

## Worship and Action Update, 6/20/03

Dear Friends in New York Yearly Meeting:

Friends called to witness and service in Quaker organizations in the New York Yearly Meeting area gathered at Powell House a week ago, from Monday to Wednesday, June 9-11, to continue a dialogue begun last year on closer collaboration. Those in attendance were Elizabeth Enloe, Lisa Gasstrom, and Chrissie Rizzo for American Friends Service Committee; Ernie Buscemi and Lori Heninger for Quaker United Nations Office; and Linda Chidsey, Vicki Cooley, Ann Davidson, Fred Dettmer, Judith Inskip, Rosa Packard, and John Randall for NYYM. The retreat was facilitated by Deborah Frisch, coordinator of Friends General Conference's Traveling Ministries Program, and her traveling companion, Jean-Marie Barch, a member of Schuylkill Monthly Meeting (Philadelphia Yearly Meeting).

In open worship, in small groups and general sessions with active facilitation, in eating and walking and singing together, the group experienced a shared willingness to being open, attentive, and supportive of one another. Some felt assisted in being fully present and available by the recollection of last year's retreat and related the impact of that experience on their work over the past year. All appreciated the faithfulness of each to her or his service and the challenge to each of laying aside one's work midweek in order to gather, worship, and discern together. Those gathered brought forward concerns and visions, named their stresses, and sought support and guidance in their service. The group considered how Friends respond to a call, are supported in their leadings, and envision their witness.

Flowing out of worship together and an ease of trust in one another, Friends shared sources of support that enable them to remain faithful to their call - family, meeting, friends, and community. They spoke of the stresses placed on family and close others who support them. Friends asked, Where do you get your inspiration? What is the ballast that keeps you centered and on an even keel? Does it spring from a poem, a song, a person, a community, an idea? Participants expressed the need for strong internal faith. Sometimes Friends' work takes them outside the frame of reference of their meetings, so that they need to seek testing, clearness, and support elsewhere. Friends noted the need to communicate about their work with Friends at home.

Friends spoke to what brought them to their work, how to discern when the time had arrived to lay down a particular focus, and right order in separating from the endeavor. Letting go of work is a process; one is released and can't just drop it. Stress may arise from difficulty in recognizing when the time to separate has arrived or in uncertainty about what comes next. It may be appropriate to examine even whether the work, itself, is enduring and needs to continue. Through their shared consideration of responding to the call, Friends came to appreciate the need for transition and transformation both for themselves and for their organizations in taking up or laying down an engagement.

Friends looked at their hopes and visions for their organizations and particularly gathered around the vision of New York Yearly Meeting, with a deep sense of its connectedness to Friends service organizations. Recognizing progress in learning how to gather and worship together, to be less contentious, to let go and trust, and to celebrate how God is moving among us, Friends asked whether NYYM is called to be

an instrument of the Peaceable Kingdom and what this could look like. Participants acknowledged a reticence of Friends to bring Quaker experiences and insights to relations with our wider communities and our civil and political society. Those gathered recalled how two minutes on peace rose from the floor at NYYM annual sessions in 2002 and asked if God was not calling us to take the next step in faithfulness of speaking out to our world; a time not merely to peer over the hedges we have built around us, but to stride out onto the road with our voices and visions of peace.

Those gathered shared a recognition that movement begins from asking the questions, even though we cannot know where it will lead, so long as we remember that the vision begins with God and ends with God. Friends exhorted each other to listen, test and then go do it; to stand up, stay strong and move ahead. The Kingdom of God is among us today if we can open our eyes to see and free our bodies and voices to act. *“The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, ‘Here it is,’ or ‘There it is,’ because the kingdom of God is within you.”* (Luke 17:20-21)

When people lift their eyes at home in their monthly meetings, what do they see on the horizon? Does Yearly Meeting pay attention to Friends’ vision for the world and remind each other of it? How can NYYM support, encourage, nurture this vision? Are we ready to take our vision and voice outside NYYM? Outside the Society of Friends? How can NYYM be helpful in this journey?

Peaceable greetings,

Linda Chidsey, Vicki Cooley, and Fred Dettmer  
NYYM Worship and Action working group

*“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it - he will be blessed in what he does.”*

James 1:22-25

*“No one lights a lamp and puts it in a place where it will be hidden, or under a bowl. Instead he puts it on its stand, so that those who come in may see the light. Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eyes are good, your whole body also is full of light. But when they are bad, your body also is full of darkness. See to it, then, that the light within you is not darkness. Therefore, if your whole body is full of light, and no part of it dark, it will be completely lighted, as when the light of a lamp shines on you.”*

Luke 11:33-36