

**New York Yearly Meeting Spring Sessions
First Baptist Church of Lincoln Gardens, Somerset, NJ
Saturday, April 2, 2016
Morning Session**

*Lucinda Antrim (Scarsdale), Clerk
Jeffrey Aaron (New Brunswick), Assistant Clerk
Karen Way (New Brunswick), Recording Clerk
Karen Snare (Bulls Head-Oswego), Reading Clerk*

2016-04-01. The meeting opened with silent worship.

2016-04-02. The Clerk welcomed Friends, the Spring weather, and the work God has gathered us to do in these Spring Sessions. She reviewed the agenda and introduced those at the clerks' table.

2016-04-03. The Reading Clerk read the Roll Call and f/Friends stood as their region was called. All regions were represented.

2016-04-04. Barbara Menzel (New Brunswick) welcomed us on behalf of Shrewsbury-Plainfield Half-Yearly Meeting which hosted Spring Sessions. Barbara thanked members of the hosting committee and announced that Spook Handy, a folk-singer who played with Pete Seeger, will offer music for the children and any available adults at the end of the afternoon.

2016-04-05. On behalf of NYYM in general and Powell House Committee in particular, Melanie-Claire Mallison (Ithaca) read a tribute proclaiming April 2, 2016, as Ann Davidson Appreciation Day. Ann is retiring after 22 rich years as Powell House director. Friends stood in gratitude.

2016-04-06. Irma Guthrie (Perry City), clerk of the Committee to Revise *Faith and Practice*, reviewed a proposed revision of Section G in *Faith and Practice* (section attached). The changes reflect the new terminology of Spring and Fall sessions, plus other adjustments for grammar and new details. This was a first reading.

2016-04-07. Irma presented a first reading of a new section on the Use of Technology in the Conduct of Business:

USE OF TECHNOLOGY IN THE CONDUCT OF BUSINESS

The use of modern communication systems in the conduct of Friends' business has great benefits and has also created challenges for Quaker Business Process. The use of technologies such as telephone and video conferencing and electronic mail have made it possible to reduce the need for travel, and thereby have expanded participation by distant Friends. Our business can be responsive to the fast pace of developments in the modern

world. Young Friends, who have grown up with these technologies, expect to use them as they integrate into the life of the Society.

Use of these technologies, however, which may replace or augment face-to-face meetings, requires discipline so that corporate worship, spiritual discernment, and the presence of the Spirit in our committee meetings and larger assemblies is retained. Each committee or meeting that uses these technologies should establish agreements and protocols to ensure that their use of communication will ensure inclusivity and full participation, protect privacy and confidentiality, and maintain collegiality.

Committees seeking to conduct business by ways other than physical meetings should do so only upon the unanimous consent of their members. Committees should use email to schedule meetings or distribute documents. They are advised not to use it to share ministry, respond to proposals, or engage in substantive discussions. These activities are best suited to synchronous communication such as physical meetings or telephone or video conferencing.

Friends spoke in response. Those with suggested changes were directed to speak with the committee. Concern was expressed for Friends who do not use digital technology.

2016-04-08. Irma presented a first reading of changes to our approval process. These changes were proposed by Ministry Coordinating Committee:

Proposed revisions to Faith & Practice may originate in a monthly or regional meeting or a Yearly Meeting body. When the proposed revision has been seasoned by the Committee to Revise Faith & Practice and approved by Ministry Coordinating Committee, the Committee to Revise Faith & Practice may bring the proposed revision to any Yearly Meeting session for a first reading. After being brought forward the first time, the proposed revision is brought for a second reading and final approval to a subsequent Yearly Meeting session.

2016-04-09. Irma Guthrie, as clerk of Ministry Coordinating Committee, brought the recommendation that the Yearly Meeting on Ministry and Counsel be permanently laid down. Irma reviewed the recent history of the Yearly Meeting on Ministry and Counsel and how it was suspended in 2007 when we began holding Meetings for Discernment. Irma also explained how the responsibility for nurturing emerging gifts in ministry and the recording of ministers is now under the care of Ministry Coordinating Committee. Friends approved.

Friends spoke to the historical moment of this decision. Before there was a formal Religious Society of Friends, Friends gathered in Second Day Meetings for fellowship and to support one another in discerning leadings of the Spirit. As an extension of

this practice of Friends in Great Britain, New York Yearly Meeting formed a body called the Yearly Meeting of Ministers and Elders. This body became the Yearly Meeting on Ministry and Counsel (YMMC) in 1955 when the Orthodox and Hicksite branches of the Yearly Meeting reunited after separating in 1827. The YMMC met annually to discern and seek clearness for leadings and to support the ministry of its members. Now those functions will be carried out by the Meetings for Discernment and the Ministry Coordinating Committee.

2016-04-10. Minutes to this point were approved.

2016-04-11. Anita Paul (Schenectady) of Aging Resources Consultation and Help (ARCH) announced the publication of “Quaker Values and End of Life Decision Making”—24 pages that distill the information that has been offered for eight years in the 5-hour ARCH workshop. The workbook is available for sale for the first time at Spring Sessions.

2016-04-12. Christopher Sammond reported as NYYM General Secretary and spoke on the Yearly Meeting as a covenant community. He described how we need community for discernment and courage as we travel our spiritual path. A covenant community means a people united in seeking the divine, and trying to live in the divine, while also aware that we live in Empire. We want to save our monthly meetings, but we need to avoid insularity. If we make our meetings outposts of the larger Blessed Community, they will thrive.

Christopher feels that we are moving towards becoming the beloved community we are meant to be, and that we have turned a corner toward renewal. We finally have enough Yearly Meeting Staff to address needs, even though all our staff are stretched thin.

One of the signs of renewal is the hiring of a new staff member who will serve as Children and Youth Field Secretary. Other signs are rising energy for outreach, an increase in financial support, and the strong interest in programs such as the One Spiritual Community Retreat Youth Institute held at Brooklyn Meeting. The path to a true covenant community is “to follow our inner guide, to not outrun it, and to mutually support each other in this root of our faith as a people.”

Friends offered ministry in response. His report is attached.

2016-04-13. The remaining minutes of this session were approved. After announcements, we closed with quiet worship.

New York Yearly Meeting Spring Sessions
First Baptist Church of Lincoln Gardens, Somerset, NJ
Saturday, April 2, 2016
Afternoon Session

Lucinda Antrim (Scarsdale), Clerk
Jeffrey Aaron (New Brunswick), Assistant Clerk
Melanie-Claire Mallison (Ithaca), Recording Clerk
Sylke Jackson (Rockland), Reading Clerk

2016-04-14. The afternoon session began with f/Friends gathering in open worship.

2016-04-15. The Reading Clerk read the following piece from *Civil Disobedience* by Henry David Thoreau, provided by the Committee on Conscientious Objection to Paying for War:

Under a government which imprisons any unjustly, the true place for a just man is also a prison. The proper place to-day, the only place which Massachusetts has provided for her freer and less desponding spirits, is in her prisons, to be put out and locked out of the State by her own act, as they have already put themselves out by their principles. It is there that the fugitive slave, and the Mexican prisoner on parole, and the Indian come to plead the wrongs of his race, should find them; on that separate, but more free and honorable ground, where the State places those who are not *with* her, but *against* her — the only house in a slave State in which a free man can abide with honor. If any think that their influence would be lost there, and their voices no longer afflict the ear of the State, that they would not be as an enemy within its walls, they do not know by how much truth is stronger than error, nor how much more eloquently and effectively he can combat injustice who has experienced a little in his own person. Cast your whole vote, not a strip of paper merely, but your whole influence. A minority is powerless while it conforms to the majority; it is not even a minority then; but it is irresistible when it clogs by its whole weight. If the alternative is to keep all just men in prison, or give up war and slavery, the State will not hesitate which to choose. If a thousand men were not to pay their tax-bills this year, that would not be a violent and bloody measure, as it would be to pay them, and enable the State to commit violence and shed innocent blood. This is, in fact, the definition of a peaceable revolution, if any such is possible.

2016-04-16. The Clerk introduced those at the clerks' table and reviewed the upcoming agenda.

2016-04-17. Christopher Sammond (Poplar Ridge), reporting as NYYM General Secretary, introduced Melinda Wenner Bradley, our new NYYM Children and Youth Field Secretary. Words that describe this Friend include: Quaker educator, Collaborator, Teacher of all ages, Leader, Coordinator, Mentor, Presenter, Speaker,

Member. She has also been described by one Friend who knows her work well as “a Force.” And she is. Her work is informed by a quote by Maria Montessori:

Education is not so much teaching with love but participating, as one teaches, in the energy of God, who is love.

In her career as an educator and in service to religious education programs, she has worked with children and youth of all ages. Her work has been shaped by listening to children and by collaboration both with teaching colleagues and the families of her students. For her, teaching and working in service to Quaker religious education programs has always felt like a leading and a place where she is called to grow. Her work has included growing sustainable models for children and youth programs, developing, identifying and sharing resources, and building networks to lift up the many gifts among Friends. She views spiritual formation of all ages as a ministry that our Religious Society can be more intentional in supporting. Among her many accomplishments; Taught Godly Play and Faith & Play Curricula; Created written materials for Playing in the Light and Learning in the Light trainings; Supported grant-funded project for Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Children’s Religious Life program; Taught children of all ages, in Quaker schools, in Quaker meetings, and at Gatherings of all types; Served on the Pendle Hill Board of Directors; Presented as a Plenary Speaker, FWCC World Plenary, Pisac, Peru, 2016; and led workshops on “Playing in the Light: An Introduction to Godly Play and Faith & Play for Friends” and “Learning in the Light: Faith & Play for Friends School Educators”; Served on the NYYM Youth Committee; Been a member of the Religious Education Association (Professors, Practitioners, and Researchers in Religious Education).

Like Gabi Savory Bailey, her counterpart serving Young Adult Friends, Melinda will make herself available to all meetings in the yearly meeting to offer support in our efforts to better nurture our youngest members. But Melinda will also give extra focused attention to six project partner meetings, two meetings chosen in each of the next three years. As part of the grant from the Shoemaker Fund, and in collaboration with New England Yearly Meeting, she will work intensively with those meetings in an experiment to see how we can effectively help our children and young families to establish stronger roots in our monthly meetings.

Christopher encouraged us to welcome Melinda.

Melinda spoke to her work listening for spirit, reaching out across the full range of experiences to share the wisdom of all ages. She looks forward to working with NYYM Monthly Meetings and Worship Groups, sharing and learning.

2016-04-18. Mary Harpster (Rahway & Plainfield), reporting on behalf of the Powell House Committee, first noted that Heidi Kelly, Clerk of the Powell House Committee, sent her regrets for not being here today. While we will miss Ann Davidson's leadership and presence at Powell House, the Powell House Committee is excited to announce that Regina Baird Haag and Dennis Haag have accepted the positions as

the new Co-Executive Directors of Powell House. Regina and Dennis have been a part of New York Yearly Meeting for over a decade during which time Regina served as the pastor of Adirondack Friends Meeting. Dennis and Regina have extensive knowledge, experiences, and relationships among the breadth of the Society of Friends including ministry, spirituality, organizational, and committee positions. Over the years they have attended conferences and meetings at Powell House and their son, now a young adult, was a participant in the Youth Program. Dennis and Regina support the mission of Powell House, the New York Yearly Meeting priorities, and value the importance of continuing revelation.

Thanks to a wealth of life and job experiences such as running a dairy farm, working as caretakers of Quaker Knoll Camp, training and managing bus drivers, and working to develop and coordinate YouthQuake, Regina and Dennis have gained a variety of skills that are a wonderful match for the wide range of responsibilities entailed in this work of serving as Co-Executive Directors.

Regina and Dennis are already in close contact with Ann and the Powell House staff. Regina will move onto the campus full time starting on July 1st and have a month of working full time alongside Ann before Ann retires. Dennis will initially work part time at Powell House as he finishes up his commitment to his current job.

Powell House is blessed to be able to welcome these two people, deeply grounded in the Spirit, and carrying such a variety of gifts, to help guide this beloved institution into the future.

Friends spoke to their joy to hear this announcement, welcoming Regina and Dennis. We asked and they shared that their favorite music is the Hallelujah Chorus sung in Powell House's Perera ballroom, and "How Great Thou Art." We are encouraged to hold them tenderly as they grow into this very demanding job.

2016-04-19. Paula McClure (Montclair), NYYM Treasurer, presented the 2015 year-end report. She noted that the "elephant in the room" – the Audit Committee expenses – will not yet be discussed since the issue first needs to be discussed later today by Audit and General Services. Paula explained that Sessions Committee went well over their budget due to the fact that Spring and Fall Sessions venues are now requiring larger deposits, sooner, to hold spaces, and also, for the first time, Silver Bay Association required a \$1000 deposit for our Summer Sessions. Finally, Office Operations (Computer Consultation) went over budget because we made our first down-payment on our new website. Friends spoke to the year-end numbers, and received the report.

2016-04-20. Emily Provance (15th Street) reported for the Meetings for Discernment Steering Committee, noting that the Meeting for Discernment at the 2015 Summer Sessions was rich. She continued by speaking to the laying down of our Yearly Meeting on Ministry and Counsel. Emily reminded us that while the form of YMMC has been laid down, the work has not. We have the records of their work

and the wisdom those meetings have passed down. The work of spiritual listening continues. She invited us to attend Meetings for Discernment and bring with us those who are younger than us, newer to Quakerism than us, and those whose ministry has had a local focus. Our presence and theirs will enrich us and our Yearly Meeting. A Friend spoke to his experience of these meetings and the ministry that is not to be found nowhere else—ministry that may very well come from you.

2016-04-21. Robin Whitely (Chatham-Summit) and Arlene Johnson (Chatham-Summit) reported for the NYYM Outreach Working Group. The Advancement Committee has been suspended for the time being as no one felt led to step forward as clerk. It is clear, however, that Friends are interested in sharing our message with others and are looking for help in doing that. To help fill that need, Arlene and Robin are co-leading an Outreach Working Group for Friends who are interested in advancement to think about steps that they can take to share more of who we are as Quakers and what we have to offer to others. They are looking for three to five other Friends who would like to join them in this calling as it has become clear that many Friends are interested in Advancement and sharing our message, but do not know how to move forward. This group will share ideas and explore ways to help bring the message of Quakerism to seekers who have not found us yet.

Arlene spoke of a “very unscientific” survey that they sent out and received back from 60 Meetings. They learned much, most especially that many Monthly Meetings are concerned about outreach, including reaching out to and supporting seekers. If you are interested in serving on this Working Group, please contact Arlene and Robin. Find their contact information in the NYYM Yearbook.

2016-04-22. The Reading Clerk read a Travel Minute from Poughkeepsie Monthly Meeting for Don Badgley, attached. Don clarified that there will be a Committee of Care and will travel with an Elder whenever possible. He also spoke to the movement of the spirit in his call to this ministry. Friends directed our Clerk to endorse this travel minute, and asked that the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) be named as part of that endorsement.

2016-04-23. The minutes of this session were read and approved.

2016-04-24. After announcements, we closed in gathered worship.

**New York Yearly Meeting Spring Sessions
Rahway & Plainfield Meetinghouse, Plainfield, New Jersey
Sunday, April 3, 2016
Morning Session**

*Lucinda Antrim (Scarsdale), Clerk
Jeffrey Aaron (New Brunswick), Assistant Clerk
Andrew Mead von Salis (Brooklyn), Recording Clerk
Elaine Learnard (Conscience Bay), Reading Clerk*

2016-04-25. The Meeting returned to calm after the rise of a morning meeting for worship, as the Clerk called us to attend to our business at approximately 10:25 a.m. The Clerk introduced those at the clerks' table. She explained our last-minute agenda changes for today, encouraging us to hold the work lightly, taking time for answers to our questions to emerge.

2016-04-26. John Cooley (Central Finger Lakes), clerk of the General Services Coordinating Committee, reported that our desired consolidation of Trustees' and operating-account books had led to unexpected accounting expenses. These costs had already reached a multiple of their estimates. The Coordinating Committee recommended that this work be halted until the Yearly Meeting can reassess it, both among ourselves and in consultation with the accounting firm. Frederick Dettmer (Purchase), current clerk of our Trustees, explained how our accountants, who keep the books, and our independent auditors are separate entities. For a new Audit of increased scope, both must do considerable extra work. The Trustees had minuted yesterday:

The Trustees note that, pursuant to the Bylaws, "The Trustees shall be responsible for holding title to and administration of the properties, both real and personal, owned by the Corporation." In that capacity, the Trustees expect that (a) no further payment will be made to the accountant, nor any payments to the auditor beyond \$10,000 until the Trustees are satisfied with the status of current and further work, and (b) no further work will take place for 2015 or the GAAP audit until the Trustees have assessed the work in hand for 2014, and the projected costs for 2015. Noting that the Audit Committee will pursue this inquiry, the Trustees expect to approve any decision with respect to the adequacy and cost of any further work on the GAAP audit or review. This minute will be conveyed to the Audit Committee and the General Services Committee.

Last night, the General Services Coordinating Committee met and minuted its unity with the Audit Committee and Trustees as to these decisions.

After some silence in which the situation was digested, Friends posed questions and answers were supplied. The regular bookkeeping work would continue, while the

accounting firm would do no further work supporting the expanded Audit project. It was not yet learned how or why the accountants incurred these cost overruns without any interim notice or billing to us. The impact and timing of the overruns on our financial statements were explained. Several factors that complicate any quantitative measure of the overruns and their impact were enumerated, but we were assured that the Yearly Meeting's financial viability was not threatened.

We received these reports. The Yearly Meeting approved our committees' plan and asked them to report further to us at our Summer Sessions.

2016-04-27. Frederick Dettmer presented our Trustees' plan for "Redesignation of Income From Trust Funds" dated March 20, 2016. He explained its stated overall purposes and the thinking behind the Trustees' process. Friends' input and comments were invited, and the Trustees expected to complete its plan before our Summer Sessions.

Fred addressed some questions from the floor. He explained that Fund income can be in our operating account, though a Fund may be restricted in purpose, because the specific expenditures they cover, such as a Friend's conference scholarship aid, are not investment management concerns that should rightly be decided by Trustees.

Friends heard the interim report, although a lack of unity was clearly expressed regarding the placement of restricted Funds' proceeds into our operating account.

2016-04-28. Jeff Hitchcock (Rahway & Plainfield) and Judy Meikle (Wilton), co-clerks of the White Privilege Conference Task Group, reported on their work toward the Conference to be held in Philadelphia this month. The Conference was already fully enrolled, with approximately 2300 adult and 250 youth registrants, including about 500 Quakers of whom over 100 are from our Yearly Meeting. The Task Group was excited to report Friends' role as engines helping to power the Conference and build the strength of its message to the world. Friends organizations and meetings were already envisioning avenues of follow-up, though our Task Group was not yet clear as to what continuing role it may have.

The Task Group's report was received.

2016-04-29. A letter from a group of our children aged 6-12 in attendance this weekend was read. The children's own words urged us to conduct our Sessions without the use of plastic tableware and disposable plastic water bottles. The letter was attentively received, and we referred it to the Sessions Committee for a response.

2016-04-30. The Reading Clerk reads the Clerk's report of the interim statements that the Clerk and General Secretary had issued in our name since our Fall Sessions, pursuant to our approved process for time-sensitive communications. The interim

statements consisted of letters of solidarity and spiritual support sent to Friends in France and Belgium following terror attacks on cities there. Friends received this report.

2016-04-31. A report from the Sessions Committee on these Spring Sessions was read by its clerk, Melanie-Claire Mallison (Ithaca); 133 adults and 19 youth attended this weekend for a total of 152 participants.

Melanie-Claire also read to us the Committee's report on a "Pay As Led" system of voluntary payment toward the operating costs of Yearly Meeting Summer Sessions, which had recently been tried by New England Yearly Meeting.

As many NYYM Friends may know, for the past two years, New England Yearly Meeting has experimented with a "Pay as Led" system for their annual session – meaning that, basically, they informed people how much a room would cost for the week and then invited everyone to attend, paying what they could afford. What NEYM discovered over those years is – not only did more Friends attend their Summer Sessions than in previous years, but the Yearly Meeting also did better financially with this system than they had with a more conventional one. They found that, when given the opportunity, Friends are both conscientious and generous. One point to note however is that at their Summer Sessions location, all accommodations are dorm rooms with a shared bath and they are all the same price.

With this information on NEYM's Pay as Led process, last fall, Sessions Committee tasked a small group to develop ideas for a 'pay as led' fee structure for NYYM Summer Sessions at Silver Bay. We hope, of course, that such a structure would open the Yearly Meeting experience to more Friends. Creating a financially sound and yet flexible structure is complicated by the many levels of rooming options available to us at Silver Bay Association, however, the Pay as Led Ad Hoc Committee members, Dawn Pozzi (Rochester), Christopher Sammond (Poplar Ridge), and myself, Melanie-Claire Mallison (Ithaca), along with the entire Sessions Committee feel strongly led to pursue this system of payment, bringing it to experimental fruition at the soonest, most appropriate time. Our intention is to offer a full report on our discernment at the 2016 Summer Sessions, for discussion and consideration by the Yearly Meeting. Please feel free to contact the ad hoc members over the intervening months with your thoughts, concerns, and insights.

These reports are received.

2016-04-32. Frederick Dettmer, as a member of the Witness Coordinating Committee, read the Coordinating Committee's recommendation that we join the faith communities that had endorsed the "March For a Clean Energy Revolution" in Philadelphia on July 24, 2016. The Coordinating Committee also encouraged Friends

who are so moved to join the March, though it was scheduled for a day during our Summer Sessions. After concerns were heard, Friends approved the request that our Yearly Meeting endorse the March, and the Clerk was directed to sign the organization's endorsement form.

2016-04-33. Emily Provance (Fifteenth Street) introduced, read and commented upon a report from the Young Adult Concerns Committee, signed by eleven Friends she named. Emerging from the YACC's talk and worship together, what arose was a Quaker Party in New York City, centered on about 200-250 young people from New York Yearly Meeting and beyond, for which June 17-19, 2016, has been scheduled. Commitments of resources, attendance, and assistance had been generous, and a plethora of events and activities had been planned. We were all asked by YACC to spread the word, offer sleeping spaces, and perhaps even donate a little money. Friends received the report.

2016-04-34. The Minutes of this morning's session were heard, corrected and approved in stages during the meeting.

2016-04-35. Friends set aside the earnest busyness to conclude our worship in a few minutes of reflective silence and vocal ministry, rising at 12:40 p.m.

ATTACHMENTS

Changes to *Faith & Practice* (first reading)

Note: Proposed revisions to *Faith & Practice* may originate in a monthly or regional meeting or a Yearly Meeting body. When the proposed revision has been seasoned by the Committee to Revise *Faith & Practice* and approved by Ministry Coordinating Committee, the Committee to Revise *Faith & Practice* may bring the proposed revision to any Yearly Meeting session for a first reading. After being brought forward the first time, the proposed revision is brought for a second reading and final approval to a subsequent Yearly Meeting session.

Part Two—PRACTICE AND PROCEDURE

1. Organization and Business Procedure

G. The Yearly Meeting (section with proposed changes, as follows:)

MEMBERSHIP. The yearly meeting comprises the entire membership of constituent monthly meetings, all of whom share in its deliberations. Members of other yearly meetings are welcome to attend yearly meeting sessions.

FUNCTION. The yearly meeting exists principally to worship together. It is a meeting for the transaction of business and can engage in any activity or foster any work that the membership considers appropriate. This may include provision of funds and supervision for common projects. By pooling efforts and resources, the yearly meeting can consider wider and more varied concerns.

The yearly meeting meets to conduct business in the spirit of worship three times each year: at Fall, Spring, and Summer Sessions. It approves the yearly meeting's annual operating budget. It receives memorials of deceased Friends.

Among its other functions, the yearly meeting issues to the monthly meetings queries, advices, and reports of its proceedings, and it maintains contact with other yearly meetings and Friends' organizations. It alone has authority to establish or change the Book of Discipline, or to issue statements of faith.

The yearly meeting should inspire and support its constituent meetings, broaden their awareness of other Friends' concerns, and help them develop their own concerns. Much of the work is carried forward by yearly meeting committees. The yearly meeting receives reports from them and from its constituent meetings. It reviews the State of the Meeting reports and considers communications addressed to it. It provides for the due consideration of epistles and of minutes of Friends from other yearly meetings.

It provides for participation in the work and financial support of Friends' groups including the Friends General Conference, Friends United Meeting, and the Friends World Committee for Consultation.

ORGANIZATION. The yearly meeting follows the general principles of organization

and uses the same general business procedures as do monthly meetings, but it is more elaborate in structure due to the multiplicity and variety of functions that it performs. The New York Yearly Meeting is incorporated under Section 15 of the New York State Religious Corporation Law for the purpose of holding title to and administering property of the meeting and deeds of trust committed to its care. As such, any business meeting of the yearly meeting constitutes a meeting of the corporation, and all members of the yearly meeting are likewise members of the corporation.

The yearly meeting appoints a clerk to preside at its sessions, and carry out associated administrative functions. It also appoints an assistant clerk and such recording and reading clerks as may be needed to assist the clerk in the conduct of the meetings. It appoints a treasurer, assistant treasurer, and such administrative secretaries as it may decide to engage for designated functions.

The activities of the yearly meeting are carried on by four specialized sections-the Ministry Coordinating Committee, General Services, Nurture, and Witness – having the following functions:

- To develop and coordinate services and programs, implementing them directly or through committees, task groups, staff, or volunteers;
- To explore new ways of service and respond to concerns of individual Friends and monthly and regional meetings;
- To recommend for yearly meeting action any major change of activity within their general areas of responsibility;
- To help plan yearly meeting programs.

The Ministry Coordinating Committee exercises general care of the ministry and spiritual life of the yearly meeting and receives and considers concerns of members or meetings regarding their spiritual needs.

The Section on Nurture is responsible for the advancement of the principles of Friends and for educational functions and personal services to members of the yearly meeting. Some of the interests have become the responsibilities of separate corporate entities, such as Powell House, and the Oakwood Friends School.

The Section on Witness makes visible both the traditional testimonies and the newer concerns of Friends in ways that extend beyond the Religious Society of Friends. Its work attempts to express beliefs in action.

The Section on General Services provides the main administrative, financial, and reporting services of the yearly meeting, including the operation of the yearly meeting office.

(More detailed information on the section is to be found in the current edition of the yearly meeting Handbook.)

Each section has a coordinating committee, composed of representatives chosen by its constituent committees and groups, as well as members-at-large appointed by the yearly meeting.

The Ministry Coordinating Committee, includes in addition, a representative appointed

by each quarterly or regional meeting (two from Farmington-Scipio) for a three-year term, according to established rotation.

The coordinating committees are enabling bodies. They consider the activities within their respective sections in relationship to each other, assist in their coordination, and help allocate the resources of people, time and money. They prepare the section budgets, are responsible for their overall administration, and participate in preparation of the total yearly meeting budget.

The yearly meeting may establish or lay down committees according to the need for the conduct of particular functions of the meeting. Regular standing committees include, among others, Advancement, Financial Services, and Sessions. The yearly meeting also appoints representatives to various Friends' groups such as the American Friends Service Committee, Friends United Meeting, Friends General Conference, and the Friends World Committee for Consultation, and the governing boards of various other institutions or agencies.

When the yearly meeting establishes a committee, it must also determine and approve a statement of its purpose and functions and provide adequate funding. All appointments are to be made for a specified term. A current record of all committees and their membership is published annually in the Yearbook of the yearly meeting.

Four committees of the General Services Section fulfill specific administrative functions:

SESSIONS COMMITTEE: The Sessions Committee is responsible for selecting and arranging a suitable place for the sessions of the yearly meeting and for the preparation of schedules and programs. It advises committees on presentation of reports to the yearly meeting and serves as an advisory committee to the clerks during the sessions. It is responsible for publicity, hospitality, and financial arrangements for these meetings. The composition of the Sessions Committee appears in the yearly meeting Handbook.

FINANCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE. (To remain as is, with appropriate deletions of representative meeting if any.)

AUDIT COMMITTEE. (To remain as is, with appropriate deletions of representative meeting if any.)

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE. (To remain as is, with appropriate deletions of representative meeting, if any.)

YEARLY MEETING NOMINATING COMMITTEE. (To remain as is, with appropriate deletions of representative meetings if any.)

OFFICE AND ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF. The Yearly Meeting maintains an office staffed by a variety of professionals who implement or administer ministerial functions identified by the Yearly Meeting.

Report of the General Secretary

On Being Covenant Community

The following is based on an oral report given by Christopher Sammond at Spring Sessions, 2016. Some material has been added for clarification.

Part of how I understand one dimension of my work is to gather impressions of how we are doing as a community, and to reflect that back to us as a gathered body. What I have been led to share today would fall into that category.

We are called into deeper community, and deeper communion. This starts with each of us deepening individually in our walk with the Divine. There is perhaps no more challenging work than this. We can't do it alone. Parker Palmer has this to say about the need for community in the work of "sinking down to the Seed," of living out who God created us to be, central to our practice as Friends:

The journey toward inner truth is too taxing to be made solo:
lacking support, the solitary traveler soon becomes weary or fearful and is likely to quit the road.

The path is too deeply hidden to be traveled without company:
finding our way involves clues that are subtle and sometimes misleading, requiring the kind of discernment that can happen only in dialogue.

The destination is too daunting to be achieved alone:
we need community to find the courage to venture into the alien lands to which the inner teacher may call us.

Parker Palmer

We are called to be in communion with each other, one with another, each of us with our whole meeting, and our meetings together forming one body of the yearly meeting- a body, *a people*. This is what I mean when I talk about Covenant Community- a people united in seeking the Divine and how to live in awareness of the Divine while at the same time living in Empire.

The Leadings and Priorities process has pointed us as a yearly meeting body to attend to how God is at work in our monthly meetings. This is a much needed orientation. But we run a risk here. We risk supplanting our true calling, to be faithful in living into Covenant Community, with the understandable desire to make our meetings prosper.

"He who seeks to save his life shall lose it, and he who seeks to lose his life for the sake of the Gospel shall have life abundant."
Luke 9:24

This extends to our monthly meetings as well. If we seek to save our monthly meetings, we will lose them. If we seek to save our monthly meetings for their own sakes, we run the risk of them only having life in themselves, not rooted and grounded in God. If we seek to make our monthly meetings outposts from which we create the the reign of love and unity and justice which we variably call the Blessed Community, The Reign of God, the Kingdom of God, they will thrive. Our work is not to save our meetings, or to “save” Quakerism. Our work is to be faithful to the good news of the reality of the Beloved Community, and to invite others into what we have touched of that reality.

Of course, The Kingdom is something that is both here, and, “not yet.” We catch glimpses of its power, we touch upon its Presence enough to know it is real, and we also struggle to live it out. There are symptoms, hallmarks, aspects of it that we can experience, and yet still struggle to live out fully. These are what I know to be aspects of the Blessed Community, lived out in our monthly meetings, and in the fabric of our wider community as a yearly meeting:

Open hearts: We live with hearts wide open to each other and to the Divine, tender and undefended, even as we do the difficult work of being community together.

Our wills directed to God: This is the core of every spiritual tradition, and certainly central to Friends efforts to shift from “the creature” to “the new Adam.”

Connected to one another: We are united in a covenant community, supporting each other in our search for Truth. We “carry” each other spiritually.

Effectively dealing with conflict: All communities have conflict. When we live out conflict effectively, it strengthens our community, rather than erodes it.

Engaged with the wider world: We are fully aware of, and engaged with, the currents of the world. We unflinching face that we live in Empire at the same time we are called to live out the Blessed Community.

We Are Turning a Corner

In many ways, I see us turning a corner as a community. This is really heartening to see. Here are some of ways I am seeing us live more into Covenant Community, living into the hopes behind the Statement of Leadings and Priorities:

- **Advancement and outreach:** I have never seen more energy, across this yearly meeting, for advancement and outreach as I am seeing currently. The new Outreach Working Group is an experiment in supporting outreach and advancement work across this yearly meeting in a new way. We are seeking to create a supportive network rather than to try to support outreach work through a yearly meeting committee. Friends involved in this network can participate as much or as little as they have leading and energy. We hope it will be a forum, a community, and an extended laboratory for how to do effective outreach work in our local meetings.
- **Meetings renewal:** Many of our meetings showing signs of renewal, with newcomers, families, children joining our worship. In many meetings, I sense renewed energy and enthusiasm.

- **Hiring a Children and Youth Field Secretary (CYFS):** With the hire of our newest staff person, we finally have barely enough staff to actually meet the needs we as staff encounter as we travel around the yearly meeting. For years, it has been particularly frustrating to me for us to not have enough staff to make a difference, which has left many Friends feeling like they did not get anything from their contribution to the yearly meeting, which in turn did not inspire them to give financial support, which meant that we lacked the funds to have staff to meet present needs, etc., in a “Catch 22” situation. We finally have enough staff to make the difference we need to make. At the same time, I need to tell you that your staff is stretched to the absolute limit.
- **Project Partners:** With the help of the grant from the Shoemaker Fund, and in collaboration with NEYM, our new Children and Youth Field Secretary will be giving concentrated attention to six Project Partner monthly meetings, working intensively with them to help them do effective outreach to young families and to do a better job of welcoming and integrating children into the fabric of their meetings. She will also be available for this same work across the yearly meeting, but in a less intensive fashion. If you think your monthly meeting might want to be a Project Partner, please look for information on that program, which should be coming out next week.
- **Witness Work:** NYYM’s Witness Coordinating Committee has been doing discernment on what witness work is arising and finding life in our constituent monthly meetings, so that the work done through the yearly meeting is a better reflection of that work.
- **Tending the Garden:** The Spiritual Nurture Working Group has now given quite a few workshops and retreats for monthly and Quarterly/Regional meetings as part of the Tending the Garden program, with more in the planning stages. Check out the yearly meeting website for information on the various retreats being offered both in local meetings, and at Powell House, as part of this program.
- **Supporting Children and Youth:** Fifty Friends, eighteen of them children, signed up for the “One Spiritual Community” retreat, sponsored by the Nurture Coordinating Committee and held at Brooklyn MM. And the Youth Committee has sponsored one Youth Institute, with another scheduled, gatherings designed to share best practices and learn new ones in better integrating children and youth into the lives of our monthly meetings.
- **Direction of the Yearly Meeting Organization:** The organizational aspect of our yearly meeting has been much more pointed towards needs of our constituent monthly meetings, in harmony with the Statement of Leadings and Priorities.
- **New Financial Contributors:** Our initial 2016 Appeal Letter highlighted this change of direction, with a surprisingly positive response. Many Friends who had heretofore not given were led to make contributions, including some sizeable ones. I take this to be positive feedback that we are heading in the right direction. If you have given in the past, and have not yet done so this year, please consider supporting our growing edges.

Risks of Insularity

It is unquestionably a blessing to witness the clearer direction, renewed energy, and focus on supporting the life of our monthly meetings. And yet, in this, I see a risk in our reinforcing a tendency I witness in some of our monthly meetings towards insularity. One study, done by FGC many years ago, and titled *Fostering Vital Quaker Meetings*, concluded that meetings not connected to some larger body, whether Quarter, Yearly Meeting, or larger Quaker organization, did not tend to do well. Over time, they lost vitality.

If we forget that the heart of our life as a community is our monthly meetings, we will cease to exist. We need to remember that without our monthly meetings, there is no point for us to exist as a yearly meeting. But if we are only about our monthly meetings, we will dwindle and die. If our focus is on preserving our meeting communities as an end in themselves, they don't tend to do well. If we seek to bring about the Beloved Community, the Reign of God, in and through our meeting communities, they will flourish.

If our meetings are only about themselves, as insular entities, we run the risk of having an idolatrous relationship with them. We cannot create community, any more than we can "create" vibrant worship by our own will. However, if we are intent on being Covenant Community together, on supporting each other in our walk with the Divine, endeavoring to live out the spiritual reality that we are *a people*, then our meetings will have life. The way to that life, as individuals, as communities, and as a people, is to follow our inner guide, to not outrun it, and to mutually support each other in this root of our faith as Friends of Truth, Children of the Light, and as the Blessed Community.

Poughkeepsie Friends Meeting
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845-454-2870

Travel Minute for Don Badgley

December 13, 2015

Don Badgley, a member in good standing at Poughkeepsie Monthly Meeting, has brought forward a calling to travel in ministry, to share the “good news” of experiential faith. This ministry comes from a deeply personal spiritual place. His leading is to do outreach among Friends and in communities beyond meeting house doors to share the experience of that “place” of faith. He is hoping to encourage Friends to find more ways to express to the world their experiences of the Divine Light and to reach others by pointing to the Divine Light that guides Friends.

Don has received the call to travel in ministry with the understanding that as Friends we are called to preach and share the truth we discern under the guidance of the Divine Light. He will travel as led in waiting worship and by invitation.

Poughkeepsie Friends Meeting supports Don in his leading to travel in this ministry. The Meeting understands that the content of his ministry, which builds on his plenary message at NYYM in July 2015, will evolve as he continues to discern his leading. The Meeting continues to encourage Don to diligently seek and follow the leading of the Spirit during this ministry. Don will travel with an elder whenever possible, to assist in seasoning his ministry and being attentive to the needs and concerns of those with whom he meets. The Meeting also encourages those who receive this ministry to do so with the same diligence in seeking to discern where the Spirit may be leading them as individuals and as communities.

Yours faithfully for Poughkeepsie Monthly Meeting,

Rachel V. Ruth, clerk

Approved _____

Meetings visited by Don Badgley are invited to endorse this travel minute and comment below:

Name	Faith Community	Date
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