

WITNESS COORDINATING COMMITTEE
APRIL 6 2013
Minutes

Present: Mary Eagleson (Clerk), Frederick Dettmer (acting as Recording Clerk), Sue Weisfeld, Naomi Paz Greenberg, Diane Keefe, Susan Wolf, Lyle Jenks, Gloria Thompson, Patricia Chernoff, Andy von Salis, Helen Garay Toppins, Pamela Wood.

Regrets: Suzanne Blackburn, Sue Clark, Judy Meikle, Robin Alpern.

The travel minutes for Judy Meikle and Margaret Lechner (attached) were approved.

The draft Advance Report (attached) was corrected and approved. Discussion of the draft report prompted requests from a couple of persons for additional information about the survey Witness Coordinating Committee undertook to discern peace and social concerns activities at the monthly meetings and the need for a peace and social concerns committee at the yearly meeting level. Mary will provide information to those persons.

Mary reported that the proposed contributions to the National Religious Campaign Against Torture and the New York State Council of Churches of \$150 each would be gratefully received and would be sufficient for the Yearly Meeting's annual contribution. Quaker Earthcare Witness does not require annual contributions, but also would appreciate any donation. The Committee confirmed that the contributions should be made.

Fred updated the Committee on his exploration of whether there is energy for reforming a peace committee. Conscientious Objection to Paying for War Committee is amenable to being folded back into the committee as a sub-committee. Fred and Naomi will schedule an organizational meeting to form a working group in advance of Summer Sessions. Mary will provide information to them from the survey of monthly meetings. Diane Keefe, Sue Weisfeld and Judy Meikle expressed a willingness to participate on the working group, and Helen offered to provide staff support.

Committee Description Revisions for the NYYM Handbook:

- a. Shirley Way provided an updated description for the Alternatives to Violence Project Committee. WCC approved the description subject to confirmation that the AVP Committee has approved the statement and with the correction of the office address for AVP, Inc.
- b. Descriptions for the Bolivian Quaker Education Fund and Friends Peace Teams were reviewed. The Committee considered whether the

descriptions for outside Friends organizations to whom NYYM appoints representatives who are under the care of WCC should include uniform information about the ability of Friends to make tax-deductible gifts to each such organization. The Committee did not reach clarity on this question. The Committee approved having the draft descriptions put on the Yearly Meeting website with the descriptions to be revised upon approval as necessary.

- c. Susan Wolf provided an updated description for Indian Affairs Committee, which has been approved by IAC. The Committee approved the IAC description for forwarding to the Body for its consideration and approval. IAC was encouraged to add a brief historical discussion to its description. If IAC does so, it needs to be provided before Summer Sessions.
- d. Mary provided a draft update for the WCC description which includes proposed changes to the Guidelines for Witness Activities Fund Grants. One change would delete the explicit provisions permitting grants of interest free loans (and the reference to such loans in the caption). Another change would eliminate references to an “oversight committee” to consider grant requests. Friends approved both sets of proposed changes.

Witness Activities Grants: WCC previously approved advancing funds from the Sharing Fund Endowment to temporarily fund Sharing Fund activities before sufficient contributions have been received to pay for such activities in order to liberate WCC and its committees to undertake projects when the Spirit is at work (rather than only when the funds already are in hand). Mary raises the question as to how we should apply this principle in making Witness Activities Fund grants in light of the fact that requests for such grants may be received throughout the year and we cannot anticipate all the requests that may be received. The Committee agreed that Witness Activities Grant requests should be considered after the annual letter to monthly meetings soliciting requests has gone out and the deadline in the letter for submitting requests has passed. This year, the letter will go out in May with a September 15th deadline. Mary, Helen and Fred will develop guidelines for regularizing the process, which will be submitted to the Committee for consideration.

WCC Nominating Committee: We need persons to propose officers for WCC for the year beginning at the conclusion of Summer Sessions in July. Lyle and Fred will serve.

Diane Keefe presented a proposal to ask Friends Fiduciary Corporation to divest its holdings in companies that profit from fossil fuels exploitation. Minimal shares could continue to be held to enable making or participating in shareholder resolutions to be presented at annual meetings of such corporations. The

Committee expressed its unity with the proposal, including retaining sufficient shares in such companies to be able to submit and participate in shareholder resolutions, even if such divestment results in reduced profitability from our participation in Friends Fiduciary Corporation. The Committee asks Diane to discuss the proposal with the Yearly Meeting Trustees and report back on the sense of the Board of Trustees. If the Trustees support the proposal, WCC can then prepare a minute for submission to the Body for its discernment and approval.

The Minutes were approved.

Mary Eagleson
Clerk

Frederick Dettmer
Acting as Recorder