

New York Yearly Meeting Religious Society of Friends

InfoShare

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Number 1

Editor, Paul Busby, paul@nyym.org

AFSC: Haiti Update

Mary Ellen McNish, general secretary, AFSC

February 5, 2010

Below: AFSC partner Handicap
International's staff helping a child in Haiti



I'm glad to report that AFSC's assessment team has returned safely from Haiti, where they spent time in Port-au-Prince viewing firsthand the immense devastation of the capital city. They report that the formal structures that keep a country running were very hard hit, especially because many government ministers and mid-level civil servants died in the quake. Many institutions that were the pillars of the community such as churches, medical facilities, and schools were badly damaged or destroyed.

According to assessment team member Jorge Lafitte, AFSC regional director of Latin America, the situation in Haiti is not like other disasters to which AFSC has recently responded. The destruction of the capital city and the collapse of the Haitian middle class, who sustain the country, make this very different.

However, some of the poorest areas in the city were not as greatly affected because buildings there are not large permanent structures and were not as lethal if they fell. People in these areas have slowly returned to informal systems of survival, and our team noted that there seemed to be little violence and looting.

A variety of makeshift solutions has developed from formal camps of 80,000–100,000 people to smaller groups of 700–1,000 banding together where they can. Some residents are camping in front of their destroyed homes. In talking with them, our team found that people hope they will reconstruct their houses and it is safer to stay close by.

Geri Sicola, associate general secretary for International Programs, was on

Right: A simple balloon lights up the face of an injured child the assessment team. While in Haiti, Geri was able to visit one of the three centers where AFSC is providing emergency



assistance to people living in a makeshift shelter on the grounds of a school. On that day more than 600 people were provided a meal. Our partner, Swiss Interchurch Aid, is using a private home's kitchen to produce the food, an example of the practical and generous gestures being made by so many Haitians in this crisis. The meals include rice, beans, and vegetables, and the ingredients are purchased locally or in the Dominican Republic, bolstering local economies.

Our assessment team found that the meals are costing less than anticipated. So, instead of providing 10,000 meals, AFSC's contribution may now fund 16,600.

The team also met with Handicap International, another partner agency. AFSC provided funds for shipping medical supplies and purchased vital emergency kits that include sheets, ropes, mats, water filters, jerricans, and kitchen utensils for their "roving" work in devastated neighborhoods.

We are hiring staff in Haiti to set up an office, coordinate with other organizations, and continue examining avenues for ongoing AFSC work. Other staff from the Latin America region or the central office in Philadelphia will make a follow-up trip in the near future.

Meanwhile, our offices in Miami, Fla., and Newark, N.J., continue their outreach to Haitians living in the United States to inform them of their temporary protected status (TPS). AFSC staff is coordinating with other groups and volunteers to help Haitians fill out applications correctly and avoid fraudulent offers of assistance.

We will continue to find ways to contribute to Haiti's recovery and will keep you posted on developments. Your support is gratefully received and we look forward to your continuing confidence in AFSC.

In addition to our direct response in Haiti, AFSC is helping immigrants, particularly in the Miami and New York metropolitan area. Both locations have significant numbers of Haitians who, under President Obama's recent decision, now qualify for Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for up to 18 months.

For ongoing news on AFSC's Haiti work, visit www.afsc.org/haiti, and see

pictures from Haiti on Flickr at
www.flickr.com/photos/45386997@N05/sets/72157623185029653/show/.

EFC-Eastern Region Haiti relief efforts

Evangelical Friends Church Eastern Region (EFC-ER), www.efcer.org, has seven affiliated churches in Haiti with around 2,500 attenders. EFC-ER's field director in Haiti and the Dominican Republic is William Bertrand, who served for a while as pastor for a Haitian Friends Church in Florida. The churches are more than thirty miles north of Port-au-Prince, so their main challenges have been shortage of food, water, and other supplies because of transportation difficulties. Since they provide material aid for their communities, this is a serious concern. Soon after the earthquake, EFC-ER sent \$15,000 to Haiti through World Relief, www.worldrelief.org, to fund three food-distribution centers that are feeding 5,000 people a day and to support a 300-bed hospital with three operating rooms. EFC-ER is posting bulletins about Haiti on its Web site, www.efcer.org.

The agencies that EFC-ER and AFSC have partnered with are part of InterAction, www.interaction.org, a coalition of 150 humanitarian organizations that offer disaster relief, refugee assistance, and sustainable development with a focus on the world's poorest and most vulnerable people.

Memorial for Harold Risler Orchard Park Meeting February 14, 2010, 2:00 P.M.

A memorial service for Harold Risler, member of Buffalo Monthly Meeting and former treasurer of NYYM, who died February 8, 2010, will be held on Sunday afternoon, February 14, at the Orchard Park Friends meetinghouse at 2:00 P.M. The address is 6924 E. Quaker Street (Rt.20 A), Orchard Park, NY 14127. For further information contact Rodney Pierce, clerk of Buffalo Meeting, at sparce7@verizon.net.

Ramallah Friends School Director Is Touring NYYM!

Joyce Ajlouny, director of Ramallah Friends School in the West Bank in Palestine, will make presentations to several meetings from February 10–17, 2010.

Joyce will speak about her experiences as an alumna, parent, and director of this school, which educates children from around the occupied territory.

Quakers have been educating children in Palestine since 1869, and the school has survived many wars and occupations, including a period of being used as a hospital during the First World War. Throughout its history, the staff and families of the school have remained resilient. Owned by Friends United Meeting (FUM) in Richmond, Indiana, the school is governed by a local board in partnership with FUM.

Donations to Ramallah Friends School and to Joyce's ministry account are welcome.

This is a very special opportunity. Please attend a presentation in your area!

Joyce's itinerary is:

Wednesday, February 10, Chatham-Summit Monthly Meeting. Presentation from 7:00–9:00 P.M., followed by dessert and coffee

Thursday, February 11 to Saturday, February 13, FUM board meetings, Powell House

Saturday, February 13, presentation from 3:00–5:00 P.M. at the Quaker Intentional Village Project, under the care of Old Chatham Monthly Meeting. Refreshments will be served, provided by OCMM.

Saturday February 13, 7:00–9:00 P.M., Albany Meetinghouse. Refreshments provided by Old Chatham Monthly Meeting.

Sunday, February 14, 11:30–12:55, Saratoga and Easton Monthly Meetings, at Saratoga

Sunday, February 14, 6:30–8:30 P.M., Purchase Monthly Meeting, potluck dinner and presentation

Monday, February 15, 6:30–8:30 P.M., Buffalo Monthly Meeting at Buffalo Network of Religious Communities

Tuesday, February 16, 1:15–3:15 P.M., Farmington Monthly Meeting, presentation to Farmington United Society of Friends Women International.

Tuesday February 16, 7:00–9:00 P.M., Burt House, Ithaca Monthly Meeting

Wednesday February 17, 1:30 to 3:30 P.M., Brooklyn Friends School

Wednesday, February 17, 7:00–9:00 P.M., Brooklyn Monthly Meeting

FCNL Seeks Candidates for Executive Secretary

Friends Committee on National Legislation is seeking a new executive secretary to replace Joe Volk, who is retiring in the spring of 2011. FCNL seeks

- inspired and inspiring leadership for the organization that fields the largest team of registered lobbyists working for peace
- a Quaker who can excite coalitions, constituents and donors
- a leader motivated to change national policies and reclaim the people's democracy
- a Spirit-led executive secretary with management competence.

The FCNL executive secretary and staff team are intensely engaged in crucial policy work in Washington. Joe Volk told the FCNL Annual Meeting that he sees more opportunity for change today than he has seen at any time in his 20 years of service with FCNL. The next executive secretary will lead FCNL at an exciting time when our lobbying and education work can make a real difference.

Applications will be accepted starting March 1, 2010. Applications should include a cover letter and résumé, sent to gretchenhall.search@gmail.com after March 1. The description is posted at www.fcnl.org/about/jobs.htm. The new executive secretary will begin service in the spring of 2011.

FCNL, 245 2nd St. NE, Washington DC 20012; 800-630-1330;
www.fcnl.org.

AFSC Seeks New General Secretary

The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) recently announced that it is seeking nominations and candidates for the position of general secretary. The general secretary is responsible for assuring that the programs and administration of the AFSC are focused, coherent, collaborative, and impactful, and that they are carried out in accordance with the values and spiritual insights of the Religious Society of Friends.

Nominations and inquiries can be sent directly to the General Secretary Search Committee clerk, Sam Lowe: sam_lowe@me.com. Letters of interest and résumés are due March 19. More information is available online at www.afsc.org/jobs.

Earthcare Working Group Outreach

Patricia Chernoff & Vitalah Simon, Earthcare Working Group

As we move into a new decade, the Earthcare Working Group, now under the care of Witness Coordinating Committee of New York Yearly Meeting, invites you to participate with us as we reorganize this working group. May we join together to meet the environmental crisis of our precious planet and to respond in unity in new directions for our Earth.

We know that you, as individuals and monthly meetings, are involved in this important work. What have you done recently? What are you currently doing? What's working? How can we combine our resources to support and encourage one another? We want to share your ideas, your successes and trials, your stories with other Friends. We know that together we can accomplish more.

We were inspired by the participation of the leaders of many nations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and private citizens at the Copenhagen Climate Summit, particularly the small island nations whose survival is already threatened by climate change. The unwillingness of the political leaders of industrialized nations to make deep commitments to emission targets only underscores the importance of our contribution as people of faith in building an Earth Community.

As Friends, we have a rich history of bringing about deeply needed social change. Let us rise to the call of our heritage.

All are invited to join this committee. Let us know what your vision might be for our work together.

We eagerly welcome your responses.

Patricia Chernoff, Morningside Meeting, clerk, patriciachernoff@verizon.net
Vitalah Simon, Purchase Meeting, assistant clerk, vitalah@verizon.net

Drawing from Deep Wells: CYF Winter Retreat Epistle

The Kingdom of Heaven did gather us, and catch us all, as in a net, and His heavenly power at one time drew many hundreds to land...the Lord appeared daily to us, to our astonishment, amazement and great admiration, insomuch that we often said to one another, with great joy of heart, "What? is the Kingdom of God come to be with men?"... —*Francis Howgill*

Dear Friends of Truth everywhere,

We write to you from the snowy midwinter of central New York State where Friends from across New York Yearly Meeting and the wider region have gathered to open ourselves to God's working in our hearts and among us as a community. We have been grateful to be a part of the opening chapter of the Young Friends in Residence (YFIR) program at Beloved Community House in Newfield, New York, and for the warm hospitality shown to us by the resident Friends here.

We were blessed to have with us Christopher Sammond, who led us in a number of practices that helped us to dig down to the Source of our life together and become grounded in a living experience of God's Spirit. Focusing around the theme, "Drawing From Deep Wells," we participated in guided meditation and group sharing, both in small groups and as a whole. We have been blessed by several Friends who served as spiritual elders, helping to ground the group in prayer. We are grateful for the faithfulness of Christopher and our elders in staying close to their Guide, trusting in the Spirit's moment-by-moment leading in adapting the program to be responsive to the way that the Comforter was working among us.

As we sought to open ourselves to the Inward Light and to one another, we often revealed aspects of our spiritual lives that we had not shared before. We found that it took great courage to share about our deepest spiritual experiences; but our courage was rewarded with a joy that passes understanding. We felt ourselves, in the words of Francis Howgill, caught up "as in a net," and drawn to the shores of God's transforming love. We were surprised by wonder, and sensed that something new is emerging in our lives, as individuals and as a group.

Perhaps most wondrous of our discoveries was that as we felt our hearts opened to relationship with our Creator, we were knit together as a community. While many of us knew each other well before this weekend, others of us were new to the Circle of Young Friends (CYF) community; and a number of others had been away from the community for many years. Whatever our past involvement with CYF, we experienced God doing a new thing among us during our time together. Just as the nets of God's love drew us to shore, they drew us closer to one another, as well.

As we conclude this brief but powerful opportunity for shared listening and growth in love, we feel a sense of excitement and hope. We feel inspired to reinvestigate the roots of the Quaker tradition and to learn more about

other Friends who have emphasizes different from our own. Many of us look forward to the gathering of Young Adult Friends that is to be held in Wichita, Kansas, over Memorial Day weekend, which promises to bring together a broad variety of Friends from across North America. We trust that the Spirit has more in store for us, and for the Religious Society of Friends, as we seek to be faithful to the God's guidance in our lives.

Your brothers and sisters in the love and light of the Spirit,

Friends gathered at Beloved Community House in Newfield, New York, First Month 8–10, 2010. [Approved 1/10/10]

World Ministries in the 21st Century

Newton Garver, coclerk, WMC.

The World Ministries Committee (WMC), which is part of the Witness Section, continues to spend time and effort wondering how to cope with the problems and opportunities of the 21st century. The issues have to do not only with meetings and records but also with mission and policy. The Committee asked me to bring NYYM up-to-date on our progress.

More than a year ago it became clear that the WMC's business could not be conducted effectively at NYYM sessions. Too many members of the Committee are also members of other committees, and as a result a quorum was almost never present for a meeting in conjunction with sessions. Having meetings at another time and place was deemed too awkward, and incompatible with earthcare witness. WMC therefore decided to try meeting by teleconference. While it is surprisingly tricky to find a time agreeable to all for an hour on the phone, that does seem to be working. Future meetings for deciding on the distribution of funds will therefore be by teleconference.

Meetings in conjunction with sessions will, however, not be dropped altogether. Even though they are not practical for decisionmaking, they do provide an opportunity for grant recipients to describe their work in detail, and members of WMC who are able to attend profit greatly from such meetings.

Meeting by teleconference creates new challenges about the distribution of requests and reports. In the past applicants have brought hard copies of these documents. Teleconferencing means that the documents need to be distributed electronically, and that WMC needs a software system for storing them and having ready access to them. We are working on that.

Having documents in electronic form means that some of our work can be posted on the NYYM Web site. Paul Busby informs us that there is plenty of space, and we hope to be able to begin posting material by the end of the year.

One more thing we have done has been to draft a statement of our mission, policies, and procedures. The draft follows. Friends should bear in mind that it is only a draft. It still needs seasoning by the Witness Coordinating Committee. To that end, any comments or suggestions the Friends have may be sent to the coclerks of WMC (Sue Weisfeld and me) and to the clerk of WCC (Fred Dettmer).

World Ministries Committee Mission, Policies, and Procedures

The NYYM World Ministries Committee (WMC), working with funds from bequests and the Sharing Fund, supports the ministry of NYYM Friends in the wider world. Persons or organizations applying for funds should write to us with a sense of ministry, that is, with a vision of what is to be done to spread the Quaker message of love in the wider world. Such persons should be members of NYYM, or the vision should be shared and endorsed by a meeting or organization within NYYM.

Funds available are between \$20,000 and \$25,000 annually. In considering the applications, WMC will focus on whether the proposed work is ministry and also whether it is in the wider world. Nonetheless there is a recognition that it is difficult to distinguish firmly and definitively between ministry and administration, or between ministry and service/development, and similarly difficult to distinguish between the wider world and pockets of oppression/poverty in the U.S.

Applications should be by letter, preferably electronic, to the clerk of the committee. The letter should say specifically what the funds are needed for as well as information about other expected sources of funding. Each application should designate someone as the main contact person for the project, and this person must have a specific connection to NYYM, usually through individual membership, and must accept responsibility for stewardship of any funds granted to the project.

The clerk will acknowledge applications and then distribute them electronically to members of WMC at least a week before scheduled meetings.

WMC plans to meet in May and November, normally by teleconference, to approve grants. When grants are formally approved, the clerk of WMC will notify the recipients of the action, inform them that checks for approved applications can be expected within six weeks, and ask that they acknowledge receipt of the check.

WMC needs to know how the funds are used. About nine months after the checks are sent out, the clerk will write to those recipients who have not yet sent in reports requesting where they are in the use of the funds received. Applicants will not receive further grants until reports are received.

The current clerks for WMC are Newton Garver (garver1928@aol.com) and Susan Weisfeld (sweisfeld@juno.com).

Prison Group Needs Native American Films.

Sybil Perry, clerk, Indian Affairs Committee

The Longhouse Group is a group for traditional Native American in prison who want to continue practicing their Native heritage and spirituality. The Sing Sing Longhouse group has requested a set of titles in VHS (only) format. These are titles that people may consider donating as they switch to more modern technologies such as DVDs.

Please ask people in your monthly meeting if they would consider donating any of these films to the Sing Sing Longhouse group. Please get the films to the next Indian Affairs Committee meeting or mail them to Sybil Perry (address in *Yearbook*).

The films are:

- *Apocalypto*
- *Black Robe*
- *Broken Arrow*
- *Broken Chain*
- *Clear Cut*
- *Dances with Wolves*
- *Lakota Woman*
- *Last of the Dogmen*
- *Last of the Mohicans*
- *Smoke Signals*
- *Squanto*

Other good titles with information on Native Americans would also be welcome.

Hands-on-Ernie Quilt

Tom Goodridge, Morningside Meeting

Morningside Meeting surprised Ernie Buscemi on December 20, 2009, by wrapping her in a "Hands-on Ernie" quilt to celebrate her three years as Clerk of NYYM. The quilt features a spiral of hand prints of Morningsiders cut from a deep blue fabric with specks of gold set against the raspberry color of the quilt. The First Day school created the quilt's cosmic background of dark swirls using action art after hearing the inspirational story *Born with a Bang: The Universe Tells Our Cosmic Story* by Jennifer Morgan with illustrations by Dana Lynne Andersen.



Christopher Sammond's Travel Calendar February 1 to March 31, 2010

February

- 1 Meet with YM clerk and assistant clerk, Maplewood, NJ
- 5 Visit Cayuga Worship Group, Cayuga Correctional Facility, Moravia, NY
- 11–13 Friends United Meeting General Board meeting, Powell House, Old Chatham, NY
- 13–14 Friends for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered and Queer Concerns Winter Gathering, Garrison NY
- 19–20 Meeting for Discernment, Purchase, NY
- 25 Meet with Liaison Committee, Pelham, NY
- 26–28 Lead Retreat for New Paltz MM, "Deepening the Spiritual Life of the Meeting," New Paltz, NY

March

- 5–6 Spiritual Nurture Working Group Annual Retreat, location TBD
- 6 General Services Coordinating Committee Meeting, Oakwood School, Poughkeepsie, NY
- 8 Meeting of general secretaries of BYM, NEYM, NYYM, PYM, Quaker House, New York, NY
- 14 Advancement Gathering, Poughkeepsie MM, Poughkeepsie, NY

- 21 Speak at Southern Cayuga County Ecumenical Gathering, Genoa, NY
 27–28 Lead retreat for Peconic Bay Executive Meeting, Shelter Island
 MM, and North Fork WG, “Members One of Another,” Wainscott
 Chapel, Wainscott, NY

**The Joy of Quaker Committees:
 Clerking and Working with Spirit**

Pendle Hill

February 12–14, 2010

Many of us have spent countless hours in Quaker committees. How often have these hours been tedious and draining? How often have they been energizing and joyful? What causes the first—and what creates the second kind of committee? What is the special role of the clerk? While the “nuts and bolts” of committee work will receive some attention, we will focus on setting a positive tone for that work—awakening to the Spirit and to Gospel Order. In this interactive weekend we will gather the collective wisdom of all who attend. If you care about discovering the joy of Quaker committees, you are welcome!

For further information see www.pendlehill.org, e-mail info@pendlehill.org, or call 800-742-3150.

Meeting for Discernment: An Invitation to Deep Listening

Janet Hough, clerk, Steering Committee for Meetings for Discernment

Learning to listen for the voice of God is a lifelong endeavor, because God communicates and guides with words that are not words, with sounds that are not ordinary sounds—in an interior, submerged landscape. As we seek to discern how we are led as meetings, how we are to go forward in faith together, our tradition and experience has shown us that we *can* hear God when we give over our willing and striving. God is reaching out to us in Love and inviting us to listen, follow, and serve in unity with Divine purposes.

*—from a retreat on Spirit-Led Discernment led by Deborah
 Fisch & Beckey Phipps for Purchase Quarter*

The next NYYM Meeting for Discernment will be held on February 20, 2010, from 9:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M., at the Purchase Meetinghouse. (Snow date: March 6, at the same time and place.) This will be a time for Friends to

consider, in particular, the nature of our meetings and worship groups as active faith communities. Representatives from the Yearly Meeting coordinating committees will be present to listen and to communicate the joys and concerns of monthly meetings to relevant committees under their care. For registration forms, directions, and further information go to www.nyym.org/events. NOTE: The registration deadline has been extended to Friday, February 12, for Friends not requiring childcare or hospitality. Advance registration enables the host committee to be sure there is enough food for everyone!

If you have questions, contact Janet Hough, janet.hough@verizon.net; 914-769-6885.

YFIR Winter Wonderland Retreat

Friends, join us in celebrating the snowy season at our Winter Wonderland retreat for children grades 6–9, February 19–21, 2010, Friday 6:00 P.M. to Sunday 1:00 P.M. at the Perry City Meetinghouse! We'll take advantage of the fun aspects of winter: sledding and making snow-people and anything else we can think of, while taking the time to wonder about the meaning of this time of year. How is our experience of winter different from the experience of those who lived a hundred years ago, or those who live in other parts of the world? We'll talk about what we do to keep from getting bored or depressed in the dark months, and explore how different plants and animals adapt to the cold weather, and sometimes rely on it. We'll spend plenty of time playing and exploring outside, followed by time drinking hot cocoa in front of the fire. We'll once again have Anna's tasty food and Franklin's bedtime stories, but we'll also welcome Natalie to the group. She just arrived from Ecuador, which has a very different winter experience from upstate New York, and she's a whole lot of fun.

For a registration form and further information contact Anna Obermayer, 599 Trumbulls Corners Rd. Newfield NY 14867-9475; oberman@earlham.edu.

Make sure to register by February 12!

There is no charge to go to a YFIR youth retreat although donations are always welcome.

The dates for other upcoming YFIR retreats are:
 March 12–14, 2010, Creating a Safe Space
 April 16–18, 2010, YFIR!? Because...

April 30–May 2, 2010, Living Planet
June 18–20, 2010, You Are What You Eat
August 6–8, 2010, H2Oh Yeaah!

Mark your calendars!

**The Family Friendly Meeting
with Christie Duncan-Tessmer**

Powell House

March 12–14, 2010

This weekend event is an opportunity for Friends to strengthen the community's welcoming of children and families and create structures that support their spiritual journeys. We'll explore the ways in which important aspects of meeting life such as worship, service, learning, fellowship, and fun can meaningfully include children and families. Friends will investigate what it means to include and nurture children, identify the signs that a meeting is welcoming of children and families, and gain knowledge and skills to help children and adults live in deep relationship together with God.

We seek to include all members of Meeting communities in looking at what it means in our hearts and in our actions to make space for living in the Center with children. To this end, the attendance of the *many* people in our Meetings who have the care of our children is encouraged. As children are members of our spiritual community, this includes meeting clerks and committee clerks and members, as well as parents and anyone who has a heart open to children.

The event begins Friday, March 12, at 6:00 P.M. and ends Sunday, March 14, at 2:00 P.M.

Christie Duncan-Tessmer is the associate secretary for Program and Religious Life at Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. Her understanding of the dynamics of including families in Quaker communities come from her personal experience being active in a monthly and yearly meeting as well as her professional experience.

Advancement—Worship & Work

Don Badgley, new clerk of the NYYM Advancement Committee, invites Friends to attend an Advancement Gathering at Poughkeepsie Meeting on First Day, March 14, 2010. We will worship with Poughkeepsie at 10:00 A.M. and then meet with the NYYM Advancement Committee at 11:30 A.M. Please bring a brown-bag lunch.

The Yearly Meeting *Handbook* has laid out our tasks as follows:

(1) to disseminate widely an awareness of the faith, practice, and testimonies of Friends and to encourage their observance by monthly, quarterly, and regional meetings and by members of the Yearly Meeting, (2) to reach out to seekers, (3) to knit Friends and Friends meetings more closely together, (4) to encourage outreach and growth in existing meetings, to undergird and strengthen weak meetings, and to help new worship groups.

Please let the NYYM office know if you plan to attend and if you need hospitality: office@nyym.org; 212-673-5750. Don Badgley's contact information is in the *Yearbook*.

FWCC 2010 Annual Meeting March 18–21, 2010, Reisterstown, Maryland

I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. *John 13: 34-35 (NRSV)*

Hosted by Friends in Baltimore Yearly Meeting, the Annual Meeting of the Friends World Committee for Consultation Section of the Americas will be held March 18–21, 2010, at the Pearlstone Conference and Retreat Center, 5424 Mount Gilead Road, Reisterstown, MD 21136, about 30 miles northwest of Baltimore-Washington International airport (BWI) and downtown Baltimore. Meetings, lodging and meals will all take place at this site. Pearlstone's Web site is <http://pearlstonecenter.org/>.

For information and to register, go to fwccamericas.org/events or contact FWCC, 1506 Race St., Philadelphia PA 19102; 215-241 7250; americas@fwccamericas.org.

Daphne Mason of Butternuts Meeting wrote a report on last year's annual meeting, which appears later in this issue.

NYYM, AFSC Cosponsoring Conscience in War Event

What happens when the country you have sworn to defend orders you to fight in a war that you believe is wrong?

New York Yearly Meeting and the New York Metropolitan Region of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) are cosponsors of the **Truth Commission on Conscience in War**, which will bring together community and religious leaders, advocacy groups and artists to explore moral and religious issues facing soldiers compelled to participate in war in violation of their consciences. The Truth Commission will hold a public hearing on Sunday, March 21, 2010, from 4 to 8 P.M., at Riverside Church, 490 Riverside Dr., New York, N.Y. 10027. At this hearing, recent veterans, military chaplains, religious leaders, and legal experts will testify about issues of morality, just war, military service, and the rights of conscience for our women and men in uniform. More information is available at www.conscienceinwar.org.

The Truth Commission is seeking additional religious and advocacy groups, which could include monthly and regional meetings, to become cosponsors, and has issued an open invitation to concerned persons to attend the public hearing. For more information about becoming a cosponsor or attending the public hearing, or if you have any questions about the Truth Commission, please feel free to contact Fred Dettmer (Purchase Monthly Meeting), fdettmer@aol.com or 914-738-8782 or 917-968-0369.

Imagine...

20 or so Friends—young, older, in between...

Sitting in a sunlit, full-windowed meetinghouse overlooking farms and fields...

Fireplace lit, songbooks scattered everywhere...

Friends bound together by the joy of music, the love of singing, picking from the books, their memories, or personal journals, the tunes of their joys, sorrows, and life adventures...

Song after song sung from the circle, each picking one and sharing the story (or not), setting the tempo and pitch...

Stir in community meals with shared job chores in local Friends' homes, wandering up or down the road to share the communion of Spirit and food...

Sprinkle in hospitality, camping, or a bedroll spread on the floor...

Add First Day worship in a rapidly growing meeting that has been so richly fed by this joyous nourishment...

Sweet goodbyes and hearty farewells until the next time, departing with the treasure of new friendship tucked in our heart pockets...

If this sounds like fun, come join the **"Nightingales"** once again at **Mohawk Valley Monthly Meeting, April 23 –24, 2010**. Continue your New Year with fun and music, company and Friendship. A potluck dish, a donation of \$10, and your joyful assistance are all it takes to fill a weekend with all these visions and more. Everyone is most welcome, regardless of singing ability. For our planning for meals and beds, we need you to make reservations with Walter Naegle at the YM office: walter@nyym.org or 212-673-5750.

Looking forward to new faces, new music, and new Nightingale adventures at Mohawk Valley Monthly Meeting April 23–25, 2010.

Young Adult Friends' Delegation to Israel/Palestine June 7–25, 2010

This June, there will be a two-week trip to Israel/Palestine sponsored by the Middle East Working Group of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting and the Friends International Center in Ramallah, and endorsed by the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC). This trip will offer a rich cultural experience, including home stays with Palestinian families, visits to historical, cultural, and religious sites, and meetings with nongovernmental organizations. The delegation will pursue a joint project with participants of the AFSC's Public Achievement youth program, which focuses on community organization, civic engagement, and leadership development.

The delegation is open to young adults (ages 18–35). Applicants must demonstrate a familiarity with Quakerism and a commitment to values congruent with the Peace Testimony.

Financial assistance will be available to help cover the estimated cost of \$3,000. Please contact Travis Green, travmagreen@gmail.com, with ques-

tions.

Rolling application deadline—more information and application can be found at: www.pym.org/education/yaf/ or contact Israel/Palestine Delegation, 1515 Cherry St., Philadelphia PA 19102; 215-241-7075.

Westtown School Summer Workcamps

Once again Westtown School is offering summer workcamps for young adults. In 2010 these include an Environmental Leadership workcamp and a Mexico Summer workcamp.

Environmental Leadership workcamp, June 18–20, 2010, is an experiential leadership program focusing on the big question: Can we design sustainable communities for our future? Participants will live and work together on the beautiful campus of Westtown School in southeastern Pennsylvania and have the opportunity to explore the social, economic, spiritual, and ecological issues and skills needed for developing sustainable life practices.

Mexico Summer workcamp, June 27–July 5, 2010, is an experiential, bio-regionally based educational program focusing on cloud forest conservation, sustainable development, and cultural exchange at Las Cañadas in Huatusco, Mexico. Up to 12 interested young adults will have the opportunity to work in an ecovillage setting, enjoy the beauty of the Mexican cloud forest, develop leadership skills, and forge enduring friendships as part of Westtown's sixth exchange with Las Cañadas. Workcampers enjoy a unique opportunity to learn about the natural and cultural history of the cloud forest, as well as contribute to exciting efforts to develop sustainable agriculture and forestry practices.

Complete information and registration forms are available at www.nyym.org/events or from Paula Kline, Westtown School, 975 Westtown Rd., West Chester, PA 19382-5700; 610-399-0123; www.westtown.edu/our_program/summer_workcamps.aspx, or e-mail kline.paula@gmail.com.

Quaker United Nations Summer School July 14–16, 2010, Geneva, Switzerland

The Quaker United Nations Summer School provides an introduction to the work of the United Nations, as seen through the programs of the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) in Geneva. QUNO works on disarmament and

peace, human rights and refugees, and global economic issues. During Summer School there will be talks by staff of the UN, nongovernmental organizations, and diplomatic missions, as well as informal discussion sessions and visits to the UN itself.

The work of some of the UN specialized agencies will also be examined, and where possible, visits will be arranged to, for example, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

The 2010 Summer School will be held from Sunday, July 4, to Friday, July 16. Participants will stay in single-sex dormitories at a hostel in Geneva. The hostel provides breakfast, packed lunch, and evening meal. Participants will be expected to share in some domestic duties involved in meal preparation for meals we have at Quaker House.

The participation fee is £490 (approx. \$789), which goes toward the costs of accommodation, program, and meals. Travel costs to Geneva and spending money are not included. Some suggestions on how to seek financial help will be provided if you are accepted.

We welcome applications from anywhere in the world. Applicants from outside the EU/Switzerland will need a visa, which QUNO will assist in applying for. No formal qualifications are necessary. However, an active interest in international affairs is needed, as well as the desire to share understanding with others.

Application forms are available from www.quaker.org.uk or from Helen Bradford, helenb@quaker.org.uk or on receipt of a large stamped addressed envelope or international reply coupon, from Helen Bradford, Quaker Peace & Social Witness (QUNSS), Friends House, 173-177 Euston Road, London, NW1 2BJ, UK.

Closing date for receipt of applications is March 15, 2010. Usually we receive more applications than there are places available. Letters informing applicants if they have been accepted will be sent out by the middle of April 2010.

Thoughts from ARCH: Help with Taxes

Anita Paul, Aging Resources Consultation & Help coordinator

By now we are all thinking of doing our taxes. Some of us will decided this year that we are no longer able, or confident of our ability, to do our taxes

ourselves. AARP has trained volunteers available in many localities to provide free and competent help to seniors to file state and local taxes. To locate that service in your area contact your local Office for the Aging, your local library, or the nearest AARP chapter. To get a phone number for the Office for the Aging in your county check your state's listing.

New York State www.aging.ny.gov/NYSOFA/LocalOffices.cfm

New Jersey www.njfoundationforaging.org

Connecticut www.ct.gov/agingservices/

Let's tell the world! Volunteers Needed to Write Press Releases

The NYYM Communications Committee is seeking to publicize important acts of witness done by the New York Yearly Meeting community of Friends and to communicate Quaker testimonies of peace, social justice, environmental stewardship, and other values when breaking national news or world events occasion a response.

Here is how you can help with this exciting work:

- Is there a Friend in your monthly meeting who can write? We need volunteers to write press releases.
- Are you or other Friends you know making your own Web sites, blogs, videos, or podcasts? You can also help the Yearly Meeting share the Light with these tools!
- Does your meeting already have relationships with contact people in your local print, broadcast, and online media outlets? Please share with us; we are compiling a contact list of local, state and regional media for use by the YM when a message needs to be localized.
- If your meeting's Peace and Social Action Committee will agree to handle distribution of NYYM press releases to your local media outlets, that, too, would be a great service.

As you can see, we want to take our candle out from under the bushel and let it shine to illuminate the world. If you have communication skills that can serve the Yearly Meeting by publicizing Friends' works and values, please let us know immediately!

Please contact Adam Segal-Isaacson, clerk, Communications Committee, a.segal@elsevier.com.

Casa de los Amigos Partners with UNHCR

In October 2009, the Casa de los Amigos (Friends' House) signed a landmark Agreement of Cooperation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Mexico. The agreement *permanently reserves two rooms* in the Casa de los Amigos for recent refugees and those seeking asylum in Mexico.

The Casa de los Amigos is a Quaker center for peace and international understanding in Mexico City. The Casa was established as a Mexican non-profit organization in 1956 by the Quaker community in Mexico, and its work is rooted in Friends' values. Through its programs, community space, and social and cultural activities, the Casa fosters understanding between groups and individuals, and supports the human dignity of every person. The Casa maintains a peace-and-social-justice-oriented guest house that is open to all. For more information about the Casa's work and how to visit, please go to www.casadelosamigos.org.

When you visit the Casa's Web site, be sure to click on the link to read the Winter 2010 issue of their newsletter.

Update: As of February 9, 2010, the Casa is housing six **refugees from Haiti**. They arrived to the Casa via one of the Casa's partner organizations, Sin Fronteras, www.sinfronteras.org.mx. Because of the magnitude of the disaster in Port-au-Prince, the Casa expects to receive more families throughout the spring.

Chappaqua Christmas Pageant

Ruth Matthews Chappaqua Meeting

The First Day school at Chappaqua meeting held their annual Christmas pageant on January 10, 2010, after meeting for worship, to the delight of all who attended. (The originally scheduled date in December had to be postponed due to snow.) The pageant was followed by a social hour featuring holiday baked goods and much merriment. The First Day school also plans to have a talent show on February 28, featuring many musical, comic, and theatrical talents, to help raise money to send to Haiti. Truly an event to look forward to!

General Secretary's Report to Fall Sessions

The following is a reconstruction of the oral portion of the General Secretary's Report to Fall Sessions. The written version follows.

First of all, I want to thank all those Friends who held me in prayer this summer as I dealt with the death of my brother, Lyme disease, and moving, all at once. I felt carried on a cloud of prayer, and don't know how I could have gotten through that time as I did without that very palpable support. Anyone who might doubt the power of prayer would only have to go through an experience of that kind of support to know its reality. Thank you.

I have been extremely grateful for the incredible level of financial support for this Yearly Meeting. Nonprofits are currently facing, on average, a 40% gap between income and expenses. The fact that we are only facing a 5–6% gap shows a remarkable level of support. Thank you.

Since the beginning of the economic downturn, I have been pondering matters of money and the Spirit, the spiritual dimension of our financial life. I have been acutely aware of how our monthly meetings have been working with issues around money. I have been witnessing many monthly meetings moving incrementally along a continuum from a place of passively receiving funds towards active fundraising. Many monthly meetings, when I first started here, did not talk about money much. I think that has something to do with our demographics and social norms; it's not polite to talk about money. It stretches us some.

Incremental changes I can note at various monthly meetings, moving along this continuum, include, for the first time: sending out a letter asking for funds; checking in at meeting for worship with attention to business once or twice a year as to how the monthly meeting is doing regarding the budget; sending out several letters in the course of a year asking for support; checking in monthly as a body as to how well the budget is being supported; and holding one or more fundraising events. What I have heard back from our communities that have become more proactive is that this has led to a greater sense of empowerment, agency, and deeper community. That it has in fact in some cases even been transformative for the meeting community.

At Budget Saturday I watched with great interest as we as a body went

back and forth between a sense that we needed to cut to the bone, and beyond, to create a balanced budget, and a sense of "We can do this! We can raise the money to support work that is vital to the health and growth of this Yearly Meeting." We went back and forth many times between these two different ways of holding the question of how to deal with this budget gap.

I talked later with one Friend who was there to hold the meeting as we worked, and she had the image come to mind of a little bonsai tree, and the sense that we were trying to decide whether to take it out of the pot to trim its roots, or whether to plant it. For those of you who aren't familiar with bonsais, you trim their roots to keep them small. You do it to keep them as this cute little plant. You do it to keep them the same. Small. Manageable.

Since I have been here I have witnessed several monthly meetings dwindle down to almost nothing, and then find rebirth. Part of this process has been in shrinking down so far, they become released from any need to preserve the present or re-create the past. They can grow and flourish as something new.

Have we dwindled enough, have we trimmed our roots enough, to welcome change and growth, to become something new?

I see a connection between this phenomenon of shrinking to a point of being able to become something new, and then growing, and our budget and the programs it supports. Systems theory postulates that all systems resist change. That is the nature of any system. And yet any growth necessitates changes on many levels. Could it be that it is more comfortable for us to keep trimming the roots than to embrace change?

We say we want to grow. We are invested in that. And yet there are many groups who are trying to be a part of us who are finding that terribly difficult. Young adult Friends are having a very hard time staying with us. I have been asked if there is any way to join Quakers without joining a monthly meeting, because that Friend really liked Quakers, but just can't seem to find a way into her monthly meeting. I have had Christ-centered Friends tell me that they feel marginalized and unwelcome in their meetings. When this yearly meeting reunited in 1955, it was about 60% Orthodox, Christian Quakers. Now I would guess that number to be about perhaps 15–20%. And we as a body are not making it easy for those who are left, to stay. Is this who we want to be?

Formerly incarcerated Friends, who have worshipped as a part of us for 20, 25 years or more, tell me that they are not feeling welcomed in our monthly meetings. While incarcerated, I hear that because we did not ask them to join us, they assumed that we might not want them to. One formerly incarcerated man, a member of one of our worship groups for many years, told me "Friends never asked me to join them. The Presbyterians did. So I'm a Presbyterian now."

Friends of Color are having a hard time staying a part of us. Friends of limited financial means are speaking out about how hard they find it to be a part of us. Friends with lots of financial resources are also feeling unwelcome, hearing lots of comments denigrating people of means. And those few Friends whose politics are to the right of very liberal are also finding it terribly difficult to stay with us, persistently facing assumptions about who "we" are that leave them out.

We say we want to grow, but many of those who want to be a part of us are finding it very hard to do so.

Who we are is not defined by some narrow set of social norms. We are defined by the core experience of the spark of the Divine within each of us, not by such externals.

How we limit ourselves in our unconscious self-definition, and how we limit ourselves financially, at all levels of our Society, are two ways we are trimming the roots, avoiding change.

Let us stop trimming the roots, and plant this tree by Living Water, that it may grow!

General Secretary's Report Fall Sessions 2009

At a time when we are facing a serious budget crunch, I think it is a good moment to review how we are doing in general, and to reassess our priorities. The charge given in 1999 to the Ad Hoc Committee on the Function of New York Yearly Meeting was "to discern how the organization of New York Yearly Meeting can best participate in the continuing renewal of the local meetings, the quarterly and regional meetings, and the Religious Society of Friends as a whole." How well have we been doing this work? What could and should we be doing better? The answers to these questions may influence budget decisions this year, and possibly redirect some of our ef-

forts in the years to come.

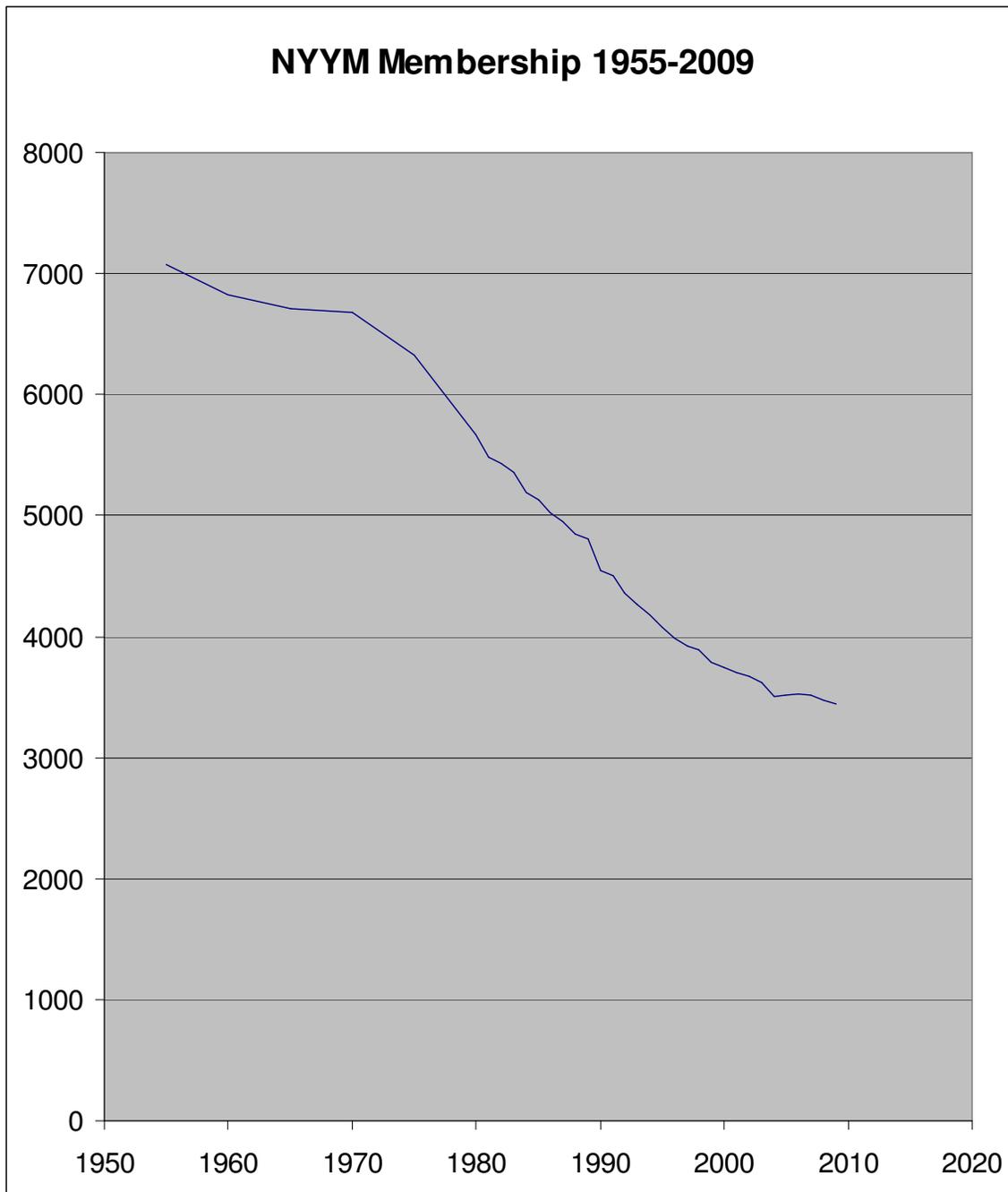
In looking at how we are doing, I have focused on membership, attendance, how much energy there has been for new initiatives, spiritual vitality, relative ease or difficulty in finding nominees to support the work, and financial support. Some of this examination will be quite subjective, and may open the door to fruitful discussion.

Membership

First, a note about how we count membership: Looking at membership numbers is far from an exact science. Yearly Meeting staff compiles data given to us by our monthly meetings. Some years, some monthly meetings do not offer us revised numbers. There are also times when the report from a monthly meeting does not reconcile with their report from the previous year. These times are noted with footnotes.

We also have many Friends who, though they are no longer worshipping with us, still find meaning in being considered a part of their monthly meeting, visiting on rare occasions, and frequently contributing funds for its support. Adult Friends who have grown up in a meeting and have moved away and Friends who have retired elsewhere make up most of this group.

Some monthly meetings also have Friends on their rolls who have not been in contact for a considerable time. Some of our meetings have sought to reach out to such Friends on their rolls, to see if they still wish to be included. Other meetings have not done so. It is virtually impossible for us to know just how much of this "dead wood" there is on our membership rolls. Even coming up with criteria for determining who does and who does not constitute "dead wood" would be difficult. It is equally difficult to know if there were similar amounts of "dead wood" in 1955, 1975, and 1995. Trying to ascertain what is an accurate baseline is less fruitful than looking at the change from one year to the next. In doing so, I am assuming a comparable amount of "dead wood" in all the years on the following chart.

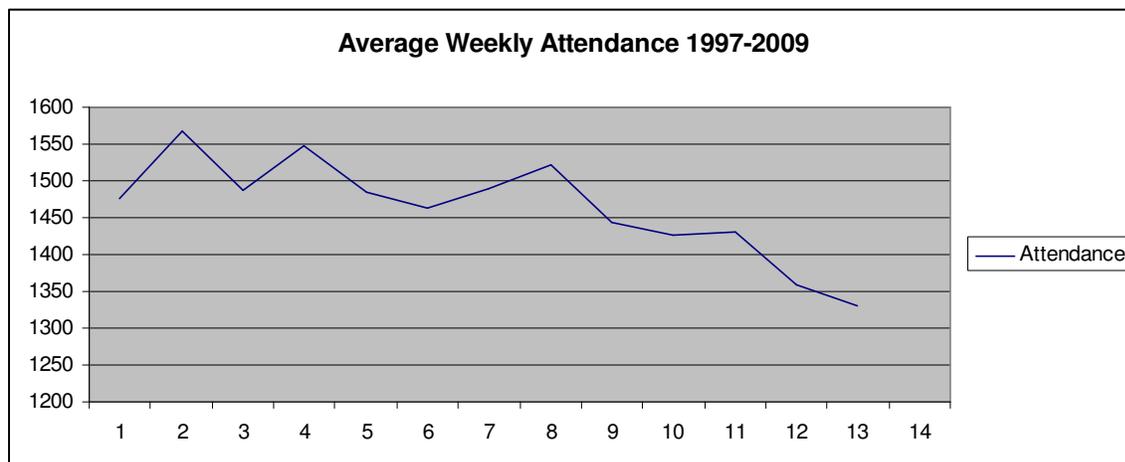


As you can see from this chart, we are still declining in membership, though the rate of decline has decreased markedly, almost leveling off. While I would obviously prefer growth instead of decrease, the change in rate is moderate good news, and I hope the bottom of a parabolic curve about to ascend again.

Attendance

Our monthly meetings also report average attendance on First Days. In many respects, this is a much more useful indicator of how we are doing

than membership numbers. The following chart graphs our reported average attendance from 1997 to the present:



In some ways, this chart paints a more negative picture than is accurate. In 2005, point 9 on this chart, we started counting attendance at Nine Partners monthly meeting/Lyall Federated Church differently. Before that time, we had counted all in attendance at worship. After that time, we counted only those attending who named themselves as Friends. This change resulted in a reduction of about 75 Friends, more than half of the drop in the last thirteen years.

That factor aside, our attendance had been oscillating up and down within a certain range, not a cause for concern. The last few years' data show a decrease that goes outside that range. This decline in attendance causes me much greater concern than our numbers on membership. If we did not have new people coming in, I would be even more concerned. But half of the monthly meetings and worship groups which shared a state of society report last year reported newcomers, new attenders, and/or new members. Conditions vary widely from meeting to meeting, but I feel that it is fair to state that we need to address retention significantly more than we need to ramp up our efforts at outreach.

Part of that effort needs to be becoming aware of how we are making it hard for some of those who would like to be with us, to do so. In the past year, I have heard from young adult Friends, Christ-centered Friends, Friends with political views to the right of center, formerly incarcerated Friends, and Friends of Color that they are all having difficulty finding a way to be a part of our monthly meetings. I have heard from Friends of lesser economic means that they are struggling to be active in the work of the Yearly Meeting. Each one of these is troubling in itself, but taken in aggre-

gate, they paint a picture of a Society that is more closed than open. I am sure that that is not what any of us wants. What do we need to address to change this?

New Initiatives

One way of gauging the vitality of a group is to look at how much energy it has for new initiatives. When I consider the initiatives of just the last few years, I am deeply impressed by what Friends in this Yearly Meeting have been faithful to. Here is a sampling. Perhaps you can add more:

- The Aging Resources Consultation and Help (ARCH) program started up.
- The Spiritual Nurture Working Group was formed, and created an upcoming series of retreats.
- Collaborations are under way with AVP and AFSC on prison ministry.
- The Personnel Committee is in the process of a total revision of the *Personnel Handbook*.
- We began sending peacebuilding and humanitarian aid to Friends in the Republic of Georgia.
- We started new worship groups at Gouvenuers and Cayuga Correctional Facilities and the Bedford-Stuyvesant Worship Group at the Redemption Center.
- We rekindled the worship group at Dansville, NY, and are increasing the number of worships per month at Sullivan and Woodbourne Prison Worship Groups.
- The Communication Committee is in the process of constructing a new Web site.
- The Young Friends in Residence Program was envisioned and made a reality.
- The new Youth Committee has taken on the work recommended by the Task Group on Youth.
- The Financial Services and Communication Committees collaborated with staff to better communicate the substance of the work done at a YM level.
- The First Day School Working Group formed and is up and running.
- The new Ministry and Pastoral Care Committee has been formed and starting its work.
- Spring and Fall Sessions youth groups have become a part of our practice, supported by JYM.
- We began holding Meetings for Discernment.

Spiritual Vitality

This facet of our collective condition is the most subjective and hardest to quantify. It is obviously expressed through all the other facets. My personal sense, informed by others' subjective comments, is that we are growing significantly, both as individuals and as a body, in depth and faithfulness. The Spiritual Nurture Task Group noted a sense of increased spiritual vitality and community as a result of the Drawing Out Gifts series, and that this spiritual charge has diminished some over time. With that in mind, they have created a series of eight retreats designed to nurture those Friends enlivened by the first series, as well as welcoming in Friends who were not a part of that experience.

Friends' Willingness to Be Nominated

The current clerk of our Nominating Committee told me that despite shrinking economic resources of individuals, monthly meetings, and Yearly Meeting committees, she has experienced the same level of willingness, or better, by Friends asked to serve. She tempered this by saying that it is hard to separate Friends' willingness from the benefit of having committee members who are good at recognizing the gifts of Friends and inviting them to share those gifts. She said that the nominating process has also been helped by more committees doing work via conference call when possible.

One area she said she hopes we can improve upon is in nominating our younger Friends to committees. Three-year terms are difficult for Friends in high school and college to commit to.

Financial Support

Nonprofits are facing an average shortfall of 40%. At Budget Saturday, we were facing a shortfall of about 5%. I have been moved by the degree of support that I have heard from our monthly meetings. Many have dug deep and stretched mightily. Some have done fundraisers in order to honor their covenant donation. Some have even gone back and increased that amount in response to the request from Financial Services.

I have heard great appreciation from Friends for the work of Financial Services in creating a project-based budget. They have commented that that approach, in conjunction with the standard budget spreadsheets, has given them a greater understanding of where the money goes than they ever had before. Without this work, I don't think that we would be in as good a financial position as we are right now.

Conclusions

Despite some reduction in numbers, we have greatly expanded the work we have been called to, addressing our need to deepen spiritually, to care for our children, young adults, and aged Friends, to be faithful in our witness, and to work toward bridging the gap between our monthly meetings and the Yearly Meeting. We are continuing to lay the crucial foundations for growth in depth as well as numbers, and we are doing that work well. And we have done this while keeping the budget relatively flat since 2005.

And there is much yet to do. In my 2006 report to summer sessions, I named six areas to which we needed to give significant attention:

1. Closing the divide that separates monthly meetings from the Yearly Meeting organizational structure.
2. Coming to a unified, clear vision of who we are, where we are going, and why.
3. Passing on the substance of our faith to our children.
4. Becoming more skillful at resolving conflict.
5. Better welcoming and integrating the newcomers who are joining us.
6. Addressing the spiritual nurture of existing Friends.

We have done some work in all these areas, and yet I see all of these needs to still be somewhere between a state of “pressing” and “quite urgent.” Of these needs, I see bridging the monthly meeting/Yearly Meeting gap, coming to a common vision, and developing a coordinated and coherent approach to how we nurture our children and youth, to be our greatest priorities.

We have this budget year, and perhaps one other, to take a really hard look at how we are addressing the above needs, and to make some substantive changes, not just tweaking what we are already doing. This year’s budget is bolstered by many one-time adjustments that we cannot repeat next year. Even if the economic recovery proceeds well, it will be two years or so before most nonprofits will feel the benefit of that. We cannot assume much rosier conditions in the economy for our budget a year from now, or even in two or three. We cannot continue our present course without some substantial changes in how we raise money and how we spend it.

I see this budget crunch as a real opportunity for us to look at our priorities, break out of our unconscious attachment to the ways things are, and to look afresh at how God is leading us in our work together. We have just a little breathing room in which to come to a unified vision of our work as a

body, a vision that is well connected to, and supported by, our constituent monthly meetings, and to develop the fundraising mechanisms to adequately support that vision. If we do this well, it will build community, and release untapped energy as well as the financial resources to do the work that God calls us to do.

Report from 2009 FWCC/SOA Annual Meeting Diversity is Beautiful

Daphne Mason, Butternuts Meeting

How can we explain the sense of fullness we receive from being together at these annual meetings? Next annual meeting there is an opportunity for you to see for yourself. We are from many different styles of worship and from many different ways of thinking theologically. We are one in diversity.

The 2009 Annual Meeting of the Friends World Committee for Consultation Section of the Americas took place south of Portland in Canby Grove, Oregon. The Quakers have been in the northwest since 1847, when friends brought nursery stock to the area by oxen over the Oregon Trail. The Pacific Northwest is home to independent, nonpastoral, pastoral, and evangelical meetings. Some refer to their places of worship as meetinghouses and some call them churches. This was an opportunity for worship and fellowship with the wider Quaker world.

The theme of the Meeting was: Then the Lord answered me and said: Write the vision; make it plain on tablets So that a runner may read it For there is still a vision for the appointed time. (Habakkuk 2:2–3)

What is the vision? How do we respond to the prompting of the spirit? We met each day in small groups and discussed: Does the Religious Society of Friends have a prophetic vision from God? What is the vision that God has entrusted to Quakers? How can the vision be conveyed on our times?

Jan Wood gave the keynote address. She is a former pastor, teacher, and minister and has authored several books on discernment and spiritual direction. She spoke of God's showing Habakkuk the way the world works. Those who put themselves into degradation will find themselves empty. There are those who seek to define others through race or status. We need to stand and walk together. Let us dance the dance of respect and independence and break through our separateness. The world is broken. We need to expand beyond our like-minded groups. Move beyond our wants and comforts. Confront our fears. Stop hiding behind our well-crafted right-

ness. The world is shifting beneath our feet. FWCC needs to discern its vision. Forgive one another. Often there are harshness and strife among us. Division happens because often fear overwhelms our good judgment. We are called to love everyone all the time. The vision from FWCC needs to be love. We need reconciliation. We are never free as long as we define ourselves in opposition. We need to listen together around healing. God calls us to light our ocean of darkness. Jan was reminded at the end of her talk of the hymn by Robert Jackson, "Breathe on Me Breath of God."

Friends were brought together across traditions and national borders, and a feeling of spiritual renewal was evident to us.