

Ministry Coordinating Committee Meeting

Summer Sessions 2016

Minutes

Wednesday, JULY 27

Present: Marissa Badgely, Annie Bancroft, Mary Pugh Clark, Cheshire Frager, Irma Guthrie, Lu Harper, Carol Holmes, Angela Hopkins, Beth Kelly, Mia Kissil-Hewitt, Elaine Learnard, Anne Pomeroy, Tom Rothschild, Gabi Savory-Bailey, Claire Simon, Bruce Steinberg, Ann Wright

1. Meeting began with a period of waiting Worship at 3:15 pm.
2. To check-in, Clerk Irma Guthrie shared the statement "Because I know trees, I understand the meaning of patience. Because I know grass, I can appreciate persistence." Irma shared "Because I watch clouds, I see endless possibilities." She invited us to finish the sentence, "Because I am a Quaker, I..."
3. The Clerk reviewed the agenda.
4. Presentation and Approval of the State of Society Report. Marissa Badgely read the State of Society report and discussed plans for presenting the report to YM Business session. With one slight change, Friends approved the report (attached).
5. Request for funding: Mia Kissil-Hewitt read a letter requesting \$3600 funding from the Lafayette Avenue Fund for courses she plans to take at Earlham School of Religion Fall 2016 and Spring 2017. Irma Guthrie reported that the Fund has \$14,000 in the operating budget, and MCC is charged with discernment as to the Fund's dispersal. Friends approved allocating \$1800 for the Fall Semester with an additional allocation of \$1800 for the Spring should Mia be clear to enroll in Spring 2017. Mia will report to the committee on her experience.
6. Proposed Changes to Faith and Practice from the Committee to Revise Faith and Practice: Peter Phillips
 - a. Revisions to the first reading of the "Use of Technology in the Conduct of Business": Standing aside as clerk of MCC and reporting as Clerk of F&P, Irma Guthrie presented the revised text. With a minor change

(attached), Friends approved sending the text to YM for a second reading.

7. Guidelines for members of committees to record: Anne Pomeroy presented draft queries to guide the internal processes of MCC, to guide individuals suggested as members of committees to record, and to guide the committee in its discernment. Friends asked to review the suggested queries at our next meeting.
8. Update on the Process of Naming the Committee to Record Beth Kelly in the Ministry. Clerk Irma Guthrie reported that we have received a minute from Brooklyn Meeting recommending that Beth be recorded, and that Beth has sent suggested names of committee members to the Clerk. Friends were clear to move forward appointing a committee for Beth. Friends approved returning to the constitution of that committee at our meeting on Friday.
9. Prayer List Announcement: Angela Hopkins, new keeper of the prayer list, shared her thoughts and discernment with her accountability group around taking on the prayer list. She & John Edminster have spoken about some future changes to the prayer list process.
10. Report Back from the Quaker Party. Gabi Savory-Bailey reported on the experience of the first Quaker Party held at Fifteenth St. Meeting on [dates]. She reported that ca. 120 Friends from at least 5 YMs and several Quaker organizations attended and well over 100 volunteers supported the event & meetings from the quarter contributed food. There were 3 plenaries and 10 workshops, with spaces set aside for concurrent experiential explorations of music, art, etc. Childcare was provided. An epistle created from the words of the participants shared via social media was distributed & presented to NY quarter meetings by Friends who attended worship on Sunday. At least two Friends who attended the Party became first-time attenders at our summer sessions this year. Financial, food & hosting support was provided from NY quarter.
11. Friends approved the minutes to date.
12. The meeting closed after a period of worship at 5:17 pm.

Friday, July 29

Present: Annie Bancroft, Mary Pugh Clark, Cheshire Frager, Irma Guthrie, Lu Harper, Angela Hopkins, Beth Kelly, Elaine Learnard, Peter Phillips, Anne Pomeroy, Tom Rothschild

13. The meeting opened with a period of silent worship at 1:46 p.m.
14. The Clerk reviewed the agenda.

15. Committee to Record Beth Kelly: Barbara Bleeker, David Herendeen and Patricia Glynn have agreed to be part of the committee. Friends approved.
16. Committee to revise Faith & Practice:
 - a. Question about quotations in the Faith section of F&P...the committee has assumed that quotes did not need to be approved by MCC, and wanted to confirm MCC's preferences. A Friend who had previously served on the committee remembered that when a Faith section was completed (complete with quotations) it would go to MCC. Friends agreed to continue that practice.
17. All Other Committee Reports.
 - a. Ministry and Pastoral Care. Anne Pomeroy reported on the Stevens Fund. NYM Trustees & M&PC have clarified the use & breadth of that fund, which is no longer completely restricted to pastors & their spouses, but more broadly to people in the yearly meeting who are aged or disabled and are in need of funds. M&PC and MCC approved at Spring Sessions 2016 the annual distributions and also distributions from the fund's accumulated income. Trustees approved the annual distribution. Trustees wanted the YM body be informed widely of the availability of the fund's accumulated income. M&PC will share that information via InfoShare & Spark. M&PC has rescinded its earlier minute authorizing the distribution from the fund's accumulated income and has asked MCC to do the same in order that M&PC may make a determination from a broader pool of applicants at Fall Sessions.
 - b. Task Group on Racism in NYM. Mary Pugh Clark reported on the task group's busy year. Many individuals helped in the effort to bring NYM Friends to the White Privilege Conference in April 2016. The task group encouraged MCC to work on the State of Society queries to help elicit responses that describe meetings' engagement with racial justice. Angela Hopkins reported on the activities of the task group, including: visitation to meetings; publication of a booklet; and support of current exploration of developing a Friends Center for Racial Justice envisioned in Ithaca MM's Burt House to support work by Friends of Color.
 - c. Spiritual Nurture Working Group. Lu Harper & Anne Pomeroy reported on the work of the SNWG. [attached]
18. State of Society Queries for next year: Friends began to discuss State of Society Queries for next year and after the meeting was over the Recording Clerk's computer ate her notes of the discussion. We will continue the discussion at Fall Sessions.

19. Meeting closed after a period of worship.

What is the spiritual condition of your Meeting? What is the spiritual condition of your committee? What is the spiritual condition of New York Yearly Meeting?

We Are Here

When terror and war shook our world, when our brothers and sisters fled persecution and turmoil abroad, when tragedy struck our local communities, New York Yearly Meeting Friends were there. When our international leaders came together around climate change, when the Supreme Court affirmed same-sex marriage, when our people stood up against hate and injustice, New York Yearly Meeting Friends were there. When our federal systems failed the most vulnerable among us, when human rights were compromised, when schools and streets and places of business were soiled with blood and tears, New York Yearly Meeting Friends were there. We were there and we are here. And in a year so marred by political, environmental, and social tumult, we remain faithfully present. We will not go away.

With 87% of Monthly Meetings and 18 committees responding, this year's meeting and committee reports tell the story of this faithful presence. We are here. We are optimistic, joyful, grateful, and impassioned. Though our numbers are often smaller than we would like, our worship is rich and our communities are strong. Though many of us feel the pain of loss and the challenges associated with aging, there is a real sense that our meetings and Yearly Meeting will go on into the future. One report used the metaphor of a tree that has roots in the past and branches reaching out to the future: though its leaves fall away, new leaves grow. Though we sometimes mourn what once was, we are getting better at listening and responding to that which currently is and who we are now. We recognize that when we let go, the Spirit changes; when we come together in God's presence, it is no longer about treading water but instead finding ways to swim. We celebrate the short distances we have swum together this year and also the longer journeys yet to come. We are here.

Friends consistently report that faith and community help meetings and committees face challenges with joy. We speak of healing, compassion, and kindness, recognizing that it is more often Spirit that brings us together rather than a physical setting. We speak of acceptance and affirmation, of supporting each other in times of stress and strengthening our spiritual connectedness through Quaker values like non-violence, social justice, speaking Truth, and environmental stewardship. We feel our meetings are spiritual families, oases of peace, havens for spirit and body, and safe places to share joys and concerns. Likewise, our committees speak of being a part of something greater, of faithful service and dedication despite a frequent shortage of people to perform the work. Grounded by passionate witness and by desires to push us toward sustainability and a more just world, we embrace our commitment to the Yearly Meeting's priorities and to making our Yearly Meeting and world a better place. We are here.

Meeting for Worship is most frequently described as deeply enriching. It is a time to be "grounded in silence," to "grow in spirit," to commit ourselves to a "great sense of power and harmony with the Divine." At the same time, more than a third of our meetings express concerns over a lack of vocal ministry, many of us noting a delicate balance between a love of deep silence and a desire to hear and share vocal ministry. Though some meetings are concerned with a lack of spiritual depth in ministry, others are deeply moved by spirit-led messages when they occur. The common thread is that our worship brings us together despite our many differences in faith, understanding, and belief. Seekers are warmly welcomed as Friends offer hospitality, spiritual renewal and respite from worldly cares. Especially in our worship, we are here.

This year perhaps more than in past years, we have made a concerted effort to create opportunities for additional worship and fellowship beyond Meeting for Worship on Sundays. Almost half of our meetings report a rise in after-meeting and midweek discussions on social and spiritual topics, in addition to increased openings for Bible study, worship-sharing, pot luck meals, hymn singing, spiritual mentorship, community service, and Yearly Meeting-led workshops. Meetings also share that their members and attenders are actively involved in workshops outside of the Meeting, serving on Yearly Meeting and other committees, participating in AVP, ARCH, FLGC and prison witness work, and attending community events such as interfaith gatherings, vigils, parades, film festivals, and fairs. Our General Secretary recently noted that he has never seen so much going on and while this "busyness" sometimes makes it difficult for us to do everything we wish to, there is a new and expectant energy circulating among us. We seem to be catching enthusiasm from each other and it is a blessing. We are here and as one Meeting report put it, "[We]...hopefully, bring light to the troubled world."

Many of our meetings and committees are concerned about diminishing numbers, aging membership, decreasing energy of long-time members, and travel distance for Friends. However, though our concerns are commonly shared, it is clear

that our meetings and committees find themselves in starkly different places in terms of growth, satisfaction, and priorities. While 11 percent of our meetings reported decreased membership this past year, another 10 percent reported increased membership. While 15 percent of meetings celebrated the arrival of younger F/friends, families, new attenders, and visitors, more than 15 percent of us noted feelings of isolation, fragmentation, and the overburdening of a small membership with too many responsibilities. More than 15 percent of our meetings spoke of the attention given to pastoral care for aging members who can no longer drive or, in some cases, attend Meeting at all. These Meetings often keenly feel the loss of these experienced Friends and are increasingly concerned for the future. On the other hand, optimism runs deep in more than 20 percent of reports, with increasing attention paid to children, youth, young adults, and families. In this same vein, 10 percent of meetings remarked on the vitality of First Day School, the activity of young families and the joy in hearing the voices of children, while 10 percent more remarked that they do not have enough children to hold regular First Day School. In times of growth, death, and stagnation, we are here.

Similar tensions exist when we consider our structures and physical spaces. With regard to Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business, some meetings report that business processes are “rightly led” and efficient, while others find themselves avoiding difficult issues and concerned that only a small number of Friends regularly attend Business Meeting. While some Meetings are having difficulty financially maintaining meetinghouses, they see the need for upkeep as an opportunity for workdays that raise the spirit of the Meeting community and make the “sacred space” more welcoming. Others are questioning whether the time and expense needed are diminishing their ability to serve the spiritual and social needs of members. Our successes and challenges are sometimes vastly different but we are all still here.

On the Yearly Meeting committee level, we hear of passionate witness work and the intense presence of spirit, high quality clerking and increased cross-committee exposure. We hear a resounding commitment to the Yearly Meeting’s Leadings and Priorities, in addition to worries about how those priorities will affect work moving forward. More than half of the committees with whom we spoke expressed that there are not enough people for the work at hand, though a few reported vibrant and growing membership. Many committees struggle with finding face-time for meetings and more than a few feel that they are missing key representation from Yearly Meeting regions and age groups. A few clerks testified to their exhaustion and dwindling energy, while others seem to be bursting with vitality and momentum. In our energy and in our weariness, we are here.

Even as we applaud our seemingly boundless support of one other, we wonder what we can do to better support those of us who encounter difficulty. Everyone on their spiritual journey needs someone to walk with them, and as a society we continue to struggle in our efforts to bring in, engage, and keep our new and younger attenders. We are forced to ask ourselves difficult questions. How can a person be involved even if they are not serving on a committee? How do we give people the language to talk about their experiences of God? How do we create authentic opportunities for people to share these experiences? How do others know what is going on in our individual corners? How do we invite people into our corners when we see them gazing in our general direction? How do we find the delicate balance between doing and being? How do we simultaneously embrace and reconcile widely divergent views among both members and attenders?

In our questioning, discernment, and seeking together, we are here.

Our differing conditions, approaches, and priorities make it difficult to discern a true and universal state of our society. Yet, on the whole, we are guided by Spirit and encouraged by the love that we feel within and without our meetinghouse walls. We embrace the spiritual presence of those who have worshiped among us but are no longer here. We recognize our diversity of beliefs, language, and faith and are grateful for the myriad spiritual gifts in our midst. We rejoice in a sense of renewal and expectation that stands in wonderful juxtaposition with the doubts, fears, and worries of our past. We are here and we will remain faithfully present. Accompanied by God and Truth and Light and Love, we will not go away.

USE OF TECHNOLOGY IN THE CONDUCT OF BUSINESS

The use of digital communication systems in the conduct of Friends' business has great benefits and has also created challenges for Quaker business process. The use of technologies such as video conferencing and electronic mail makes it possible to reduce the need for travel, and thereby expands participation by distant Friends. Our business can be responsive to the fast pace of developments in the world. Many Friends expect to use these technologies as they engage in the life of the Society. **At the same time**, we must be mindful that among us are Friends who cannot or choose not to use these technologies freely.

When use of these technologies replaces or augments face-to-face meetings, we must maintain discipline so that corporate worship, spiritual discernment, and the presence of the Spirit in our meetings and assemblies is retained. Each Yearly Meeting body that uses these technologies should establish agreements and protocols to ensure inclusivity and full participation, protect privacy and confidentiality, maintain collegiality, and support openness to Spirit.

Committees and other Yearly Meeting bodies seeking to conduct business by ways other than physical meetings should do so only upon formal approval at a face-to-face meeting. While they may choose to use **email or other** asynchronous digital communication for scheduling meetings or distributing documents, they are advised not to use it to share ministry, respond to proposals, or engage in substantive discussions. These activities are best suited to synchronous communication such as physical meetings or telephone or video conferencing.

**Spiritual Nurture Working Group report
6 June 2016**

Since Summer Sessions 2015, the SNWG has organized 3 Tending the Garden retreats at POHO and 8 retreats for local meetings, worship groups and quarters. In addition, Mary Kay Glazer, formerly of Rochester meeting, travelled in the ministry in NYYM in April 2017 under SNWG auspices. She met with 5 meetings and also provided spiritual direction opportunities for attenders at the NEYM/NYYM Ministers & Elders retreat. To date SNWG has sponsored opportunities in the following Quarters & Regions: All Friends; Farmington-Scipio; New York; Nine Partners; Northeastern; Purchase; and Shrewsbury & Plainfield.

Additional retreats are being planned into Fall 2016. We encourage meetings to look at the retreat descriptions posted on the YM website (<http://www.nyyym.org/?q=TendingtheGarden>) as a guide to possible retreat topics, and invite meetings to be in touch with the SNWG co-clerks to discuss the shape of a retreat that would be right for your meeting, allowing ample time for the Working Group to discern a facilitator and set a date. Because the YM has budgeted funds in support of these retreats, meetings should not feel stopped due to lack of funds.

SNWG had requested funding in the 2016 budget for 10 retreats at a cost of \$400 per retreat (travel plus costs for minister/elder). By Summer Sessions we will have expended \$917.78, due in large part to facilitators not requesting reimbursement and/or meetings providing facilitators with honoraria. Additionally, \$250 has been expended in POHO scholarships this year to date.

Tending the Garden retreats at POHO

Dates	Topic	Facilitator
10/30-11/1/2015	Exploring the Empowerment of Spiritual Giftedness	Jan Wood
1/22-1/24/2016	Transformation & the New Birth	Marcelle Martin
5/20-5/22/2016	From Seed to Flower	Christopher Sammond
9/23-9/25/2016	Building Facilitation Skills Authentically	Emily Provance, Karen Reixach & Christopher Sammond

Local retreats

Dates	Meeting	Topic	Facilitator(s)
10/9-10/10/2015	Buffalo (F-S)	Vocal Ministry	Lu Harper & Ed Seliger
2/12/2016	Manasquan	Vocal Ministry &	Anne Pomeroy &

	(Shrewsbury & Plainfield)	Discernment	Christopher Sammond
2/13/2016	15 th Street (New York Quarter)	Vocal Ministry	Christopher Sammond
2/14/2016	Amawalk (Purchase Quarter)	Sacred Journey	Callie Janoff
3/19/2016	Flushing (New York Quarter)	Deepening Worship	Chris de Roller
4/7/2016	Rochester (FS)	Healing	Mary Kay Glazer
4/9/2016	Purchase Quarter	Surrender & Resistance	Mary Kay Glazer
4/10-4/11/2016	Prayer group (Northeastern Quarter)	Spiritual Renewal	Mary Kay Glazer
4/13-4/14/2016	Chatham Summit (All Friends Regional Meeting)	Living with Integrity in Community	Mary Kay Glazer
4/15-4/18/2016	NEYM/NYYM Pastors & Elders Retreat	Spiritual Direction Opportunities	Mary Kay Glazer
4/19/2016	Poplar Ridge Women's Spiritual Nurture Group (FS)	Faithfulness	Mary Kay Glazer
5/21/2016	Cornwall (Nine Partners)	Anne Pomeroy	Living in Integrity
6/4/2016	Brooklyn M&C (New York Quarter)	Emily Provance	
6/26/2016	Old Chatham (Northeastern)	Ed Seliger	Vocal Ministry

Upcoming Retreats:

Dates	Meeting	Topic	Facilitator(s)
Sept. 2016 tbd	Scarsdale	Tbd	tbd