

**New York Yearly Meeting  
Spring Representative Meeting  
April 13-15, 2007  
Chautauqua Institution**

**Saturday, April 14**

*Ernestine Buscemi, Clerk  
Karen Reixach, Acting Assistant Clerk  
Elaine Learnard, Recording Clerk  
Anne Wright, Reading Clerk*

2007-04-01. The meeting opened in silent worship.

2007-04-02. The reading clerk called the roll, asking Friends to rise in response as attenders of prison worship groups, as those with newly starting meetings, and as members of regional meetings.

2007-04-03. The clerk quoted from John Welwood, that the heart cannot actually break, it can only break open. She introduced those at the clerks' table. She urged us to live and listen with open hearts.

2007-04-04. Frederick Dettmer (Purchase), clerk of Witness Coordinating Committee, reported that he had five pieces of business for discernment and one report.

The first was the following Minute on Refraining from War against Iran (approved for presentation to New York Yearly Meeting sessions by WCC 3/3/7 and by the Peace Concerns Committee on 4/14/07):

Friends in New York Yearly Meeting hear anew the call to pray and work for a peaceful resolution of the conflicts in the Middle East. Fears that war with Iran may be imminent are fanned by news that the United States has dispatched additional troops and war ships to the region and is making claims of Iranian involvement in the fighting in Iraq. Time may be very limited to awaken neighbors and members of Congress if we are to prevent a tragic escalation of the present war. NYYM's *Faith and Practice* reminds us that "all outward wars and strife and fightings with outward weapons are contrary to our Christian testimony." It goes on to urge us "to maintain our testimony against war by endeavoring to exert an influence in favor of peaceful principles and the settlement of all differences by peaceful methods." It counsels us to "lend support to all that strengthens international friendship and understanding and give active help to movements that substitute cooperation and justice for force and intimidation." In faithfulness to our testimony of peace, Friends call on the United States government to use diplomatic means in concert with

the United Nations to resolve issues with the government of Iran, to disavow the use of military force in settling these issues, and to seek a positive, cooperative relationship with Iran in good faith. We call on the U.S. Congress to reassert its constitutional responsibilities and to take action to prevent aggression against Iran. We urge all Friends to share this call within and beyond New York Yearly Meeting and to work for a peaceful resolution of the issues involving Iran. In these efforts, Friends should seek cooperative or collaborative relationships with Friends organizations, such as the Friends Committee on National Legislation, the American Friends Service Committee, and Quaker United Nations Office, and with other faith groups.

Friends approved this minute.

2007-04-05. Friends further directed the clerk, staff, and committees of the Yearly Meeting to broadcast the minute widely within and without the Society, to make resources available to assist meetings and Friends to use this minute in correspondence with members of Congress and others, and to keep Friends informed about opportunities and activities in support of this witness. Friends spoke from the floor of the urgency and magnitude of this concern.

2007-04-06. Frederick Dettmer next brought a minute approved by Purchase Quarterly Meeting on 2-4-07 that addresses concerns about parole:

Many of the men and women in New York prisons who are faithful attenders of Quaker Worship Groups have used their years of incarceration to transform their lives. Some entered prison without high school diplomas and now have graduate degrees. Others have mastered the skills of a variety of vocational trades. Most have participated in programs such as non-violent conflict resolution, anger management, responsible parenting, and substance abuse counseling. Having embraced the teachings of a faith community and the disciplines of a spiritual practice as a basis for living their lives, many now reach out in ministry to others, especially younger persons just entering the prison system. Yet, even after all these efforts aimed at turning their lives around while serving out their sentences, the parole board, all too often, ignores the many accomplishments of those who are parole-eligible, and requires them to serve more time – typically in two-year increments – ostensibly because of the nature of the crime of which they were convicted. And the refusal of parole seems to have no limit – some have been refused parole half-a-dozen or more times before being released, and it's possible that some never *will* be released. This despite the fact that the original parole eligibility date is based on an exhaustive presentencing report prepared

for the court. It is a matter of faith among Friends (Quakers) that there is *that of God in everyone*. We know, experientially as a faith community, that it is possible for human beings to be transformed, by the power of Spirit at work in the world, and present in each of us, even in those of us who have broken the law, even in those of us who have taken the life of another. We ask, therefore, that, in addition to criminal history, parole release decisions give equal consideration to *all* of the factors involved. These factors include: Educational achievement; Employment skills; Disciplinary record; Program participation; Creation of a viable discharge plan; Parole eligibility.

Once people in prison are release-eligible and community-ready, they should have a parole hearing that takes into account the totality of their record of achievement and behavior. Being community-ready means a prisoner has accepted responsibility for crimes committed, understands the circumstances that led to criminal behavior, maintained satisfactory institutional conduct, and has created a comprehensive discharge plan that includes family ties, housing, and employment. Such a person should not be refused release on parole, beyond their court-imposed minimum sentence, solely because of the crime for which that sentence was served. All of the factors that led to the original sentence were considered by the sentencing judge. To revisit them in a parole decision hearing is to usurp the role of the court. Further, to allow the parole release decision to hinge on one immutable factor – the nature of the crime, which can never change – is to invite despair and hopelessness into what should be a *correctional* process that supports the possibility of transformation, and the making whole of what has been broken: lives, families, communities.

Friends approved this minute and directed the Clerk of the Yearly Meeting to forward this Minute to the New York State Council of Churches and to ask the Council and its affiliates to consider how they might assist in revising the State's parole policy and practice for **violent** offenders.

207-04-07. The body approved directing the Clerk to forward this minute to Governor Spitzer and others, as may be recommended by the Prisons Committee.

2007-04-08. In part in response to minutes received from a number of monthly and regional meetings, WCC considered support for the National Religious Campaign against Torture (NRCAT). NRCAT is a coalition of national, regional, and local religious and secular organizations working "to ensur[e] that the United States does not engage in torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment of anyone, without exceptions."

Friends approved the recommendation that New York Yearly Meeting become a participating member of the National Religious Campaign against Torture (NRCAT), that the Nominating Committee in consultation with WCC bring forward a named person to act as our representative to the Coordinating Committee of NRCAT, and to make an annual financial contribution to NRCAT. Friends further noted that this witness and representative are to be under the care of the WCC.

2007-04-09. Frederick Dettmer introduced Bobbie Sue Bowers (Manasquan), who reported that an opportunity to abolish the death penalty in New Jersey has arisen because of a recent report by the New Jersey Death Penalty Study Commission recommending abolition of the death penalty and pending bills in both houses of the New Jersey legislature.

Friends approved endorsement of the following minute that originated in Manasquan Monthly Meeting and Shrewsbury-Plainfield Half-Yearly Meeting

The New York Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends [which includes Chatham-Summit Monthly Meeting, Dover-Randolph Monthly Meeting, Montclair Monthly Meeting, Ridgewood Monthly Meeting, Manasquan Monthly Meeting, New Brunswick Monthly Meeting, Rahway and Plainfield Monthly Meeting, Shrewsbury Monthly Meeting and Somerset Hills Monthly Meeting, all in New Jersey] reaffirms its stand along with other people of faith in New Jersey and the United States in calling for an end to the death penalty. The death penalty teaches that the solution to violence is more violence, and that the way to put an end to killing is through more killing. Our belief that there is God in every person unites us in upholding the fundamental value of all human beings and their lifelong potential for spiritual redemption and reconciliation. Criminal justice procedures are inconsistent with the teachings of Christ and weighted against the poor, the powerless, members of minority groups and persons with developmental disabilities. Errors can lead to the punishment and execution of innocent or mentally incompetent people. The death penalty is also costly and unproven as a deterrent. After finding the death penalty indecent and a poor response to crime, the New Jersey Death Penalty Study Commission recently recommended its abolition. We ask New Jersey state officials and the governments of other states to enact legislation ending the death penalty permanently, and to declare an immediate halt to executions pending this legislative action.

Friends further directed the Clerk to send a letter to New Jersey officials and publications indicating the Yearly Meeting's support for ceasing executions in New Jersey and everywhere.

2007-04-10. Frederick Dettmer was joined by Thomas Rothschild (Brooklyn), Jens Braun (Old Chatham), and James Hamilton (Wilton) to report on the status of Daniel Jenkins's war tax witness case in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit New York. Tom spoke about the day Dan's case was heard. The day began with a meeting for worship. Thirty-four Friends from all over the Yearly Meeting were present, entered the courtroom together, and sat throughout the audience. At the conclusion of the proceedings, Friends rose as a group and left the courtroom together, a powerful witness of support for this conscientious objection to war tax. The court later issued a decision rejecting all Dan's claims.

Jens Braun reported on a conference held at Purchase and sponsored by Powell House the weekend after Dan's case was heard, to consider the possibility of group action for war tax witness. Five working groups were formed out of the conference. He spoke about the need to create the "Conscience Movement," and the hope that it would become effective and as widely recognized as the civil rights and women's movements are now. The next meeting on this effort will be June 15 through 17 at Rochester Meeting.

Fred reported that Daniel Jenkins has decided in consultation with his support group to file a petition for a writ of certiorari, petitioning the U.S. Supreme Court to hear his appeal. James Hamilton discussed preparation of an amicus curiae ("friend of the court") brief in support of Dan's petition to the United States Supreme Court to hear his appeal. The earlier documents in Dan's case are available at <http://www.cpti.ws>.

The body authorized the Yearly Meeting to submit an amicus curiae ("Friend of the Court") brief in support of Daniel Jenkins's petition to the United States Supreme Court to hear his appeal, and directed the Yearly Meeting clerk, the clerk of the Witness Coordinating Committee, the clerk of Peace Concerns, and the clerk of the Subcommittee on Conscientious Objection to Military Taxation to work with Friend and attorney Thomas Whyatt (Philipstown Worship Group) on filing such a brief. The body further approved defraying the cost for conferring and printing coming out of the Contingency and Witness Activities Fund portions of the Sharing Fund.

2007-04-11. Paula McClure, clerk of General Services, brought business on behalf of the Yearly Meeting Trustees concerning the proposal to close the McCutchen and sell the property. Jim Whitely, President of the Board of the Yearly Meeting Friends Home (the McCutchen), reported on the long consultation that resulted in that decision. He described the arrangements for appropriate alternate placements for residents and the caring work of the staff in making these transitions successful. The Board is working out ways to use the endowment, including the proceeds from the sale of the facility, to continue to assist the elderly, possibly through establishing a foundation that would work in close collaboration with New York Yearly Meeting. The Board expects that

much of the assistance in future would be directed at helping people remain in their homes.

Friends approved the proposal of the Board of the Yearly Meeting Friends Home (the McCutchen) to discontinue operation of the Home and sell the facility, with the corporation continuing to operate and seeking other ways of continuing its mission, reporting to the Yearly Meeting periodically.

2007-04-12. The meeting closed with silent worship.

### **Sunday, April 15**

*Ernestine Buscemi, Clerk*  
*Karen Reixach, Acting Assistant*  
*Clerk*  
*Sharon Hoover, Recording Clerk*  
*Rima Segal, Reading Clerk*

2007-04-13. The meeting settled into worship.

2007-04-14. The reading clerk read a memorial minute for Marguerite Matthews of Catskill Monthly Meeting. Marguerite was quite active throughout her life in peace and justice and social concerns; however, her meeting recalls her most fondly through her faithful and active participation in the local meeting for worship. Marguerite brought gifts of gentle sharing, encouragement of others, and joyful music wherever she went. Friends spoke lovingly of small but joyful and encouraging moments with her.

2007-04-15. Clerk Ernestine Buscemi (Morningside) welcomed Friends into this morning's business session and introduced the clerks' table.

2007-04-16. Helen Garay Toppins (Morningside), clerk of the Prisons Committee, reported that the committee determined that it will not send the NYYM minute on parole (2007-04-06) to Governor Eliot Spitzer at this time. The committee will continue to labor with issues of how the minute will be handled with the new administration.

2007-04-17. Helen Garay Toppins (Morningside) reported for the Nurture Coordinating Committee. It requests that the fund known as "YouthQuake Attenders" be changed to "Youth and Young Adult Activities" and be placed under the care of Advancement Committee. Friends approved.

2007-04-18. The Clerk introduced Christopher Sammond (Bulls Head-Oswego), who presented a moving report from the New York Yearly Meeting representatives to Friends United Meeting regarding its February 2007 general board meeting in Kenya, the first ever held there. Christopher told in some detail of the conditions he observed among Friends in Kenya. He reflected that, even in the United States, Friends too often fall into “us and them” arguments. He emphasized that there is a mixture everywhere of Friends who identify more with Orthodox leadings or Hicksite leadings.

Friends reflected on the importance of “staying at the table” while we all labor with our attitudes toward human sexuality and the source of spiritual authority.

The NYYM representatives to FUM request that Nurture Coordinating Committee appoint a task group to be under the weight of helping NYYM consider a series of queries about our responses to the issues that divide us. We will expect the group to report back periodically to the Yearly Meeting on how to proceed in our ongoing relationship with FUM. Friends approved. One Friend stood aside.

2007-04-19. Timothy Johnson (Schenectady), clerk of the Nominating Committee, presented Nominating Committee’s recommendation that Ann Davidson (Farmington) be appointed to serve as an alternate to the FUM General Board Class of 2008. Friends approved.

2007-04-20. The Clerk stepped aside and turned the business over to the assistant clerk, Karen Reixach (Rochester).

2007-04-21. Ernestine Buscemi (Morningside) presented a report for the Transition Working Group. It represented a first reading of five recommendations to the Yearly Meeting. The recommendations are as follows:

Recommendation 1:

The Transition Working Group recommends that, to conform to the name of the other three sections of the Yearly Meeting, a new section be created, named Ministry and Pastoral Care Section, or Spiritual Care Section, or Ministry and Spiritual Life Section. The two bodies described below would constitute this one section.

Recommendation 2:

The Transition Working Group recommends revitalizing and restructuring the body currently named the Yearly Meeting on Ministry and Counsel so that it will meet for the purpose of listening to concerns, leadings, and movements of the Spirit in the Yearly Meeting body.

Recommendation 3:

The Transition Working Group recommends reducing the Coordinating Committee on Ministry and Counsel to a smaller coordinating committee, which would be both proactive and responsive in addressing the needs of monthly meetings and worship groups. This body, called the Ministry Coordinating Committee, would be responsible for administering and coordinating the work of its constituent committees.

Recommendation 4:

The Transition Working Group recommends that the responsibilities for (a) planning Bible study at Yearly Meeting and (b) the receiving and composing of Epistles be transferred to the Nurture Section.

Recommendation 5:

If Friends approve the recommendations above, the Transition Working Group recommends that the nominating committee of the existing Coordinating Committee for Ministry and Counsel nominate three Friends to serve as an Interim Committee, who will ensure the orderly transfer of the responsibilities for particular duties, such as the State of Society reports.

The meeting received the report and commends it back to the committee for clarifications of language and intent and for communication to local meetings before it is considered at the summer session of Yearly Meeting.

2007-04-22. The clerk asked Harold Risler, treasurer of the Yearly Meeting, to present his report of the state of the NYYM 2006 budget. He drew our attention to the fact that the Yearly Meeting is currently running a surplus and to the treasurer's notes that follow the written report. Friends received the report.

2007-04-23. The Clerk asked General Secretary Christopher Sammond to give a general secretary's report to the meeting. In his remarks. Christopher emphasized that we appear to be strengthening our quarters and regions, moving forward in supporting our youth and young adult Friends, encouraging traveling Friends and spiritual nurture, addressing issues of advancement and conflict, and establishing new worship groups and seasoning newer Friends. He also reported on shifts in staffing responsibilities to serve the ongoing needs of the Yearly Meeting. Friends received the report.

2007-04-24. Herbert Lape (Westbury) presented the General Secretary's Task Group report. After considering many responses from Friends, reports from the general secretary, and its observations of the effects that Christopher Sammond has had on meetings and individual Friends, the task group recommends that the position of general secretary be continued.



This is a first reading of the recommendation. Friends are asked to disseminate the report, to send any questions or recommendations to the task group, and to be ready to consider the issue for approval in July.

2007-04-25. The Clerk read an announcement for the minutes concerning the siting of the Old Chatham meetinghouse: The new proposed site for the Old Chatham Meetinghouse lies between Pitt Hall and the Knoll House. Because the meetinghouse is now to be situated on the main campus, there is no longer a need for a lease between the Yearly Meeting and Old Chatham Monthly Meeting. The NYYM trustees have been informed of this change.

2007-04-26. The minutes were read and approved.

2007-04-27. The meeting settled more deeply back into silent worship as Norma Ellis (Scarsdale) of the Epistle Committee read the 2006 Illinois Yearly Meeting epistle. In it, the Illinois Yearly Meeting reflected that it found itself "living the exquisite tension of transformation," that "God seems to be expecting leaps of faith" as its members "relinquish . . . old methods and make room for the new," and that the process of transformation requires grieving the yearly meeting's losses as well as embracing its future. The meeting took these words into its silence.