

Witness Coordinating Committee Minutes for
July 2014 at Silver Bay

July 22, 2014

Present: Mary Eagleson, *clerk*; Helen Garay Toppins, *treasurer, also Black Concerns Committee and Prisons Committee*; Robert Kazmeyer (Sunfire), *member at large*; Robin Mallison Alpern, *recording clerk, European American Quakers Working to End Racism Working Group*; Frederick Dettmer, *National Campaign for a Peace Tax Fund, FCNL, AFSC, NRCAT*; Emily Boardman, *Indian Affairs Committee*; Shirley Way, *member at large*; Patricia Chernoff, *Earthcare Working Group*; Sue Clark, *visitor*; Jeannine Laverty, *visitor*; Naomi Paz Greenberg, *Meetings for Discernment Steering Committee, Latin American Concerns*; Susan Wolf, *Indian Affairs Committee*; Suzanne Blackburn, *at large*; Sarah Faith Dickinson, *European American Quakers Working to End Racism Working Group*.

2014-7-1. Nominating committee report from Sunfire: 3 Friends will remain in their current posts: Mary Eagleson as clerk, Judy Meikle as assistant clerk (provided she affirms to Mary she will be able to serve actively); and Helen Garay Toppins as treasurer. Sunfire will serve as recording clerk. The nominations were approved, with the exception that the appointment of the assistant clerk is pending.

2014-7-2. We approved correcting the line in the Yearly Meeting treasurer's budget from Quaker Earthcare Witness to **Earthcare Working Group**, to avoid confusion.

2014-7-3. Sharing Fund policy report: Mary reported she has been consulting with Helen and Susan Weisfeld about a proposed policy. She presented the attached report which includes 9 points of background, and 9 proposed policy measures. Committees can support fundraising by posting info about their accomplishments and plans on the YM website, and by sending glowing reports to the WCC clerk to include in fundraising letters.

Friends approved creating a **financial subcommittee**. The subcommittee's duties will include:

- A. Annual review of committees' carry-over of funds from one year to the next and consideration of this carry-over in allocating SF percentages the following year. Recommend action to the WCC.
- B. Recommendation of an appropriate goal for the SF.
- C. Recommendation to the full WCC an allocation of SF income (considering both contribution and endowment income) based on appropriately detailed budgets submitted by the committees and including an amount for the WAF consistent with the amounts granted in the preceding few years.
- D. If committees are laid down or inactive, and they have carried-over funds, the financial subcommittee will recommend an appropriate use for those funds. They will not

be let sit for more than one year. The subcommittee might decide to retain some of the funds of a committee that's been laid down, in case other needs arise that are consistent with the original intention for those funds.

E. Review of investment of the endowment funds and recommendations for management of the endowment.

F. Communication and education about the SF finances between the financial subcommittee or WCC clerk and committees is needed. Committee clerks, at least, need to understand the SF finances.

G. Recommendation regarding which of our financial streams should be used to pay the approximately \$2400/year postage for our 2 appeals each year for contributions to the SF.

H. A decision is needed about how to handle interest income if the total of contributions plus endowment interest exceeds the goal for the year. Note that we minuted in January, 2014, that income in excess of the goal would not be automatically distributed to committees, but that WCC would decide what to do with it. However, no process for making such decisions exists.

I. Recommendation of a clear procedure for transferring WAF grants from the YM treasurer to the monthly meetings. The clerk and current financial clerk will collaborate on writing instructions to be sent to all recipients of WAF grants.

The subcommittee will be comprised of the following: Helen Garay Toppins, treasurer; Mary Eagleson, clerk, ex officio; Frederick Dettmer. Mary will invite Susan Weisfeld to join. The WCC clerk will convene the subcommittee.

Our past and current practice is that each committee prepare a budget for the next financial cycle, and that it refer to this budget and include both its budget and a detailed report of how it spent its funds the previous year in each year's advance report.

We recommend that committees who do not submit a request for a portion of the SF in advance of the meeting at which the percentage shares are approved, will not be allocated a share. Similarly, those who do not submit advance reports detailing how their funds have been spent, will be asked to account for their funds before being granted shares in the next year. If funds have not been spent and the committee does not have a plan for spending them, it will be asked to return the funds to the SF to be distributed as recommended by the financial subcommittee.

In order to establish a SF goal that reflects actual spending plans of committees, committees must be responsible for creating those plans and communicating them with the financial subcommittee by December 1 of the preceding year. (Committees that meet at Fall Sessions in November can draw up their budget request at that time, to submit to the financial subcommittee.) WCC will consider the budget requests at the January Coordinating Weekend.

2014-7-4. Mary will draft a **calendar of responsibilities** that can be shared with all committee clerks. It will inform them when budget requests are due, as well as accountability queries, annual reports, etc.

2014-7-5. Sunfire will convene a new **appeal subcommittee**. Sunfire will ask each of our committees to name someone to this fundraising committee. They will invite reports from committees by October 1, to be used in appeal letters to be sent out in November.

2014-7-6. We approved requesting **\$2300 from the operating budget** for 2015. We will use the remaining money from this year's operating funds toward the SF appeal.

2014-7-7. We received copies of the **Earthcare Working Group** implementation plan for our review. Mary presented the following minute from EWG:

Earthcare Working Group Minute

Proposed to Witness Coordinating Committee, Summer Sessions, 2014

We as Friends support the work that the Earthcare Working Group (EWG) proposes to undertake as stated in the *EWG Implementation Plan: NYYM Priorities, 2014*; intended to raise awareness about, and model ways in which Friends may contribute to the mitigation of climate change and protection of the Earth.

Specifically as part of the EWG implementation of NYYM Priority #5: *We Envision a Yearly Meeting that Witnesses to the World on Our Behalf*, we support The Earthcare Working Group request that, **1)** the Meeting for Discernment Steering Committee adopt the EWG response to the climate crisis as stated in the *EWG Implementation Plan: NYYM Priorities, 2014*, as the theme for winter Meeting for Discernment, and that, **2)** the Planning Committee for Fall Sessions adopt EWG Friends' sharing their environmental work and spiritual witness to Earthcare activism as the focus of the fall sessions 2014 Friday evening gathering.

The clerk explained both requests included in the minute can be brought directly from EWG to the appropriate committees. Naomi, as our liaison to Meeting for Discernment Steering Committee, will bring the message WCC supports EWG's request, referred to in their minute. We sent the minute back to EWG for clarification. We sent the implementation plan back for clarification about who is responsible for actions.

2014-7-8. Further business was laid over to our next meeting on Friday morning. Mary will check on the location.

Respectfully submitted,
Robin Mallison Alpern, recording clerk

Attachment: Sharing Fund policy report

Report to Witness Coordinating Committee on Management of Sharing Fund Income

- A number of concerns about the management of the Sharing Fund have been expressed.
1. There are committees with excess funds carrying over from one year to the next.
 2. There is no financial subcommittee to oversee the investment of the Sharing Fund endowment.
 3. Discussion of the allocation of the Sharing Fund finances takes up too much of limited coordinating committee time.
 4. Determination of the Sharing Fund goal is largely guesswork.
 5. Many members of the WCC are ill informed about the finances of the Sharing Fund.
 6. The Sharing Fund goal should reflect the amount of money needed by the committees and Witness Activities Fund, rather than the amount the WCC believes it can raise.
 7. The SF goal is set for contributions and does not include the interest income from the endowment. In years past, the SF goal was considerably higher than the amount contributed. The difference can be made up from the interest income *from the endowment*. However, it is unclear whether the WCC intends that distributions to committees should be capped at their percentages of the goal, or that the entire endowment interest income be distributed according to those percentages. If the latter course is followed, committees may well accumulate unspent funds unless the funds on hand are taken into consideration in their budget requests for the next year.
 8. Since the Yearly Meeting now expects that the SF should cover the cost of mailing the solicitation letters and thank-you letters, this cost must be factored into the allocation of percentages to committees and the WAF.
 9. Recipients of WAF grants do not always know what they must do to obtain the funds from the YM treasurer. A clear procedure needs to be communicated to them by the clerk of WCC when (s)he informs them that their applications for grants have been approved.

To address the first of these concerns, we recommend a formation of a financial subcommittee of Witness CC. The duties of this subcommittee would include:

1. An annual review of committees' carry-over of funds from one year to the next and consideration of this carry-over in allocating SF percentages the following year.
2. Determination of an appropriate goal for the SF.
3. Recommendation to the full WCC an allocation of SF income (considering both contribution and endowment income) based on appropriately detailed budgets submitted by the committees and including an amount for the WAF consistent with the amounts granted in the preceding few years.
4. If committees are laid down or inactive, and they have carried-over funds, the financial subcommittee will recommend an appropriate use for those funds. They will not be let sit for more than one year.
5. Review of investment of the endowment funds and recommendations for changes if appropriate.

Further, our past and current practice is that each committee prepare a budget for the next financial cycle, and that it refer to this budget and include both its budget and a detailed

report of how it spent its funds the previous year in each year's advance report.

We recommend that committees who do not submit a request for a portion of the SF in advance of the meeting at which the percentage shares are approved, will not be allocated a share. Similarly, those who do not submit advance reports detailing how their funds have been spent, will be asked to account for their funds before being granted shares in the next year. If funds have not been spent and the committee does not have a plan for spending them, it will be asked to return the funds to the SF to be distributed as recommended by the financial subcommittee.

5. Better communication about the SF finances between the financial subcommittee or WCC clerk and committees is needed. Committee clerks, at least, need to understand the SF finances.

6. In order to establish a SF goal that reflects actual spending plans of committees, committees must be responsible for creating those plans and communicating them with the financial subcommittee in a timely manner.

7. A decision is needed about how to handle interest income if the total of contributions plus endowment interest exceeds the goal for the year. Note that we minuted in January, 2014, that income in excess of the goal would not be automatically distributed to committees, but that WCC would decide what to do with it. However, no process for making such decisions exists.

8. A decision is needed about how to handle the cost of soliciting contributions.

9. A clear procedure for transferring WAF grants from the YM treasurer to the monthly meetings is needed. The clerk and current financial clerk will collaborate on writing instructions to be sent to all recipients of WAF grants.

July 25, 2014

Present: Mary Eagleson, *clerk*; Helen Garay Toppins, *treasurer, also Black Concerns Committee and Prisons Committee*; Robert Kazmeyer (Sunfire), *member at large*; Robin Mallison Alpern, *recording clerk, European American Quakers Working to End Racism Working Group*; Frederick Dettmer, *National Campaign for a Peace Tax Fund, FCNL, AFSC, NRCAT*; Patricia Chernoff, *Earthcare Working Group*; Naomi Paz Greenberg, *Meetings for Discernment Steering Committee, Latin American Concerns*; Susan Wolf, *Indian Affairs Committee*; Suzanne Blackburn, *at large*; Sarah Faith Dickinson, *European American Quakers Working to End Racism Working Group*, Naceo Giles, *Black Concerns Committee, Barrington Dunbar Fund*; Virginia Auster, *visitor*; Evelyn Kennenwood, *European American Quakers Working to End Racism Working Group*; Bowen Alpern, *visitor*; Pamela Wood, *Prisons Committee*; Pamela Boyce Simms, *Earthcare Working Group*; Andrew von Salis, *Conscientious Objection to Paying for*

War.

2014-7-9. We approved Pamela Boyce Simms as our delegate, if we are allowed one, to the Religions of the Earth weekend conference, called by the Union Theological Seminary as an ecumenical gathering to take place this September. We approved Sunfire as a second representative, if we are allowed two and if he is free to attend. Pamela will bring a report back.

2014-7-10. Susan Wolf brought a report from Ithaca MM's Peace Witness Committee, which received a grant of \$700 from the Witness Activities Fund to put on a workshop on "Roots of Injustice, Seeds of Change." (See minutes of April 2014.) The workshop was presented in Ithaca and Syracuse. Susan reported the workshop was deep and powerful. The American Indian program at Cornell provided funds as well, so \$565.71 will be returned to the WAF. Susan and others are being trained to lead the workshop. Indian Affairs Committee is considering offering it at NYYM Summer Sessions when possible. We received the report.

2014-7-11. Susan Wolf presented the following minute from IAC.

New York Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends calls for the release from prison of Leonard Peltier in accord with the plan drawn up by the National Congress of American Indians. Mr. Peltier is elderly and in ill health. We ask that he be allowed to rejoin his family and live his last days in peace.

Many supporters of Leonard Peltier believe Barack Obama, while still in office as President, might be willing to release Peltier from prison. The National Congress of American Indians has crafted a plan for Peltier's release that is designed to assuage a law enforcement concern about his release. We recommended the minute specify Peltier's release would be from prison. The minute was approved with these changes and will be forwarded to the YM at Fall Sessions. We recommend the IAC include a request, when presenting the minute to the YM, that the YM clerk forward this minute, if approved, to Barack Obama and the National Congress of American Indians. We are urged to educate ourselves about Leonard Peltier's case before Fall Sessions. A background document is attached to these minutes.

2014-7-12. Pamela Boyce Simms reported Earthcare Working Group had reconsidered its proposed minute and implementation plan. The minute has been withdrawn, as it is being addressed in other ways. There is no action required of us at this time on the implementation plan. We received the report.

2014-7-13. Andy von Salis, clerk of New York Quarterly Meeting, presented the following minute from NYQM on solitary confinement in NYS prisons.

Morningside Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends calls on Governor Cuomo to support the reform of the practice of solitary confinement in the state correctional facilities and local jails of New York, as developed in the

Humane Alternatives to Long Term (HALT) Solitary Confinement Act, Bill #A8588/S6466. With the enactment of the changes in the use of solitary confinement proposed in the Act, New York would become a leader in the effort to stop human rights abuses in the United States.

Friends approved forwarding this minute to the YM clerk, with the request the YM endorse it, replacing the name Morningside Meeting with the words New York Yearly Meeting. We will request further that the minute be sent to NYS's governor, Andrew Cuomo, as well as our local representatives. We asked Pamela Wood to bring it to Prison Committee to work on language to accompany the minute. A background document is attached to these minutes.

We closed our business with a brief return to silent centering.

Respectfully submitted,
Robin Mallison Alpern, recording clerk

Attachments: Minute and background on release of Leonard Peltier
Minute and background on Solitary Confinement Act

MINUTE CALLING FOR THE RELEASE OF LEONARD PELTIER

The Indian Affairs Committee calls for the Yearly Meeting's support for the National Congress of American Indians in their efforts to secure the release of Leonard Peltier. The National Congress of American Indians, established in 1944, is the oldest and largest national organization of Native peoples.

Background:

Leonard Peltier was convicted and sentenced to two consecutive life terms in connection with the shooting of two FBI agents at Wounded Knee in 1975.

Appellate courts have repeatedly acknowledged governmental misconduct in connection with the arrest and trial of Leonard Peltier, including false statements in court, forcing witnesses to lie, and concealing ballistic evidence. No one knows who fired the fatal shots, yet Leonard Peltier has remained in prison, and has been denied parole despite the fact that he has fulfilled his federal sentencing guideline and maintained a clean prison record for over 15 years.

While in prison, Leonard Peltier has become an accomplished writer and artist, and has received many awards:

Human Rights Commission of Spain International Human Rights Prize 1986

North Star Frederick Douglas Award 1993

Federation of Labour Humanist of the Year Award (Ontario, Canada) 2003

Silver Arrow Award for Lifetime Achievement 2004

First Red Nation Humanitarian Award 2009

Kwame Ture Lifetime Achievement Award 2010

Fighters for Justice Award 2010

Mario Benedetti Foundation First Intl Human Rights Prize (Uruguay) 2011

He was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2009 for the 6th consecutive year.

Leonard Peltier is now 67, and is in poor health. He suffers from diabetes, hypertension, and has shown symptoms of cancer. Many of these issues have been directly caused by lack of medical treatment and poor nutrition during his imprisonment, and thus his health is further at risk due to the prison environment in which he lives. He is a grandfather and great-grandfather who wants to return to his family and live the rest of his life in peace. National and international human rights organizations have called for his release.

A plan has been drafted that will call for his release to the custody of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians or to have him released on house arrest.

Should this minute be approved by the Yearly Meeting body, we ask that the clerk of NYYM forward the minute to Barack Obama while he is in office, to the National Council of American Indians, and to Leonard Peltier.

Minute:

New York Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends calls for the release from prison of Leonard Peltier in accord with the plan drawn up by the National Congress of American Indians. Mr. Peltier is elderly and in ill health. We ask that he be allowed to rejoin his family and live his last days in peace.

*Morningside Monthly Meeting
of the Religious Society of Friends*

**Minute in Support of the proposed
Humane Alternatives to Long Term (HALT)
Solitary Confinement Act (#A8588/S6466)**

*Approved at the Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business on June 1, 2014
Endorsed by the NYQM on July 12, 2014*

The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) has a strong belief in the possibility of positive transformation within each person and a strong belief in non-violence. The way we treat people affects their ability to connect with that of God within. Currently, solitary confinement is very often used as punishment for non-violent offenses and has nothing to do with the original crime. It makes incarcerated men, women and youth less able to make positive changes. They are more likely to suffer psychological damage and to become more of a risk to themselves, to Corrections Officers, and when released, to the public. Research on the effects of solitary confirms this. We have come to understand as Friends that violence may be psychological and emotional, not just physical. We feel that solitary confinement as it is currently employed in NY State is a form of torture and must be stopped.

Quakers have a history of involvement in the correctional facilities in New York State. In the 1970's, Friends developed the Alternatives to Violence Project at the request of men from the Greenhaven Correctional Facility. Many members of the NY Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends continue to volunteer with this program, which is active in 15 correctional facilities in New York. In addition, we maintain Quaker Worship Groups in 11 correctional facilities. Our involvement confirms our belief that positive interactions and programming support constructive change. The training and programs proposed in the HALT Bill have the potential, we believe, to be far more effective ways to change behavior and make prisons safer for both the incarcerated and members of staff than our current use of solitary confinement.

Acknowledging these circumstances, Friends are led to approve the following minute:

Morningside Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends calls on Governor Cuomo to support the reform of the practice of solitary confinement in the state correctional facilities and local jails of New York, as developed in the Humane Alternatives to Long Term (HALT) Solitary Confinement Act, Bill #A8588/S6466. With the enactment of the changes in the use of solitary confinement proposed in the Act, New York would become a leader in the effort to stop human rights abuses in the United States.

Local Meetings and individual Friends are encouraged to write to and call Governor Cuomo's office urging him to support this reform, and to send press releases and letters to the editor publicizing the issue.