

## Ministry Coordinating Committee

2018 Coordinating Committee Weekend January 27, 2018

Present:

Jephrey Aaron, Lucinda Antrim, Annie Bancroft, Don Badgley, Marissa Badgley, Barbara Bleecker, Roger Dreisbach Williams, Carolyn Emerson, Kenn Harper, Lu Harper, David Herendeen, Angela Hopkins, Lyle Jenks, Hugo Lane, Elaine Learnard, Maureen McGovern, Anne Pomeroy, Emily Provance, Anne Wright

Joined by Steve Mohlke, Ed Seliger, Karen Snare, Callie Janoff, Deb Wood

The meeting opened with worship.

1. Check-in: Friends responded to the query "Who are we missing here?" Friends named people without a connection to YM work, parents/siblings, people who have passed, previous clerks, one who works all night/sleeps all day/has no relationships, previous members of the CC, a long line of young adults who have burnt out of service to the YM, those who ask us what makes us happy, those who are overbooked, a long term friend with whom I am no longer close, specific individuals, elders who are still alive and yet not with us.

2. Representatives needed from MCC to Leadings and Priorities and to Sessions Committee.

a. Leadings & Priorities Support WG: Roger Dreisbach Williams will serve as the representative.

b. Sessions: We need a voice due to the impact of Sessions Committee on the discernment about theme for Summer Sessions (the impact on Bible Study) as well as how often we meet as a committee. An important function of this representative is to maintain communication between the two bodies being represented. Friends are asked to hold this under discernment.

3. Committee to Revise Faith & Practice: Section on Clearness Committees:

Carolyn Emerson presented the revised section (attached). A Friend suggested adding language about committees for clearness about leadings or ministry. The language of 'overseers' was asked to be changed to pastoral care. We are clear this section will not include this reference. We asked to broaden the scope of who may be approached to create the clearness committee. We noted the absence of a mention of care/support committees. The Committee to Revise Faith and Practice will revise the section.

4. Alternative Membership Pathways report was presented by Marissa Badgley and Jeffrey Aaron (attached). On February 3<sup>rd</sup> Jillian Smith will lead a workshop at the FCRJ in Ithaca on alternatives to membership. The working group recognizes the importance of new pathways and the importance of the impact of our current membership pathways. Membership pathways are a concern throughout the wider Quaker community.

A multistep process was suggested as a path forward with this work. The WG will bring forward a first step proposal for membership in NYYM to Spring Sessions if possible. Members of MCC who want to be involved in the work (Roger, Hugo, Angela, Elaine, AnneW. And Lu) will be contacted.

5. Quaker Outside the Lines report: Emily Provance reported on the Quaker Outside the Lines project (attached). Emily shared the initial charge was from Duke Divinity School to look at 2 things that are hard for our community. 1. How we struggle with a complicated set of procedures to get anything done. This disproportionately affects certain members of our body. 2. We have a tendency as Friends to not focus much on the people in our immediate community. Young Adults cite as the number one reason they are not involved as they perceive their spiritual community as not relevant to anything outside their walls.

18 of 22 projects were completed. For more than half the forms for reimbursement were lost at the YM level. This is being actively addressed at the YM level. The loss of forms for reimbursement disproportionately affects specific portions of our body.

Emily found that the word service is not in the index of Faith and Practice. There are two references she found. She asked us to consider is this a reflection of our condition and our call of how we are to be in the world.

She stated that if you search on Facebook “#Quakeroutsidethelines” you can find all the posts.

We are grateful for her work and the concerns she has raised for us. Emily is in conversation with FGC and FUM to do social media outreach training for local meetings.

6. Reports from Recording Committees:

a. Beth Kelly: David Herendeen reported that the committee has had 3 conference calls. They will meet with Beth directly in February. They hope to bring a report to Spring Sessions.

b. Fred Jensen: The committee is working to find a time for their first meeting.

7. Use of section expenses

a. Support of attendance of Oliver Waterhouse from Britain YM to Summer Sessions: Liaison working with GSCC has found enough funds to cover all but \$200 of his costs. We approved using \$200 of section expense funds for this purpose. One Friend stood aside.

8. Worship around Nurture Coordinating Committee and YM Structure

The body went into worship around Nurture Coordinating Committee and the Yearly Meeting structure.

9. Announcements:

The Conflict Transformation Committee is sponsoring 2 three day trainings in the Restorative Justice Practice of Peacemaking Circles. April 20-22 in Rochester and April 24-26 in the NYC area. Friends are encouraged to attend if possible (details attached).

Serving as Recording Clerk: Anne Pomeroy

Interim Clerk: Lu Harper

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## CLEARNESS COMMITTEE

Replace with:

Friends seeking spiritual discernment or clarity on an issue of concern to them may find it useful to seek the help of a Clearness Committee. Traditionally, Friends have appointed Clearness Committees for those requesting membership in the meeting or couples seeking to marry under the care of a meeting. Additionally, Friends may seek a Clearness Committee to address particularly stressful personal needs, seeking reconciliation between aggrieved Friends, or for support of witness or travel in the ministry.

The monthly meeting on ministry and counsel may appoint a Clearness Committee at the request of a member or group of members. On whatever occasion, the clearness committee meets as a meeting for worship with a particular concern. It searches as a group for divine guidance to assist particular individuals.

The Clearness Committee is usually organized and selected by the individual(s) seeking clarity in cooperation with Overseers and/or Ministry and Council. A person is usually agreed upon to be the Convener. This person can take responsibility for scheduling the meeting, for opening and closing the meeting, and for following promptings for silence and worship at appropriate times. Thus those initiating the meeting have full participation in the meeting.

The session begins with a period of worship. From the silence the person seeking clarity presents the matter to be considered including leadings and details (for marriage and membership Clearness Committees, the convener may present the details). The group may return to silent worship. There may be more details from the person(s) involved in the matter. Others may ask questions and speak to the situation. All those participating need to be open and listen for God's leadings in the matter. Participants will have an opportunity to gain an understanding and appreciation of the individual(s) involved and any special situations. Individuals taking part in a Clearness Meeting hope to avoid giving advice or projecting their own situation and views on the individual(s) seeking clarity. Clarity may be reached in one session or it may take several sessions.

A Clearness Committee is not intended as a vehicle to give advice, or as a substitute for professional counsel or therapy when that is needed. It is a way of gaining support and using the nurturing aspect of the meeting to help with immediate problems, concerns, or decisions. Friends with an interest in or need for this process may talk this over with the clerk of Overseers or Ministry and Council.

Friends are invited to seek other sources including those on the internet for further information on the process, rewards, and challenges of serving on a Clearness Committee.

## Alternative Membership Pathways Working Group: Fall 2017 Report and Proposal

Since its formation in Fall 2016, the Alternative Membership Pathways Working Group (AMP) of Ministry Coordinating Committee has worshipped and practiced discernment regarding membership process and practice in New York Yearly Meeting (NYYM) and the Religious Society of Friends at large. Per our initial charge, AMP has been “exploring ways to add to membership process in a way that improves inclusivity and relevance for Friends who do not currently have but are seeking formal ways to pursue membership without necessarily affiliating with a local meeting.” After one year of work, several small group discussions, and a retreat at Powell House with twenty Friends representing New York, New England, and Philadelphia Yearly Meetings, the Working Group has come to unity on a number of points, has reflected on some still-unanswered questions, and is presenting two potential alternative pathways for membership. We request that these proposed pathways be seasoned by Ministry Coordinating Committee for possible further advancement.

Through its work, the Working Group has discovered and is in unity about the following:

- **Friends feel that membership is valuable** on a number of levels including but not limited to individual and group Quaker identity, public recognition of those claiming to speak on behalf of Friends, mutual care and support, group strength in the world, care of ministry in a meeting, corporate accountability, responsibility for decision making and carrying out decisions, naming Truth, providing spiritual home, caring for people in need, providing space for formal relationships, and for support and clearness committees.
- **There are many important reasons for membership through the local monthly meeting**, including the need for a clearness committee that knows the applicant, approval by the body that will become the new member’s spiritual home, and regular oversight and support for members.
- Many individuals across Yearly Meetings feel that their local monthly meeting is not their spiritual home. The meeting in which they may have been raised, which may be a different meeting than their local meeting, may also not serve as their home. **Many active Friends, attenders, and others feel that other Quaker bodies serve that spiritual function.** These bodies may include but may not only be limited to Yearly Meetings, Regional/Quarterly Meetings, FUM, FGC, Prison Worship Groups, and such places as Powell House, and Young Adult Circles.
- **Barriers to membership exist for some who have found a spiritual home in Quakerism and who are sometimes unable to apply for membership at the monthly meeting level for various reasons.** For incarcerated Friends, students at Quaker schools or for regular attenders at Powell House (both youth and adult programs), there may never be a connection to a local meeting at all. There are also those who grew up as Friends and live their lives in commitment to service and Quaker values but whose circumstances and/or life commitments have made it impossible to attend meeting for worship and find a finite spiritual home.
- **In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, people are more transient than ever before.** This puts strain on current membership processes because people may not feel settled in one place, may not be able to regularly attend meeting for worship at the meeting where they hold membership, may feel the need to transfer membership multiple times.

While the Working Group has focused its energy on alternative pathways to membership, we have also discovered some hard truths about how current practices and processes are implemented across New York Yearly Meeting and beyond. We recognize and feel that it is important to name that while membership on the monthly meeting level has value and crucial functions, our monthly meetings do not always meet the needs of those seeking membership and those approved as members. Specifically, there is large variation in process and quality of process in how members are approved, how clearness committees function, and how meetings hold members accountable in the months and years following approval as a member. **The Working Group feels that at the same time as we are considering alternative pathways, it is important for us to simultaneously consider and potentially refresh the pathways we already have. We consider this to be parallel and equally important work.**

The Working Group is clear that while implementation might vary, **any alternative pathway to membership must include the components of current and standard process** (i.e., writing of a letter, appointment of clearness committee, discernment with clearness committee, recommendation from clearness committee to body, and approval by the body). The following page outlines a potential alternative membership pathway called “Itinerant Membership.” We seek seasoned advice from MCC concerning regarding these initial draft concepts.

The last page of this document includes questions and queries that the Working Group feels are important as we as a larger body discern way forward.

## Itinerant Membership Process Under the Care of New York Yearly Meeting

### DRAFT CONCEPT

1. A committee or sub-committee (new or existing) will be named at the coordinating committee level to address Itinerant Membership under the care of New York Yearly Meeting. This may be Ministry and Pastoral Care of MCC, the Spiritual Nurture Working Group, a new Membership Oversight Committee under MCC, or other designated group.
2. A membership application letter will be written by Friend seeking membership, addressed to the clerk of MCC or the clerk of the selected body from step 1. The letter should include:
  - a. compelling information as to why itinerant membership is sought at this time
  - b. an explanation of why this process was selected by the applicant instead of applying through a Monthly Meeting
  - c. whether applicant is interested in being a member in perpetuity or for a set period of time
  - d. whether applicant would like to be an Itinerant Friend under the care of New York Yearly Meeting or an itinerant friend in relationship with a specific Quaker body (including Yearly Meeting, Quarterly/Regional Meeting, Prison Worship Group,...?).
    - i. *An Itinerant Friend under the care of New York Yearly Meeting might be a person who wants to be officially be defined as a Quaker but who cannot attend Monthly Meeting, Yearly Meeting, or other Quaker gatherings with regularity, if at all.*
    - ii. *An Itinerant Friend in relationship with a specific Quaker body might be a person who is deeply involved with and committed to a specific Quaker community and would like to be recognized as such*
    - iii. *Through future collaboration, it is possible that Itinerant Friends might be named in relationship to multiple entities (i.e., New York Yearly Meeting and New England Yearly Meeting)*
3. The selected committee from step 1 above responds to the applicant and creates a clearness committee using an agreed upon process. When selecting clearness committee members, attention will be paid to geography, needs of the applicant, and representation from multiple bodies within New York Yearly Meeting.
4. The clearness committee meets with the applicant using agreed upon process.
  - a. Friends requesting to be named in relationship with a body would discern with their clearness committee about the current and future nature of relationship with those bodies and discuss appropriate accountability structures
5. The clearness committee eventually reports back to the selected committee (which, per step one above, will be decided by MCC at a later date) with its recommendation.
6. On final approval, the selected committee welcomes the new member appropriately and is responsible for support, advice and oversight of the new member thereafter.
  - a. Support, advice and oversight may come from a pool of named elders who feel led to serve on an as-needed basis. These elders may or may not serve on clearness committees.
  - b. Named committee/clearness committee will take responsibility of what is appropriate and what is needed for Itinerant Members.
7. Itinerant Friends are expected to maintain proactive involvement, and will submit an annual “check-in” letter to let named committee know what has been going on for the past year, whether they need specific support, or if they would like to adjust their membership status.

This process, and any version of this process, would require revision of the description of responsibilities of the committees in the NYYM Handbook as well as revision of the membership section of F&P. It would also require new record keeping of new YM-direct members by the YM offices.

## Questions for Moving Forward

1. With any new pathway to membership, how do we create accountability structures in a way that meets needs of members and organizing bodies?
2. Are existing accountability structures sufficient and properly followed universally?
3. Who should serve on clearness committees for Itinerant Members?
4. What expectations/responsibilities do Itinerant members have to Yearly Meeting or Religious Society of Friends?
  - a. Financial?
  - b. Social?
  - c. Serving on committees?
  - d. Attending meetings?
  - e. Engagement in “Society”?
5. Do people applying for itinerant membership need to have a history of participation in YM in some function? Do they need to live within YM regions? What are “minimal” criteria for application?
6. In the case that a YM member needs financial assistance or wants a support committee or anything else, what does that process look like?
7. Does MCC (or named committee) need to have a budget line to support YM or sojourning members?
8. What does marriage look like?
9. If other YMs do not approve of the same Sojourning membership arrangement as NYYM - can a resident of another place become an itinerant member of NYYM?

## Quaker Outside the Lines

### Report to NYYM Ministry Coordinating Committee and General Services Coordinating Committee Coordinating Committee Weekend 2018 (Final Report)

#### PREMISE

The Quaker Outside the Lines project offered reimbursement of up to \$200 for New York Yearly Meeting Friends who did projects that were meaningful in their neighborhood communities. The project was launched in January 2017, with the last projects being approved in October 2017. The program was funded by a grant from Duke Divinity School, through the Foundations of Christian Leadership Program.

#### APPROVAL AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The project was approved by NYYM's general services coordinating committee and by NYYM's ministry coordinating committee. GSCC agreed to take on the work of tracking and issuing checks. MCC affirmed that the spiritual accountability and oversight of the project ultimately rested with my (Emily Provance's) support committee but also agreed to receive occasional reports as an additional form of spiritual oversight.

#### PUBLICITY

Availability of the Quaker Outside the Lines program was advertised by video on social media, by global email from the NYYM office, and by articles in Spark and InfoShare. Information was also available at [nyym.org](http://nyym.org).

#### VIDEOS

A total of three videos about the project were produced using iMovie: an introductory video, a halfway-point video, and a concluding video. The videos took an average of two hours to produce. The introductory video was shared 27 times and was watched by 1,087 people. The halfway-point video was shared 8 times and was watched by 345 people. The concluding video was shared 6 times and was watched by 170 people. The videos were effective in building awareness of the project and its underlying concept of service to our neighborhoods not only among Friends in New York Yearly Meeting but among Friends in many other yearly meetings. It may be worth considering the possibility of developing video communications for other purposes in New York Yearly Meeting, especially in the case of communications that are message-specific and would be relevant beyond NYYM.

#### PROJECTS

Applications came through a Google form, still viewable at [www.tinyurl.com/quakeroutsidethelines/](http://www.tinyurl.com/quakeroutsidethelines/). A total of 22 applications were received. Of these, 21 were approved. (The unapproved project was a result of a misunderstanding on the part of the applicant, who eventually withdrew his request.) 18 of these projects were eventually completed, though only 15 of these projects were ultimately reimbursed. (In two cases, the applicant lost all documentation of expenses and therefore was not able to be reimbursed. In one case, the project was completed but incurred zero cost.)

In the eighteen completed projects, Friends did the following:

1. Developed an online clearinghouse for local advocacy actions;
2. Connected Quakers with secular groups to work together against solitary confinement;

3. Facilitated a multi-faith conversation forum for a town;
4. Produced a “Justice for All” concert;
5. Gathered local churches, mosques, and synagogues for a racial justice weekend;
6. Hosted an interfaith community book study;
7. Conducted body-based nonviolence training;
8. Presented information to the public on eradicating solitary confinement;
9. Provided Internet and television for a newly arrived Syrian refugee family;
10. Raised and released butterflies;
11. Planted bulbs at a local library;
12. Initiated a community-wide day of prayer;
13. Held a white privilege conversation series;
14. Gardened with a mental health organization;
15. Took Quaker worship to a Burning Man gathering;
16. Constructed a mock solitary confinement cell at a county fair;
17. Participated in a street fair;
18. Created a “cost of war” art installation.

#### FINANCIAL REPORT

Original grant from Duke Divinity School	\$5000
Total reimbursements for approved projects	\$2,698.32
Standard 10% grant administration fee assessed by NYYM	\$269.83
Total cost of project	\$2,968.15
Remaining funds (to be returned to Duke, according to original terms of grant)	\$2,031.85

#### CLOSING QUERY

There is no section in our *Faith and Practice* that refers to directly serving others as a spiritual practice. The words “service,” “neighbor,” and “neighborhood” do not appear in the index of our *Faith and Practice*. No advice or query refers to serving, or even to befriending, our literal neighbors. The closest reference might come in advice #10, in which we quote, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”

I could only find two relevant passages, in fact, in all of *Faith and Practice*. One comes under the heading “Poverty and Stewardship” and tells us that “our concern for equality and justice encourages our support of government policies that might alleviate poverty *and our involvement in private efforts to extend direct, personal help to friends and neighbors.*” The other is a quotation from London Yearly Meeting in 1944 under the heading “Social Justice,” which says, “We should like to see a greater unity between the religious service of our meetings and the social service of Friends, each being complementary to the other, since they are rooted in the same life and spirit; *and to see this expressed in meeting houses which act as centres for varied activities of the surrounding neighbourhood.*”

This is two references in a *Faith and Practice* that spans 155 pages. And in my own eight years’ experience with New York Yearly Meeting, I cannot remember a time when a yearly meeting session, a meeting for discernment, or an issue of *Spark* was devoted to the theme of serving our neighbors or of meetings’ serving/befriending their neighborhood communities.

Does this accurately reflect our understanding of Spirit, or have we overlooked something?



New York Yearly Meeting  
Religious Society of Friends  
Committee on Conflict Transformation

The Conflict Transformation Committee of New York Yearly Meeting is sponsoring two three-day trainings in the Restorative Justice Practice of Peacemaking Circles for April 20<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> in Rochester and April 24<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> in the New York City area. This training will increase participants' understanding of Restorative Justice and prepare them to keep/facilitate a peacemaking circle for a variety of circumstances..

To receive a registration form directly, please send an email to [heathermcook2014@gmail.com](mailto:heathermcook2014@gmail.com) with the subject line "Circle Processes Training Rochester" or "Circle Processes Training NYC area."

Circle processes have ancient roots in human history, and have many different applications, from building community to restoring broken relationships. The principles undergirding circle processes are in harmony with Quaker faith. Circles provide a structured way to follow our practices of deep listening and of seeking connection through that of God in ourselves and others.

The Committee on Conflict Transformation envisions circle processes becoming part of the culture of New York Yearly Meeting. They are another resource to help meetings and committees gain confidence in responding to conflict as an opportunity for spiritual growth rather than perceiving conflict as a problem to be avoided. Meeting Clerks and members of Ministry & Counsel are particularly urged to attend.

*Co-Facilitators:*

Kay Pranis has been working with Circles since 1996 helping to implement Circles in the adult and juvenile justice systems, schools, social services, workplaces, neighborhoods, mediation programs, churches and families. She has been using Circles for conflict resolution and for community building in government agencies, community non-profits and universities. She has done numerous international trainings, most recently several weeks in Brazil, and is the author of the *Little Book of Circle Processes*.

Wilbur Bontrager (Farmington Friends) received his masters degree from Eastern Mennonite University with an emphasis in restorative justice and conflict transformation. He is a member of the NYYM Committee on Conflict Transformation and the founder of Partners in Restorative Initiative (PIRI) in Rochester, NY.