

**Minutes of the 313th Session  
Summer 2008  
Silver Bay, N.Y.**

**Sunday, July 20, 2008; 6:45 P.M.**

*Ernestine Buscemi, Clerk*

*Lee Haring, Assistant Clerk*

*Elaine Learnard, Recording Clerk*

*Jeffrey Aaron, Reading Clerk*

2008-07-01. Friends—children and adults—gathered for the first meeting of Summer Sessions to begin our week of work and play and worship together. Ernestine (Ernie) Buscemi (Morningside), clerk of New York Yearly Meeting (NYYM), welcomed us to the 313th annual sessions. She shared a childhood memory of sitting in the balcony watching “the backs of all those heads” as she learned to watch and listen and become a part of her faith community. Later, she came to understand that the backs of those heads were listening to her, too. She invited all of us, of every age, to take that trip together across the generations and be welcomed into community. She reminded us that in seeking a way forward to God and each other, we don’t know where God is going to take us, but we have said “yes” just by our presence.

2008-07-02. Beginning with a brief reflection on the roll call as a joyful greeting to one another, Jeffrey Aaron (New Brunswick) read the names of monthly meetings and worship groups, by regional meeting. Friends rose in response.

2008-07-03. Out of the silence, Rima Segal (Rochester) rose and invited the young children to join her on the stage, so they could be part of a conversation and would be able to see the pictures when she read a story. She talked about the “big word” *theology* and explained that it means what we believe, know, and think about God. All our lives we are on a journey to understand God; everybody knows a little bit and nobody knows it all. She reminded us of the end of the story about Noah and the Ark, how God put his rainbow in the sky as a promise to all of us that there would not be such a great flood again and that He would always be there for us. Then she read a book [*No One Can Ever Steal Your Rainbow* by Barbara Meislin, illustrated by Helen Webber, published by Purple Lady Productions, 2005] written in rhyme about somebody who was always expecting a special message in the mailbox from a secret friend. But when first the mailbox and then a rainbow sign are each stolen, it turns out that “the secret friend is me” and all you need is in your own heart. Rima led us in singing a song: “No one can ever steal your hope, when it is there in your heart it’s there to stay... No one can ever steal your rainbow, when there’s love in your heart it’s there to stay.” Rima gave each of the children rainbows and Friends settled back into silence.

2008-07-04. The Clerk spoke about the week ahead, asking that we hold in our hearts the knowledge that we will have ample time together for worship, whether in worship-sharing groups, in meetings for worship with attention to business, or whenever two or more are gathered. We will also have something new: meeting for business will conclude with community worship from 12 to 12:15 and all, of all ages, are welcome. Michael Clark (Old Chatham) and

Christine DeRoller (Old Chatham), codirectors of the Powell House Youth Program, will bring the message to the plenary on Monday evening. Eden Grace, of Friends United Meeting (FUM), whose work in Kenya is well known to Friends, will be the Bible Study leader, giving us a chance to get to know her better. The Clerk asked first-time attenders to stand to be welcomed. She reminded us that new friends need to find their space just as we all did but that we can be helpful by making space for them, seeking them out to join us in a meal or a walk or a conversation. She also reminded us that even though we are guests “who know where the comfortable shoes are,” we must remember to be respectful of our hosts at Silver Bay, and of their guidelines and requirements.

2008-07-05. Lee Haring (Bulls Head-Oswego), assistant clerk of the Yearly Meeting and clerk of the Meetings for Discernment, explained the meeting to be held on Tuesday, which will be the work of that full day. We will meet in extended worship on the basis of silence, share our leadings and concerns and those of our meetings and regions, and perhaps make recommendations for further action and follow-up. With three meeting times, in the morning, afternoon, and evening, he expects that people will attend when they can, as they can. He told us that he had immediately been reminded, on his arrival here today, as he saw Friends greeting one another with shouts across the room, huge hugs, and rapt conversation, of the tremendous sense of connection we have to each other. Noting that the depth and sense of reverence at the Meeting for Discernment in March 2008 was unlike anything he had ever known before, with these Meetings we have embarked on a powerful way to deepen those connections.

2008-07-06. Martha Gurvich (Wilton), clerk of Junior Yearly Meeting (JYM) Committee, introduced Amy White (Quaker Street) and Jennifer Lindop (Saratoga), JYM coordinators. Amy introduced the volunteers who will be working with our children.

2008-07-07. The Clerk rose again and began the now-familiar “God is good...all the time” call-and-response; the body responded. She told us that one piece of preparation she always does before our meetings is to ask God for the time we need and the spaciousness we may need to take. Each time she is given the answer: we will take and we will have as much time as is needed. We can rest in that.

2008-07-08. The meeting ended with a brief period of worship.

**Monday, July 21, 2008; 10:15 A.M.**

*Ernestine Buscemi, Clerk*

*Lee Haring, Assistant Clerk*

*Elaine Learnard, Recording Clerk*

*Jeffrey Aaron, Reading Clerk*

2008-07-09. Friends gathered in silent worship. Out of the silence, the reading clerk read a memorial minute for George R. McClure, who died on November 3, 2007, just short of his 86th birthday. George served as a B-24 aircraft navigator during World War II, earned a degree in mechanical engineering following the war, and married Madeline Katherine Schwing in 1948. They raised three daughters. Making his living as an engineer, he was valued for his integrity and

honesty in his business dealings and was relied upon for practical experience and the ability to get things accomplished. In 1970, George became a member of Montclair Friends Meeting, where Madeline had become a member earlier. He served that meeting as clerk and in several other significant positions. He also served the New York Yearly Meeting as clerk of General Services, as clerk and then member of the New York Yearly Meeting trustees, and as a board member for the McCutchen Yearly Meeting Friends Home. In all his work for meetings, he was relied upon for his meticulous attention to detail. His deep spirituality and aura of profound contemplative stillness were part of what made him a source of grounding for others. He treated all he met with the utmost gentleness and respect. Friends quietly sat in reflection and spoke of George with gratitude.

2008-07-10. The Clerk welcomed us again to our corporate journey, a process of surrender to the highest nature, the one Light. She introduced those at the clerks' table.

2008-07-11. Ernie asked visitors to sign in with the Yearly Meeting conference office, and noted that there will be a formal welcome at Wednesday's meeting for business. The Clerk asked visitors to stand so that Friends could see their faces and welcome them, saying that our visitors are members of our community when they are here with us.

2008-07-12. Peter Frisch (Brooklyn) and Maia Murdock (Rockland) of the 7th and 8th grade group of JYM reported the names of those absent from JYM this morning. Peter said that the groups were introducing themselves and getting to know each other, and look forward to an exciting week. Maia told us that their group would be doing original play this morning.

2008-07-13. The clerk and assistant clerk left the clerks' table, so that Julia Giordano (Bulls Head-Oswego), Steven W. Ross (Shrewsbury), and John Perry (Bulls Head-Oswego) could read the State of the Society report for 2007. The Ministry Coordinating Committee had asked meetings how the Spirit was moving among us, and the meetings' responses reflected a process of thoughtful searching, whether reporting on joys or struggles. There were 63 State of the Meeting reports prepared out of a possible 91, ten more than had been received the previous year.

2008-07-14. Christopher Sammond (Bulls Head-Oswego), NYYM general secretary, offered a message with other thoughts on the state of our Yearly Meeting. He began with a quote from Rabbi Hillel:

If I am not for myself, who is for me?  
If I am only for myself, what am I?  
And if not now, when?

Christopher sees us at a place of pausing, assessing direction, seeking guidance; as we focus less on our internal frictions, we are having more energy to hold questions about how we are called. He has heard from many in this and other Quaker bodies—from adults, youth, and young adults—an upwelling of concern for our current situation in the world and a need to be of service and to bear witness, but also a concern about lacking clarity in finding the right path. We need to *be* with the question “What are we trying to create?” so that less of our energy can go to self-

preservation and working against what is wrong in our world, and more to building up the future we want for ourselves.

At the recent pastors' retreat, the question "What is the charism of your Yearly Meeting?" was raised. Christopher sees in NYYM the embodiment of what Jakob Böhme named "the fiery, creative principle" which, when combined with love, creates astonishingly good fruit. But Christopher said this passion could also be compared to a steam pipe that can deliver great useful energy, but do great harm when that energy leaks out unintendedly. He spoke of the need for inclusion of all those with new energy. He asked that we consider how we can include, for instance, those who look different from us, those who have different theology, those who have been incarcerated, those new to the meeting, those who are younger and those less experienced. He asked that we consider them in the nomination process and in all the work and life of our monthly meetings, making ourselves not a private club but an open circle.

Christopher went on to name some best practices of monthly meetings that are growing:

- joining of advancement and work in the world
- willingness of individuals to take action
- willingness of community to eagerly use the gifts of newcomers
- attentiveness to spiritual grounding
- good clerking and process in business
- individuals who have energy to welcome others into the life of the community
- sense of calling, direction
- energy to start somewhere, anywhere, and get going
- willingness to stick to our practice over the long haul, even when it is difficult

Christopher ended with lyrics by the civil rights leader Ella Baker (from "Ella's Song" as sung by Bernice Johnson Reagon):

To me young people come first, they have the courage where we fail  
And if I can but shed some light as they carry us through the gale

The older I get the better I know that the secret of my going on  
Is when the reins are in the hands of the young, who dare to run against the storm

Not needing to clutch for power, not needing the light just to shine on me  
I need to be one in the number as we stand against tyranny

Struggling myself don't mean a whole lot, I've come to realize  
That teaching others to stand up and fight is the only way my struggle survives

Friends responded, speaking of the need to know of and prepare the tools and the metaphors and how to pass them on.

2008-07-15. The minutes of the Sunday evening session and this morning's session were read and approved. We were joined by young people from Junior Yearly Meeting, and the meeting closed in community worship.

**Wednesday, July 23, 2008; 10:15 A.M.**

*Ernestine Buscemi, Clerk*

*Lee Haring, Assistant Clerk*

*Melanie-Claire Mallison, Recording Clerk*

*Norma Ellis, Reading Clerk*

2008-07-16. Friends gathered in worship. Out of the silence, Norma Ellis (Scarsdale) read a memorial minute on the life of George A. Badgley (October 26, 1909–February 26, 2008). George grew up on a farm with six siblings and much love. His life-long activity in Quakerism was a blessing to many, including young adult Friends, Oakwood Friends School, Powell House, Poughkeepsie and Butternuts Monthly Meetings, American Friends Service Committee, Five Years Meeting (now Friends United Meeting), and as NYYM field secretary—the “endless committees.” His passion for healing the Orthodox-Hicksite separation served him well when George played an integral part in clerking the first joint sessions of New York Yearly Meeting at Silver Bay during the 1950s. Even in retirement, George's active nurturing of his children, family, friends and Friends, inmates, potatoes and parsnips, proved his capacity for love. The energy and poetry of George's life will be long remembered. Friends spoke to George's dedication, his deep and continuing impact on our world, his strong hands, and his profoundly good company.

2008-07-17. Ernie introduced those at the clerks' table. JYM participants Mahasin Abashar, Patrick Connelly (Poplar Ridge), Willow Denison, and Ella Mattson (Brooklyn), from the K-1 Group, took turns reading the names of those missing from JYM today. They also told us of finding a bird's nest with baby birds in it.

2008-07-18. Ernie noted it's Wednesday, and time to check in, making sure we are taking care of ourselves. She reviewed today's agenda, items which reflect our connections with the world and items which speak to our relationships with each other.

2008-07-19. Nancy Britton (Morningside) read the March 2008 epistle from Denmark Yearly Meeting. Their deliberations were guided by a concern for the Earth and the need for an immediate response to the many provocations against Muslims in the Danish press. They experienced their sessions as steps toward “healing internally and externally.”

2008-07-20. The reading clerk introduced Kirsten Richardson, American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) director of Friends Relations (Chatham-Summit); Sybil Brennan, assistant clerk, Southeastern Yearly Meeting (Gainesville); Janice Domanik, Friends General Conference (FGC) Committee for Ministry on Racism (Lake Forest, Illinois YM); Vanessa Julye, FGC staff visitor (Central Philadelphia, Philadelphia YM [PYM]); Erin McDougall, PYM and Canadian

YM (Central Philadelphia, PYM); and George Owen, FGC Yearly Meeting Visitors Program (Milwaukee Friends, Northern YM). We also welcomed Christine (Chrissi) Rizzo, AFSC-Syracuse and Tim Barner, staff member, Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL).

2008-07-21. The reading clerk read a minute of travel for Kristina Keefe-Perry (Rochester), who travels with a concern for fostering and strengthening connections among Friends, and in the world, with the Spirit, most especially with regard to earthcare. Kristina spoke to her traveling as an elder and companion. Friends approved our Clerk endorsing Kristina's minute, which also asks to hear of our experiences with this Friend's visit. The Clerk will gather any comments she receives and share those with Rochester Friends Meeting.

2008-07-22. The reading clerk read a minute of travel for Callid Keefe-Perry (Rochester), who travels with a concern to foster and strengthen connections among Friends and with the Spirit, with a particular interest in the work of early Friends and our current transformations. Callid spoke of his travels thus far, in gospel ministry. He reminded us that the truest form of evangelism is faithfulness. Friends approved our Clerk endorsing Callid's minute. This minute also asks to hear of this Friend's visit. The Clerk will gather any comments she receives and share them with Rochester Friends Meeting.

2008-07-23. Janet Soderberg (Fifteenth Street), coclerk of the Earthcare Working Group, brought a report on the responses to the "Eco-spirituality and Action" minute approved at our last Summer Sessions. She summarized the actions, concerns, and suggestions sent to the working group by ten monthly meetings, including ideas such as growing your own food and involving the First Day school, greening your meetinghouse, and acknowledging and articulating the emotions brought up by this overarching concern. The Earthcare Working Group dedicates itself to continuing to educate and envision, energize, and empower Friends toward an earth restored.

2008-07-24. Lee Haring (Bulls Head-Oswego), clerk of the Meetings for Discernment, reported on yesterday's Meeting for Discernment, the second such meeting. The presiding clerks, Lucy (Lu) Harper (Rochester), Elaine Learnard (Bethpage), and Lee, found the day full of surprises and some shifts in their understanding of this experiment. When Friends were asked to share their Meeting concerns, they gave personal testimonies. When Friends were asked to strengthen the extended worship and wait, they stood quickly, one after another. When Friends were asked to end the final session, many asked to sit longer, in deep worship and sharing. As one Friend noted, we need practice, practice.... Today, from the gathered body, Friends spoke to the energizing space created, the loving care of the steering committee, and a request was voiced that the concern for our planet spoken to many times over the Meeting for Discernment be brought forward and not lost. The gathering was likened to the fledgling flight of a bird; there is much squawking, trepidation, fear of the unknown, then glorious flight—and the need for a nap afterwards.

2008-07-25. The Meeting gathered in community worship.

2008-07-26. The minutes of the morning's session were read, and Friends again returned to worship.

**Thursday, July 24, 2008, 10:15 A.M.**

*Ernestine Buscemi, Clerk*  
*Lee Haring, Assistant Clerk*  
*Karen Reixach, Recording Clerk*  
*Jeffrey Aaron, Reading Clerk*

2008-07-27. Friends gathered in expectant worship. Out of the silence, the reading clerk read a memorial minute for Mary Alice Benson (July 13, 1923–July 7, 2007), a faithful and active member of Chatham-Summit Monthly Meeting. In her memorial minute she was remembered as a person who never let this world or time or life strip away her divine qualities. She loved, and if love is the highest form of worship, she was constantly in a state of worship. Out of worship Friends celebrated her nobility and grace, her commitment to attending an African Methodist Episcopal (AME) church as well as Friends meeting because “we are too white,” and her ability to keep Friends on track.

2008-07-28. Lee Haring, assistant clerk, presided for this session and introduced the clerks’ table. He then invited Ta’jana Lee (Scarsdale) and Abey Levin (Wilton) from the JYM 2-3 Group to tell about their activities this week.

The Clerk introduced visitors: Eden and James Grace, and their sons Isaiah and Jesse (Beacon Hill, New England YM); Liston Ayodi (East Africa YM); S. Jean Smith (East Africa YM); Susan Corson-Finnerty and Larry Jalowiec, *Friends Journal* staff (PYM); Florence Ntakarutimana, African Great Lakes Initiative (Kamenge MM, Burundi); Mark Graham, founder of the Redemption Center in Bedford-Stuyvesant.

2008-07-29. Nancy Irving (Olympia MM, North Pacific YM) of Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) described the broad range of FWCC. She introduced the NYYM representatives to FWCC. Founded in 1937, FWCC held its triennial in Ireland last year. FWCC manages the New York and Geneva offices of Quakers at the United Nations. She reminded Friends of the minutes of concern from FWCC on the environment, indigenous peoples, and child soldiers. She listed a number of other activities connected to FWCC. Section meetings, which are open to all, will be held in March 2009. She announced a World Conference in 2012 at a university outside Nairobi, Kenya, which will create the opportunity for many more Friends to experience an international gathering and subsequently to visit the annual sessions of the various Kenyan yearly meetings.

2008-07-30. Susan Bingham (Montclair), NYYM treasurer, summarized the Treasurer’s Report for the first six months of 2008. Operating budget receipts were \$215,872; disbursements were \$238,545; and the closing balance was \$180,737. A detailed report with line items is available at this session and is posted on the Yearly Meeting Web site. Friends received the report.

2008-07-31. Stephen Mohlke (Ithaca), clerk of the Financial Services Committee, noted that the transition to covenant donations needs good information and better timing. He said that Financial Services has committed to these two goals and is developing a tool that lays out a program budget. Financial Service Committee members plan to visit as many meetings as possible to carry information and listen to meetings' concerns. He invited Friends to the Budget Saturday (October 4 at 9:30 A.M., at Bulls Head-Oswego) and urged monthly meetings to inform Financial Services of the amount of their anticipated covenant donations for 2009 before Budget Saturday, so that planning can be based on realistic income levels. The proposed budget developed out of the October meeting will be posted on the Web site and will be brought for approval at the fall sessions in November. He also urged Friends to attend Powell House and to send people from the meeting, especially young adults. Following comments and questions, Friends received the report.

2008-07-32. The consent agenda was laid over to Friday to allow Friends time to review the items.

2008-07-33. The minutes were read and approved.

2008-07-34. The Clerk introduced the business of Witness Section, asking Friends to hold this question: How is NYYM called to work for peace in the world?

Fredrick Dettmer (Purchase), clerk of Witness Coordinating Committee, introduced Nadine Hoover (Alfred), who facilitated a panel on Many Roads to Peace. Nadine set the tone for the panel, observing that as a people of faith, for whom war and violence violate our conscience, we need to be open to being called to alternative service or to directly supporting others who are called to service.

Florence Ntakarutimana, program manager of Healing and Rebuilding Our Communities (HROC), described the history of colonial division of people into Tutsi and Hutu, which resulted in a series of killings, particularly after 1993, leaving widows, orphans, and much trauma. In 2003, African Great Lakes Initiative (AGLI) responded by bringing together people from opposing sides for trauma healing and reconciliation workshops. She reported on the positive results of these efforts, and its expansion to other nations such as Rwanda and Congo. The need is enormous, not only in Africa. She thanked Friends for the support of AGLI, not just in dollars but also in presence, and invited Friends to come and participate in Healing and Rebuilding Our Communities.

Sarah Mandolang (Alfred) spoke about the transformation she felt in herself and in others in an Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) workshop in Aceh, Indonesia. This summer she spent time in Uganda, living with orphans. She told a story about how she came to terms with one child who was angry with her by treating him with love and with firmness. She wrote in her journal at that time, "I think it takes a lot of love and skill to love in this way, and I can do this. I think my greatest strength is this ability. It is something that is grounded in the Holy Spirit and in my family and community. It is something I can bring to this place, but it is built by hundreds of people."



Eden Grace (Beacon Hill, NEYM, and FUM) described the election in Kenya, the dismay at the outcome, and the shock of anger, violence, and hatred in a country that had been the model of stability in the region. FUM, FWCC, and Friends Church Kenya put together a national peace conference with the impetus and urging of the many Quakers in Kenya. Eden will report further on Friday.

Shirley Way (Central Finger Lakes), secretary of AVP-New York, said if we do not experience great joy we are not paying attention; if we do not experience outrage and deep sorrow, then we are not paying attention. Let us pay attention to the work we are called to as a yearly meeting. Let us say no to fear, no to confusion. Shirley observed that AVP draws on the power in the universe that can transform us and the “other” so that conflict becomes an opportunity to deepen relationship. She described the work of Friends Peace Teams to train local facilitators for AVP in Colombia, a nation that has been in violent conflict for decades. Civilians working for peace there are targeted by three different armed groups. AVP provides space for people to look at oppression, speak of the horrors they have witnessed, have that truth affirmed, and experience the power that transforms.

Jens Braun (Old Chatham) spoke of the resources Friends have in our concept of *leadings*, an urge to sally forth beyond the boundaries, and in our process to test the rightness of the leading with our meetings. Then when we go out, we are not alone, and we have the support of the community. Bolivia Quaker Education Fund (BQEF), founded out of a leading by Newton Garver (Buffalo), is all about *education* (scholarships for indigenous youth to go to university; exchanges with Quaker schools; AVP [PAV in Spanish] workshops; work programs for US youth in Bolivia) and *relationships* (creating flows of understanding, love, experience).

2008-07-35. The meeting closed in worship.

**Friday, July 25, 2008, 10:15 A.M.**

*Ernestine Buscemi, Clerk*

*Lee Haring, Assistant Clerk*

*Karen Reixach, Recording Clerk*

*Norma Ellis, Reading Clerk*

2008-07-36. Friends gathered in expectant worship. Out of the silence, the reading clerk read a memorial minute from Manasquan Monthly Meeting for Dean Freiday, scholar and ecumenical Quaker. Dean Freiday was born June 20, 1915, and died March 4, 2008, at the age of 92. He served as editor of *Quaker Religious Thought* from 1983–1989 and is best known as editor of the modern English version of *Barclay's Apology*. He was active in Manasquan Meeting, in New York Yearly Meeting, and in a variety of interfaith groups (including as delegate from FGC to the World Council of Churches). His memorial minute emphasized his integrity, faithfulness, and humility, quoting Arthur Roberts: “Surely, under Dean’s ministry, from Manasquan to

Bujumbura [Burundi], Truth has prospered!” Out of worship, Friends recalled his encouragement and support of spiritually grounded writing, his sensitivity to the peace testimony of other faiths, and his positive effect on others.

2008-07-37. Ernie introduced the clerks’ table. She invited JYM to come forward. Joseph Lawson (New Brunswick) and Natalie Mattson (Brooklyn) described how their week of games, arts & crafts, songs, and original play were organized around a theme from the book *James and the Giant Peach*. They invited Friends to the bonfire at Slim Point this evening.

Visitors Carl Dukes (Morningside), Larry White (Fortune Society), James Amel Russell (Morningside) were warmly welcomed. The reading clerk read the letter of introduction from Patapsco Monthly Meeting (BYM) for its member Ken Stockbridge, which described his leading to travel to seek a deeper understanding of the bonds that hold our Quaker communities together and how Friends build and stay faithful to those bonds.

The Clerk then reviewed the agenda, and called for understanding and tenderness by going deeper and deeper into worship—listening with open hearts and the flexibility of an infinite love.

2008-07-38. Eden Grace, field officer for Friends United Meeting (FUM) African ministries, returned to the stage to describe the work of the Friends Church Peace Teams since the post-election violence in Kenya in January. The first several weeks were spent in meeting humanitarian needs—not only food and shelter, but also spirit-led listening. In April 2008, the Team shifted focus to finding permanence for families displaced by the violence. The government is forcing those families either to go to a “homeland” where they may never have lived or to return to the place they were driven from. Friends Church Peace Teams discerned the call to engage with the people who had driven the families away, even though the team members sometimes faced real threats in carrying out this work. Ordinary Kenyan Quakers, with no training in humanitarian relief or conflict transformation, have been called out by God to lead the work. AGLI and FUM provide resources and support behind the scenes. The work has helped bring greater unity among the sixteen yearly meetings in Kenya and the many other Friends’ nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) working in that country. The work promises to bring unity between “peace” Quakers and “mission” Friends. The response to God, out of this terrible time, has brought greater unity and revival for Quakers in Kenya. She left us with the question “What is the message for us in this?”

2008-07-39. The Clerk introduced John Menzel (New Brunswick) from the NYYM Friends United Meeting Task Group, who read the report of the task group from June 28, 2008, at Powell House. Friends received the following report:

**Report of the NYYM Task Group on FUM  
Powell House, June 28, 2008**

We have heard many Friends, individually and in their Monthly, Quarterly, and Regional Meetings, holding concerns about whether or not NYYM should cease its association with Friends United Meeting. We witness that many Friends are in deep pain and distress about our continued association. We hear concerns to mostly center on the sexual ethics portion of the

personnel policy, the adoption of the Richmond Declaration as the faith basis of the organization, and homophobic remarks made at the General Board meeting in Kakamega, Kenya, last year. We understand the subtext to these concerns to be based on whether one understands homosexual orientation to be a sinful choice, or a matter of one's God given nature.

We are currently in association with FUM, and we acknowledge that it is our practice as Friends that we should stay in association unless we are clear to do otherwise, and to stay engaged as we do so. We perceive that we as a body are not anywhere near clarity on whether or not to dissociate. We also note that we as a Yearly Meeting do not fully know and embrace our own diversity. Given that, we understand our work to be to help this yearly meeting to explore questions about who we are and what it means to be in relationship with the rest of FUM.

**We bring the following framework of understanding to this work:**

- This is a long-term process. We doubt that we will find resolution internally in a short time-frame, and we do not see changes happening within FUM in a short time, either.
- We can find language to talk to one another and common ground that can be shared, but this will take work.
- This is a huge opportunity for NYYM to know ourselves better, as individuals and in community. We know of tremendous diversity within this Yearly Meeting, which many Friends are not well aware of. And we see this as an opportunity to learn in firsthand and challenging ways about our own internal responses to perceived differences within community.
- We will need to listen without focusing on outcomes, but rather to gain clarity on how to live in the Light always, and what this means in our institutional and personal relationships.
- We will remind ourselves always, that what we are about is love, peace, integrity, and seeing the Divine in others.

**Therefore, we as a task group will devote ourselves to the following tasks:**

- Develop forms or forums to be in relationship with each other within this Yearly Meeting, whether or not we find unity about our relationship with FUM.
- Strive to create safe environments for those who have kept silent out of fear or discomfort at being in the minority, that they may share their message and spiritual experience.
- Disseminate information so that Friends can be well informed in their discernment.
- Educate ourselves within NYYM to become more conversant with different spiritual languages, the biblical basis for points of disagreements, and different worldviews.
- Help Friends in this Yearly Meeting to come to a better understanding, and through that, we hope a greater respect, of our different understandings of where authority resides (biblical authority, institutional authority, the Richmond Declaration, individual authority, etc.)

Annie Bancroft, John Menzel, FUM Task Group coclerks

2008-07-40. Steve Ross reported on the FUM Triennial, hosted by North Carolina Yearly Meeting, and held at High Point Friends Church, July 9–12, 2008. He asked FUM Board members, Triennial representatives, past board members, and attenders of past FUM Triennials to rise, and indicated that these individuals are available to respond to questions and receive comments. About 500 Friends, including 35 East African Friends, attended the Triennial. Steve provided a sketch of the reports and other business, as well as observations about the spirit of the sessions and informal discussions. He floated the idea of NYYM sending a work group to Kenya.

Christopher Sammond, one of the NYYM representatives to the FUM Board, offered a thumbnail sketch of FUM, which encompasses fourteen North American Yearly Meetings, sixteen Kenyan Yearly Meetings, and others around the world. He noted the range of theologies within the yearly meetings in FUM, the tension between those whose work abroad is animated by the social gospel and those whose impetus is evangelism, and the unity that can arise out of service. He then raised up five areas of note:

- Better realization of the goal of genuine full participation by Kenyans, for example in the membership and nominating committees
- Moving toward difference as a means of building bridges
- No public acknowledgment of the trauma of Kenyans, but its emergence in the worship sharing groups and in the two meetings for healing
- Acknowledgment of being stuck in finding unity about affirming, changing, or eliminating the hiring policy for staff and volunteers, which requires celibacy except within marriage between one man and one woman
- The pain of representatives from united yearly meetings—as Christopher tested whether to speak out, he was led to keep silent and to work in other ways.

Friends received the report and entered into a period of open worship, asking for clarity about points in the report, seeking more actively for what we share, articulating a growing sense of being able to be in relationship with and to love people with whom we disagree, and praying in our hearts for openness to learning, for experiencing the Spirit that brings wisdom, love, and forbearance.

2008-07-41. The Clerk introduced Nancy Britton (Morningside), clerk of the Epistle Committee, who read the draft Epistle to Friends Everywhere. Ronald (Ron) Peterson (Fredonia) read the draft a second time. Friends were asked to provide written comments and suggestions to the committee to assist in the revision for the final reading this evening.

2008-07-42. The minutes were read and approved.

2008-07-43. The meeting closed in worship.

**Meeting for Worship with a Concern for JYM Business**  
**Friday, July 25, 2008, 4:15 P.M.**

*Ernestine Buscemi, Clerk*

*Lee Haring, Assistant Clerk*

*Melanie-Claire Mallison, Recording Clerk*

2008-07-44. Friends gathered in open worship.

2008-07-45. Ernie introduced Martha Gurvich (Wilton), clerk of Junior Yearly Meeting (JYM). Martha in turn introduced Amy White (Quaker Street) and Jennifer Lindop (Saratoga), JYM coordinators. Amy asked the K-1 Group to present their epistle, which began with the young ones coming on stage carrying a long string of butterfly drawings. Over the week, the K-1 Group enjoyed animal yoga, visits from many Friends, and lots of games. They sang and signed for us, using American Sign Language, “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star.” The 2-3 Group began with a poem by Joseph Bruchac, “Their eyes are not our eyes, yet we can see ourselves in them”—their week was all about looking for the Light in others. They enjoyed Red Rover, George Fox and *Stellaluna*. The 4-5-6 Group had a great week, starting with a week-long painting project on “community.” They also enjoyed meeting many visitors and talking about affirmations and conscientious objection to war. Even though Wednesday’s beach day got rained out, they still had fun playing new games, and when the sun finally came out on Friday, they got outdoors, and joined the entire JYM in the Boathouse for meeting for worship. The 7-8 Group’s Epistle Committee was introduced and read their epistle. They learned from many visitors, spent the rained-out beach day in togas, practicing Tibetan chants, participated in the Fun(d) Fair, sang songs of worship with the rest of JYM at the Boathouse, and then they all lived happily ever after! The epistle also included a visual portion, demonstrating the main themes of each day. The “group of villagers” also known as the 9-10 Group read and acted their epistle, speaking and showing their work with conflict transformation, improvisation, community, dealing with rain, and Original Play. The villagers departed, on a sunny day, to go forth and enjoy the world. The 11-12 Group read an epistle, which included the new experience of joining in the worship-sharing groups from 9 to 10 every morning as part of their program. They talked about conscientious objection to war and were encouraged to write their statements of conscience soon. On Thursday, the “monstrous-sized” group of 36 split in two, some joining meeting for business for the panel discussion on peace-work, while the rest worked on self-defining structures. They then played charades for us, asking those in the body to guess what they were demonstrating (beach day, conscientious objection, Fun(d) Fair, Original Play, the cake auction, worship, and Ultimate Frisbee). They were thankful for their week together.

Martha came back to the podium to thank the JYM volunteers for taking such good care of our children and to thank the parents for trusting JYM to care for the children. Martha also introduced the new clerk of JYM Committee, Peter Close (Purchase), and the new assistant clerk, Jennifer Lindop. Amy will continue as JYM coordinator, and she introduced Susan Stillman (Montclair), who will join her.

2008-07-46. We closed with worship.

**Friday, July 25, 2008; 7:45 P.M.**

*Ernestine Buscemi, Clerk*

*Lee Haring, Assistant Clerk*

*Melanie-Claire Mallison, Recording Clerk*

*Norma Ellis, Reading Clerk*

2008-07-47. Friends gathered in open worship. Out of the silence, Ron Peterson and Nancy Britton read excerpts from several epistles, including Europe and Middle East Friends Gathering in Vienna, Children's Epistle from Ohio Valley YM, FCNL, New England YM Young Adult Friends, Middle Youth Epistle from Ohio Valley YM, Philadelphia YM, New England YM, Illinois YM Young Adult Friends, Southeastern YM, The Annual Report of Friends United Meeting, and Australia YM.

2008-07-48. Ernie introduced the clerks' table.

2008-07-49. The reading clerk read a minute of travel for Vonn New (Bulls Head-Oswego). Vonn has a leading to travel to meetings under the weight of her concern for a form of worship combining her creativity in music in worshipful silence. Vonn spoke to her experiences working with Friends bringing her ministry of "meetings for listening." Friends approved the Clerk endorsing this minute.

2008-07-50. The reading clerk read a minute of travel to renew for Susan (Sue) Regen (Rochester), who travels with a concern for encouraging the practice of forgiveness as a spiritual discipline. Sue spoke of the incredible blessing it is to be present with Friends and Spirit, in this work. She noted four opportunities to participate in this work with her in 2009. Friends approved the Clerk endorsing this renewal minute.

2008-07-51. Jill McLellan (Central Finger Lakes) reported for the NYYM Nominating Committee. She reviewed the process for finding and nominating Friends, and the committee informed us of the top ten reasons for not responding to the Nominating Committee "yellow cards."

2008-07-52. The Clerk presented the consent agenda for approval. Friends approved the following items on the consent agenda:

- A. nominations brought forward by the NYYM Nominating Committee
- B. requests for release from NYYM service
- C. revisions to the Nurture Section of the NYYM *Handbook*
- D. revisions to the General Services Section of the NYYM *Handbook*

The nominations and requests for release can be found after the minutes and epistles of this Summer Sessions. The revised sections of the *Handbook* can be found online at [www.nyym.org](http://www.nyym.org) or paper copies may be requested from the Yearly Meeting office.

2008-07-53. Fred Dettmer, clerk of Witness CC, reminded us of the Quaker Initiative to End Torture (QUIT) conferences we have attended and the work done regarding the concern on the use of torture. He then read the following minute on torture, approved by the Witness Coordinating Committee.

## **New York Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends**

### **Minute on Torture**

New York Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) joins with the voices of people of conscience everywhere to decry the use of torture by the United States and to work for its end.

We acknowledge with deep sorrow and grave concern that our nation engages in torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment of prisoners and detainees. Our country has developed a system of “interrogation techniques” that, in addition to physical abuse, includes subjecting persons to simulated drowning (“waterboarding”); extremes of temperature, light and noise; sleep deprivation; prolonged “stress positions”; nudity, hunger and thirst; physical, psychological and sexual humiliation; solitary confinement. The International Committee of the Red Cross has observed these detention practices and condemns them as “an intentional system of cruel, unusual and degrading treatment and a form of torture” and as constituting war crimes.<sup>1</sup> Facile denials by our government representatives display arrogance and hypocrisy, and compound our shame. We have diminished our standing among nations and demeaned our moral values as a society and as individuals. The practice of torture by our nation is immoral, unethical and illegal.

Torture betrays our faith. Torture denies the divine Light present in every person. It displaces God’s Love and call for the peaceable Kingdom with violence, hatred, sadism and tyranny. Torture offends Jesus’s command to “love your enemies, do good to them. . . .”<sup>2</sup> It transgresses our belief that we must “not repay anyone evil for evil. . . . On the contrary: ‘If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.’ . . . Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”<sup>3</sup> In the presence of our nation’s use of torture, we hearken to Jesus’s query: “What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul?”<sup>4</sup>

Torture debases our ethical and moral ideals. Torture destroys the humanity of the tortured, the torturer and those who have knowledge of it. “[T]orture plumbs the recesses of human consciousness, unleashing an unfathomable capacity for cruelty as well as seductive illusions of omnipotence.”<sup>5</sup> It fails to defend the sanctity of life and undermines our humanitarian ideals. We believe, with William Penn, that “A good end cannot sanctify evil means; nor must we ever do evil that good may come of it.”<sup>6</sup>

Torture corrupts our respect for the rule of law and our standing in the community of nations. Torture condemns the innocent and the guilty alike. It is absolutely prohibited under Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,<sup>7</sup> Articles 13, 87 & 89 of the 1949 Geneva Convention III Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War,<sup>8</sup> and the 1977 Protocols thereto, Article 31 of the Geneva Convention IV Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War,<sup>9</sup> and the United Nations Convention Against Torture (1994).<sup>10</sup> It is forbidden by the Eighth Amendment to the United States Constitution, banning the infliction of “cruel and unusual punishments.” It constitutes a war crime. Civilized nations agree that these techniques are immoral and illegal under both American and international law. “[A] nation that sanctions torture in defiance of its democratic principles pays a terrible price. . . . [T]he stigma compromises its majesty and corrupts its integrity. Its officials must spin an ever more complex web of lies that, in the end, weakens the bond of trust and the rule of law that are the sine qua non of a democracy. And, beyond its borders, allies and enemies turn away in collective revulsion.”<sup>11</sup>

We call on the United States to honor its constitutional and treaty obligations, and our moral, ethical and religious principles, by ending immediately the use of torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment of prisoners and detainees. We direct the Clerk, on behalf of NYYM, to sign on to the National Religious Campaign Against Torture’s *Statement of Conscience* and its *Declaration of Principles* for an executive order banning torture.<sup>12</sup> We encourage Friends and people of conscience everywhere to join us and to work actively to convince Congress and the President to prohibit, and to stop the use of, cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment of prisoners and detainees by any of our representatives, agents or allies.

By not honoring our moral, ethical, spiritual and legal ideals, we endanger our own humanity, as well as the humanity of those involved in the practice of torture or subjected to brutal treatment. We have faith that God’s Light will not be dimmed. Let the United States abolish its use of torture now.

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1. Jane Mayer, *The Dark Side: The Inside Story of How the War on Terror Turned Into a War on American Ideals* (Doubleday 2008), pp. 164–65; *New York Times*, July 11, 2008; *New York Times*, November 30, 2004.

2. Luke 6:35–36 (NIV).

3. Romans 12: 17–21 (NIV).

4. Matthew 16:26; Mark 8:36; Luke 9:25 (NIV).

5. Alfred W. McCoy, *A Question of Torture: CIA Interrogation, from the Cold War to the War on Terror* (Henry Holt & Co., 2006), p. 13.

6. William Penn, *Some Fruits of Solitude* (1693).

7. Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights provides that “no one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.”

8. Article 13 of the Geneva Convention III Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War



provides that “prisoners of war must at all times be humanely treated.” Article 87 prohibits “corporal punishment, imprisonment in premises without daylight and, in general, any form of torture or cruelty.” Article 89 states: “In no case shall disciplinary punishments be inhuman, brutal or dangerous to the health of prisoners of war.”

9. Article 31 of the Geneva Convention IV Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War provides: “No physical or moral coercion shall be exercised . . . to obtain information from them or from third parties.”

10. Article I of the United Nations Convention against Torture defines torture as “any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession.”

11. McCoy, *A Question of Torture*, p. 14.

12. See [www.nrnat.org](http://www.nrnat.org).

Friends approved this minute for wide distribution (the president and candidates for president, our congressional representatives and candidates, New York State and New Jersey Councils of Churches, National Council of Churches, NYYM monthly and regional meetings, other yearly meetings and associations, FCNL, AFSC, FUM, FWCC, and other Friends’ organizations, churches and church organizations, NRCAT, and other organizations working to end torture).

The Meeting further approved the Clerk signing, on behalf of the NYYM, the National Religious Campaign against Torture’s Statement of Conscience and its Declaration of Principles for an executive order banning torture.

2008-07-54. Deborah Wood (Purchase), clerk of Ministry Coordinating Committee, reported that MCC would like to bring forward the name of Anita Paul (Schenectady) to be recorded in NYYM for her gifts in the ministry. Deb noted that the Yearly Meeting on Ministry and Counsel (YMMC) is the body that is charged, in our *Faith and Practice*, with approving such recordings. In 2007, we suspended the YMMC for two years, while we tried out the Meetings for Discernment. The Meetings for Discernment do not have recording gifts in the ministry as part of their charge; therefore, MCC requests that the Yearly Meeting set aside our previous practice and take on, directly, the role of recording gifts in the ministry for this two-year period. Friends approved this request. Given this approval, Deb read the report of the Recording Committee for Anita Paul. The committee reported that Anita’s gifts “include prophetic witness, administration, compassion, spiritual healing, vocal ministry, leadership, wisdom, courage, and follow-through in her witness.” The New York Yearly Meeting approved recording the gifts of ministry found in Anita Paul. Anita told of her joy in speaking God’s words.

2008-07-55. Deb also brought forward the report that Advancement has approved giving from the Lockport-Brinkerhoff Fund up to \$2,300 to New Paltz Monthly Meeting for meetinghouse renovations. Friends approved this expenditure.

2008-07-56. John Cooley (Central Finger Lakes), clerk of Sessions Committee, told of how our week together depends on many volunteers and staff, both NYYM and Silver Bay, and also depends on our cooperation with the rules and guidelines. He asked that this year, instead of having an official form with evaluation questions to answer, we simply send in our evaluation comments via e-mail or mail to Carol Rice or John. John reported that this year’s total attendance

was 657 registrants, of whom 184 were JYM registrants. First-time attenders numbered around 60. Café Night raised \$4,704, and Fun(d) Fair raised \$1,512, for a total of \$6,216, to be divided equally between the Sharing Fund and Powell House.

2008-07-57. Nancy Britton read the New York Yearly Meeting epistle for a second time, followed by a second reading by Ron Peterson. Friends spoke to concerns, and were asked to bring these to the Epistle Committee after the rise of this meeting. The committee was asked to bring the epistle to the Meeting tomorrow morning at 10:15.

2008-07-58. The minutes of this evening's session were read and approved.

2008-07-59. The Meeting returned to worship.

**Saturday, July 26, 2008; 10:15 A.M.**

*Ernestine Buscemi, Clerk*

*Lee Haring, Assistant Clerk*

*Melanie-Claire Mallison, Recording Clerk*

2008-07-60. Friends gathered in worship. The recording clerk read minute 2008-07-34, and Friends approved. The recording clerk then read the minutes for the Friday afternoon JYM Business session. Friends approved.

2008-07-61. Ron Peterson read the NYYM epistle for the 2008 Summer Sessions, followed by a reading by Nancy Britton. Friends approved the epistle.

2008-07-62. Our Clerk reminded us that it is as important for us to be together in the places of discomfort, as it is for us to be together in love. Those places of discomfort allow us to be connected in deep ways that strengthen our bonds with one another. She then spoke moving good-byes to Melanie-Claire and Lee, who are both moving on to other forms of service in the Yearly Meeting. Ernie stepped to the podium and, reminding us of the importance of the "power of a mighty history," she read the General Epistle of New York Yearly Meeting, written Eighth Month, Fourth Day, 1955.

**Minutes and Proceedings of the 260th Session of New York Yearly Meeting  
Seventh Month 29, Eighth Month 5, 1955**

**General Epistle**

To Friends Everywhere

Dear Friends,

This is the message of our love.

We have been united with you this week in closer fellowship, which transcended our diversity, as New York Yearly Meeting became again one body of Friends. We wish to share with you our joy that the way to unity has been found.

We shall continue to share our differences, which serve a useful purpose. God does not ask us for conformity, but calls us to unity, in obedience to the leadings of the spirit.

We seek to recapture the radiance of simple, uncomplicated love.... such love as will resist evil without violence, without hatred of the wrongdoer, and with compromise.

To the false standards of our time, we would offer the greatest opposition, combined with the greatest love. To the lonely seekers in this hurried and soul-hiding world, we would say, "Dear friends, we are walking beside you.... seekers too."

Have loving kindness toward one another. Have faith in the Lord and the Lord will help you.

Signed on behalf of the NYYM,  
Horace R. Stubbs,  
Alfred J. Henderson,  
Clerks

2008-07-63. The minutes of the morning's session were read and approved.

2008-07-64. Friends settled into open worship together.