civil disobedience, immigration issues, and more.

- \* The Quakerwanda email group has a score of active participants, with perhaps another 20 silent subscribers. Most postings concern events or forwards from other sources, with occasional commentary or reflection by a few contributors.

- \* New York Yearly Meeting Friends have participated in wider Quaker gatherings and efforts, including the FWCC conference on peace in Greensboro, NC, and FCNL and AFSC activities.

- \* Friends have participated with others in public vigils, rallies, and visits with elected officials, as well as joining in local peace coalitions. New York Yearly Meeting has been part of the ongoing peace efforts of the New York State Community of Churches.

A report of worship and action expenses and financial assistance by the Yearly Meeting to local actions for peace is in preparation; it should be available by the time of April Representative Meeting.

The Worship and Action working group members have experienced our work together as challenging. Our seeking has been rewarded with deepening trust in our capacity to do our work and to pay attention to inner and outer messages. We have felt blessed to see a quickening of Friends' life in the Spirit in these difficult times. In addition, we hear Friends' deep need to give voice to feelings of anger, frustration, outrage, fear and profound sorrow. We have heard how Friends are providing loving and tender care to one another.

We have sought to name and share word of the quickening we have seen throughout New York Yearly Meeting. We reflect back to Friends that we see the Spirit moving in locally based activity, grounded in worship and care; in collaborative efforts and interfaith cooperation; and in the networking with a concern for peace of Friends and others around the world.

We rejoice with Friends in the experience of receiving guidance through deep listening and openness. We believe that we will be guided as we respond where the Life is.

The Worship and Action working group suggests that the Yearly Meeting should continue direct Yearly Meeting support of locally based activities and of Friends' communication. Specifically:

1. Continue the arrangement for Yearly Meeting assistance to local meetings undertaking actions for peace following current guidelines for assistance.
2. Continue publication of Worship and Action Updates, postings on the Yearly Meeting Web site, and sharing news of Friends' worship and actions for peace in other ways.
3. Support further Worship and Action gatherings as Friends are ready to convene them, including the possibility of gatherings with a focus in worship on specific concerns, such as civil disobedience and the rule of law, international institutions and a peaceable world, global and local householding (economics).
4. Authorize drawing on the Peace Initiatives line of the Yearly Meeting budget to meet Worship and Action expenses associated with recommendations 1, 2, and 3, according to arrangements already in place, or by decision of the working group, keeping the clerk of Witness Coordinating Committee informed.
5. Continue the Worship and Action working group through NYYM annual sessions in July 2003, expecting a report and recommendations at that time.

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Linda Chidsey, Vicki Cooley, Fred Dettmer