

# Spring Sessions 2015

## Advance Documents

We encourage those who plan to attend our annual sessions this year to review these documents before arriving at Spring Sessions, and to print them out if you expect to refer to them during the Sessions. This will prepare you for the Sessions and save paper. Thank you.

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# NYYM Spring Sessions 2015 - Daily Schedule

## Friday, April 10, 2015

7:00 pm      Speaker: Shan Cretin, AFSC General Secretary, on Fostering Leadership for Social Change

## Saturday, April 11

8:00 am      Registration, display set-ups, and morning coffee

8:30 – 9:15      Meeting for Worship

9:30 – 11:15      Meeting for Business in Worship

11:30 – 12:30      Lunch

12:45 – 2:00      Meeting for Business in Worship

2:15 – 3:45      Committee Meetings – 1

4:00 – 5:30      Committee Meetings – 2

5:45 – 6:45      Dinner

7:00 – 9:00      Coordinating Committee meetings

## Sunday, April 12

8:15 am      Registration and morning coffee

9:00 – 10:00      Meeting for Worship

10:15 – 12:15      Meeting for Business in Worship

12:30 – 1:30      Lunch

# NYYM Spring Sessions 2015 – Agenda (subject to change)

## Saturday, April 11, 2015, 9:30AM to 11:15AM

Roll call  
Welcome from host committee  
Report on interim items approved  
Priorities Working Group (PWG) report  
PWG -- Implementation minutes  
PWG -- Priorities Assessment Committee minutes  
General Services Coordinating Committee -- report  
Report on the Young Adult Field Secretary position  
Treasurer's report  
Travel minute for Rachel Pia  
Three Lockport---Brinkerhoff requests

## Saturday, April 11, 2015, 12:45PM to 2:00PM

Consideration of how we are led to implement the Leadings and Priorities we have discerned

## Sunday, April 12, 2015, 10:15AM to 12:15PM

Consent agenda  
Solitary confinement minute  
Endorsement of Peace & Planet mobilization  
FGC invite to join host team for 2016 White Privilege Conference  
Children & Youth Field Secretary position – proposal  
Ministry Coordinating Committee -- report  
Faith & Practice -- Spiritual care of members – first reading  
Faith & Practice -- Recording gifts in the ministry – first reading  
Faith & Practice -- Covenant relationships – first reading  
Sessions Committee summary report

## HANDOUT FOR SATURDAY AFTERNOON BUSINESS SESSION

12:45PM to 2:00PM

### **Background:**

Monthly meetings and worship groups, through the vehicle of the Priorities Working Group, have collectively identified our needs and priorities. The gathered body of NYYM has accepted these priorities as the work of the Yearly Meeting, and we are moving now toward implementing them.

The work of the Yearly Meeting is done by Yearly Meeting staff, and also by Friends who volunteer their time. If we consider the total hours of work performed by staff and volunteers combined, the volunteer hours amount to as much as 75% of the total work performed.

Three things characterize this work and the volunteers who perform it.

- 1) The volunteers are Friends from our monthly meetings, from your meeting and from many other meetings. Thus a substantial portion of work performed by what we call the “Yearly Meeting” is actually done by Friends from monthly meetings. (And, of course, our staff are also Friends from monthly meetings.) This work impacts our monthly meetings, which are both beneficiaries of the work, and the source that supplies the Friends who perform it.
- 2) The work of volunteers from our monthly meetings who serve the “Yearly Meeting” is almost entirely channeled through the NYYM committee structure. The NYYM committee structure provides a means of coordinating this work across our monthly meetings.
- 3) Friends perform the work they are led to perform. The Yearly Meeting cannot simply redirect their work if the Friends who volunteer are not led to do it. Nor will monthly meetings necessarily gain the volunteer hours of a Friend if the Friend no longer works within the Yearly Meeting committee structure. These things may or may not happen, depending on how Friends are led to serve, and not by the direction of either the Yearly Meeting as an organization, or monthly meetings as organizations.

Our monthly meetings have voiced our priorities, and we as a Yearly Meeting as a whole have agreed to work on them.

### **Queries:**

How are Friends from monthly meetings led to help other monthly meetings achieve the priorities our meetings have collectively identified?

How might Friends from other monthly meetings help your monthly meeting?

How can the NYYM committee structure help Friends help each other achieve the priorities we have discerned together?

What are other ways we might help each other live into our priorities?

**New York Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends  
Minute in Support of the proposed  
Humane Alternatives to Long Term (HALT)  
Solitary Confinement Act (A.4401/S.2659)**

Quakers have a history of involvement in the correctional facilities in New York State. In the 1970's, Friends helped to develop the Alternatives to Violence Project at the request of men from the Greenhaven Correctional Facility. Many members of the NY Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends continue to volunteer with this program, which is active in 15 correctional facilities in New York. In addition, we maintain Quaker Worship Groups in 8 correctional facilities. Our involvement confirms our belief that positive interactions and programming support constructive change. The training and programs proposed in the HALT Bill have the potential, we believe, to be far more effective ways to change behavior and make prisons safer for both the incarcerated and members of staff than our current use of solitary confinement.

The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) has a strong belief in the possibility of positive transformation within each person and a strong belief in non-violence. The way we treat people affects their ability to connect with that of God within. The use of solitary confinement has nothing to do with the original crime and creates permanent psychological and physical injury. Incarcerated men, women and youth are then less able to make positive changes. They are more likely to suffer psychological damage, and they become more of a risk to themselves, to Corrections Officers, and when released, to the public. Research on the effects of solitary confinement confirms this. We have come to understand as Friends that violence may be psychological and emotional, not just physical. We feel that solitary confinement as it is currently employed in NY State is a form of torture and must be stopped.

Acknowledging these circumstances, Friends are led to approve the following minute:

The New York Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends calls on Governor Cuomo to support the reform of the practice of solitary confinement in the state correctional facilities and local jails of New York, as developed in the Humane Alternatives to Long Term (HALT) Solitary Confinement Act, Bill #A4401/S2659. With the enactment of the changes in the use of solitary confinement proposed in the Act, New York would become a leader in the effort to stop human rights abuses in the United States.

## **FAITH & PRACTICE - CARE OF GIFTS AND RECORDING OF GIFTS IN MINISTRY**

The section currently labeled RECORDING OF GIFTS IN MINISTRY beginning on p. 126, is proposed to read as follows:

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CARE OF MINISTRIES AND RECORDING OF GIFTS IN MINISTRY. In cases when a member has given public ministry which is sustained, consistent and enlivening and has rendered this service to such an extent as to afford a basis for judgment as to the nature of those gifts and calling, the monthly meeting on ministry and counsel should carefully consider whether there is evidence of a gift in the ministry that should be officially recognized. Friends should bear in mind that such recording of gifts of ministry is a recognition of the gift of the Spirit to the community and a recognition of the need for care and nurture of that gift.

When the monthly meeting on ministry and counsel is satisfied that a member carries a gift in the ministry that they consider to be of suitable character, they should report this to the monthly meeting. If the monthly meeting approves, the monthly meeting on ministry and counsel should prepare a minute for the consideration of the yearly meeting's Ministry Coordinating Committee, which, in turn, should refer the proposal to a designated committee for examination and recommendation. If, after due consideration, the way seems clear, the designated committee shall forward their recommendation to the Ministry Coordinating Committee, who may approve the recording and furnish a copy of its minute to the monthly meeting of which the individual is a member. The action should also be reported to the yearly meeting for record. If Ministry Coordinating Committee does not approve a proposal to record, they should so inform the originating meeting.

The recording of an individual's gifts in ministry carries a responsibility on the part of Friends in the monthly, regional/quarterly and yearly meetings to nurture, support and hold accountable the individual in the exercise of those gifts, including by being present during the exercise of the gifts, knowing the spiritual condition of the individual, hearing reports of the ministry, etc.

In naming the gift of ministry, the monthly meeting carries the primary responsibility for nurture and oversight of the gift throughout its life cycle, including naming changes in the gift and its possible withdrawal. Care committees, peer groups, etc. may provide structures for this work, which may also be carried by the regional/quarterly meeting.

In recording the gift of ministry, Ministry Coordinating Committee carries a concern for both the individual carrying the gift and the meeting in which the gift is manifested.

In cases where the gift has been withdrawn, a proposal to rescind the action recording the member as a minister may originate with the overseers or ministry and counsel of the

monthly meeting of which the minister is a member or with the Ministry Coordinating Committee. Final action rests with the Ministry Coordinating Committee. The individual concerned and the monthly meeting to which that person belongs shall be notified before final action is taken, and care should be exercised that any rights involved are fully safeguarded.

The status of a minister is transferable with the certificate of membership from one monthly meeting to another and from one yearly meeting to another. It is expected, however, that a minister planning to engage in the pastoral ministry in another yearly meeting will endeavor to meet the requirements of the yearly meeting to which transfer is made.

**NOTE: SAME TEXT, SHOWN WITH EDITS INDICATED**

New text is indicated in square brackets and in bold. Deleted text is shown by strikethrough font.

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~~RECORDING OF GIFTS IN MINISTRY~~ **[CARE OF MINISTRIES AND RECORDING OF GIFTS IN MINISTRY]**. ~~Some meetings may wish to continue the practice of recording ministers. In cases when a member has spoken in the~~ **[given]** public ministry ~~to the edification and spiritual help of the congregation~~ **[which is sustained, consistent and enlivening]** and has rendered this service to such an extent as to afford a basis for judgement as to the nature of those gifts and calling, the meeting on ministry and counsel should carefully consider whether there is evidence of a gift in the ministry that should be officially recognized. ~~While a spoken message may be helpful in its place and should be esteemed and encouraged accordingly, not every person who speaks in public should be given official recognition. Friends should bear in mind that such recognition~~ **[recording of gifts]** in ministry is ~~not only a seal of approval of one who is locally helpful but that it also involves extension of service beyond the local community. Recorded ministers not only have opportunity for service among Friends generally, but, because of the increase in interdenominational activity, such recognition opens the way for contacts and associations with ministers and members of other religious groups.~~ **[a recognition of the gift of the Spirit to the community and a recognition of the need for care and nurture of that gift.]**

When the monthly meeting on ministry and counsel is satisfied that a member ~~has~~ **[carries]** a gift in the ministry that they consider to be of suitable character ~~and aptitude~~, they should report this to the monthly meeting. If the monthly meeting approves, the monthly meeting on ministry and counsel should prepare a minute for the consideration of the yearly meeting's ~~Coordinating Committee for Ministry and Counsel~~ **[Ministry Coordinating Committee]**, which, in turn, should refer the proposal to a designated committee for examination and recommendation. If, after due consideration, the way seems clear, the ~~Coordinating Committee for Ministry and Counsel~~ **[designated committee]** shall forward their recommendation to the ~~Yearly Meeting on Ministry and Counsel~~ **[Ministry Coordinating Committee]**, who may approve the recording and

furnish a copy of its minute to the monthly meeting of which the individual is a member. The action should also be reported to the yearly meeting for record. If ~~they do~~ **[Ministry Coordinating Committee does]** not approve a proposal to record, they should so inform the originating meeting.

**[The recording of an individual's gifts in ministry carries a responsibility on the part of Friends in the monthly, regional/quarterly and yearly meetings to nurture, support and hold accountable the individual in the exercise of those gifts, including by being present during the exercise of the gifts, knowing the spiritual condition of the individual, hearing reports of the ministry, etc.]**

**[In naming the gift of ministry, the monthly meeting carries the primary responsibility for nurture and oversight of the gift throughout its life cycle, including naming changes in the gift and its possible withdrawal. Care committees, peer groups, etc. may provide structures for this work, which may also be carried by the regional/quarterly meeting.]**

**[In recording the gift of ministry, Ministry Coordinating Committee carries a concern for both the individual carrying the gift and the meeting in which the gift is manifested.]**

~~In case a member who has been recorded as a minister appears to have lost the gift and usefulness in the ministry~~ **[cases where the gift has been withdrawn]**, a proposal to rescind the action recording the member as a minister may originate with the overseers or ministry and counsel of the monthly meeting of which the minister is a member or with the ~~yearly meeting on ministry and counsel~~ **[Ministry Coordinating Committee]**. Final action rests with the ~~yearly meeting on ministry and counsel~~ **[Ministry Coordinating Committee]**. The individual concerned and the monthly meeting to which that person belongs shall be notified before final action is taken, and care should be exercised that any rights involved are fully safeguarded.

The status of a minister is transferable with the certificate of membership from one monthly meeting to another and from one yearly meeting to another. It is expected, however, that a minister planning to engage in the pastoral ministry in another yearly meeting will endeavor to meet the requirements of the yearly meeting to which transfer is made.



## **FAITH & PRACTICE – SPIRITUAL CARE OF MEMBERS**

The section currently labeled SPIRITUAL CARE OF MEMBERS beginning on p. 121, is proposed to include an additional bulleted item at the end, and to read as follows:

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SPIRITUAL CARE OF MEMBERS. Members of ministry and counsel should be concerned:

- to foster the spiritual growth of the meeting membership and enhance their religious life and fellowship, including especially the supervision and strengthening of corporate worship of the meeting;
- to consider individual needs for guidance and to make provision for personal counsel and assistance in matters of interpersonal relationships among members and in individual and family problems pertaining to illness, financial matters, marital relations, and decisions of conscience, and, where appropriate, to recommend professionally-trained counsel for especially difficult problems;
- to review annually the spiritual condition of the meeting and its membership and to write the State of the Meeting reports;
- to develop programs and conferences, study groups, and public meetings to disseminate information regarding Friends' spiritual concerns and to assist members and attenders to deepen the life of the spirit;
- where desired by local meetings, to consider qualifications and make recommendations concerning recording gifts in ministry or engagement of pastors or meeting secretaries;
- to seek guidance in nurturing gifts of ministry throughout the life cycle of gifts from naming gifts, to care and oversight and including changes in the gift.

**NOTE: SAME TEXT, SHOWN WITH EDITS INDICATED**

New text is indicated in square brackets and in bold.

---

SPIRITUAL CARE OF MEMBERS. Members of ministry and counsel should be concerned:

- to foster the spiritual growth of the meeting membership and enhance their religious life and fellowship, including especially the supervision and strengthening of corporate worship of the meeting;
- to consider individual needs for guidance and to make provision for personal counsel and assistance in matters of interpersonal relationships among members and in individual and family problems pertaining to illness, financial matters, marital relations, and decisions of conscience, and, where appropriate, to recommend professionally-trained counsel for especially difficult problems;
- to review annually the spiritual condition of the meeting and its membership and to write the State of the Meeting reports;
- to develop programs and conferences, study groups, and public meetings to disseminate information regarding Friends' spiritual concerns and to assist members and attenders to deepen the life of the spirit;
- where desired by local meetings, to consider qualifications and make recommendations concerning recording gifts in ministry or engagement of pastors or meeting secretaries;
- **[to seek guidance in nurturing gifts of ministry throughout the life cycle of gifts from naming gifts, to care and oversight and including changes in the gift.]**

# FAITH & PRACTICE - COVENANT RELATIONSHIPS

The first five paragraphs of the section are unchanged, and not shown.

Beginning with the sixth paragraph of the section, located on page 38, the section will appear as follows:

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Love reaches further than words, and we experience the Spirit long before any words. The family is a precious spiritual community, and we rejoice and are nourished in homes full of friendliness, refreshment, and peace, where God becomes real to those who live there and to all who visit. We joyfully acknowledge the sustaining, enriching presence of loving unions among us, whether between persons of different or the same gender, and we want the meeting's strength to undergird these covenants.

Some of us live alone and find love and community among our friends. Some of us are single parents, caring for our children. Some members' families follow traditional patterns; others do not. Many monthly meetings honor committed gay and lesbian relationships and take same sex marriages under our care, following the practice of the monthly meeting. Just as there is that of God in every person, there is that of God in every relationship that calls upon God. We seek to treat responsible, loving relationships tenderly and respectfully. We seek to hold each other in the light of our ideal that Spirit-filled covenant relationships are the one sure basis for love and sexuality.

In prayer and worship, each meeting can speak truthfully to the particular needs and difficulties of its members and their relationships. Through committees of clearness, for example, a meeting can respond with great care and concern to the requests for marriage that come before it, following the marriage procedures described elsewhere in this book.

Marriage is a covenant intended for life. Families need the support of monthly meetings and their marriage-oversight committees long after the wedding vows are spoken. These groups can support the couple, offering to help explore options and seek constructive solutions with waiting and prayer. The partners should be encouraged not to give up their commitments easily. However, some relationships can be unwise or become unhealthy, even psychologically or physically abusive. We urge Friends to treat conflict in relationships, separation, and divorce among members with the same careful concern for clearness as they use before marriage.

**NOTE: SAME TEXT, SHOWN WITH EDITS INDICATED**

New text is indicated in square brackets and in bold. Deleted text is shown by strikethrough font.

---

Love reaches further than words, and we experience the Spirit long before any words. The family is a precious spiritual community, and we rejoice and are nourished in homes full of friendliness, refreshment, and peace, where God becomes real to those who live there and to all who visit. We joyfully acknowledge the sustaining, enriching presence of loving unions among us, **[whether between persons of different or the same gender]** and we want the meeting's strength to undergird these covenants.

~~God has created no man or woman even nearly perfect. But we grow in both our virtue and our capacity to love by the testing, against the world and each other, of those weaknesses which by the grace of God we can convert into strengths; and by the finding of those strengths and beauties in each other which we hardly dared suspect were there. But these are the rewards of unfolding years; years, not weeks or months. The glory of a great marriage lies in the surprises which loving support, acceptance, and graceful forgiveness can bring forth.~~

*—R.B. Crowell, "Words at a Quaker Wedding,"  
Friends Journal, 11/74*

Some of us live alone and find love and community among our friends. Some of us are single parents, caring for our children. Some members' families follow traditional patterns; others do not. **[Many monthly meetings honor committed gay and lesbian relationships and take same sex marriages under our care, following the practice of the monthly meeting.]** Just as there is that of God in every person, there is that of God in every relationship that calls upon God. We seek to treat responsible, loving relationships tenderly and respectfully. We seek to hold each other in the light of our ideal that Spirit-filled covenant relationships are the one sure basis for love and sexuality.

In prayer and worship, each meeting can speak truthfully to the particular needs and difficulties of its members and their relationships. Through committees of clearness, for example, a meeting can respond with great care and concern to the requests for marriage that come before it, following the marriage procedures described **[elsewhere in this book.]** ~~in the Practice and Procedure section of this book of discipline. The monthly meeting can also advise and counsel those who are overwhelmed by social pressures and confused by our culture's conflicting attitudes toward sexual morality.~~

Marriage is a covenant intended for life[.], ~~and it is with deep sorrow that we note divorce among members. Separation and divorce are spiritually, psychologically, and sometimes physically devastating for children.~~ Families need the support of monthly meetings and their marriage-oversight committees long after the wedding vows are spoken. These groups can support the couple, offering to help explore options and seek constructive solutions with waiting and prayer. The partners should be encouraged not to give up their commitments easily. However, some relationships can be unwise or become unhealthy, even psychologically or physically abusive. We urge Friends to treat conflict in relationships, separation, and divorce among members with the same careful concern for clearness as they use before marriage.



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Monday, March 30, 2015

New York Yearly Meeting  
15 Rutherford Place  
New York, NY 10003

Dear Friends of New York Yearly Meeting,

Greetings from Friends General Conference's Committee for Nurturing Ministries Ministry on Racism Program! We commend the work NYYM has done to advance racial justice, and we are pleased to invite you to join the 2016 White Privilege Conference host team.

The White Privilege Conference is an annual conference which challenges various forms of oppression, and empowers individuals to transform themselves and the world around them. Attendance in recent years has ranged from 1500-2400. For the past four years, FGC has made it possible for Quakers to form cohesive networks while at the conference by providing a large registration discount, a Quaker Hospitality room for fellowship and worship, and home hospitality for Quakers attending the conference.

Members of the host team are the volunteer core sponsoring body which ensures that the Conference is a success in each city where it is held. We are inviting organizations from as north as New York, as west as Pittsburgh, and as south as Baltimore and DC to provide a representative to this local team. We hope that you will join FGC and the other host team members in producing the second East Coast White Privilege Conference.

Thank you again for your work in racial equity and healing, and for your interest in supporting the White Privilege Conference. We hold your yearly meeting in the Light of God's love as you look forward to your annual sessions.

In Friendship and on behalf of the FGC,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Vanessa Julye".

Vanessa Julye  
Friends General Conference's Committee for Nurturing Ministries  
Committee for Ministry on Racism & Youth Coordinator  
[vanessaj@fgcquaker.org](mailto:vanessaj@fgcquaker.org)



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## **The White Privilege Conference is coming to Philadelphia in 2016!**

A consortium of 15-25 organizations will co-host the 17th White Privilege Conference (WPC17) in Philadelphia, April of 2016.

### *Expectations of member organizations:*

- Organizations will appoint a representative member to be involved in the planning process.
  - The representative will participate in meetings and will attend or volunteer at WPC16 March 11-15 2015 in Louisville, KY.
  - Meetings will occur approximately bi-monthly until Summer of 2015, then monthly until Spring of 2016, then every 1-2 weeks (with weekly phone conferences with national planning team for core team and committee chairs when possible). If travel and attendance are a concern, meetings may occur less frequently for longer duration. Actual schedule will be decided by the consortium.
  - The host team strives for diversity of all types, and we encourage organizations to take that into consideration when selecting their representatives
- Members of the consortium, in addition to being co-hosts of the event, are asked to contribute approximately \$2,000 - \$5,000 towards the conference, by August of 2015, to support plenary speakers and host team meeting expenses, and will receive registrations reflective of the value of this contribution. Organizations without the financial resources to sponsor at that level but with a desire to be involved are asked to contribute as they are able – WPC and the current host team hope that no one will turn down the invitation to join the host team due to financial concerns.
- Member organizations may join one of three committees or coordinate a task with a specific focus, covering community outreach, securing sponsorship, and conference logistics.

### *Members of the consortium will receive:*

- On-screen recognition before keynotes and plenary sessions
- Recognition in conference program and on conference website
- Space for brochures at shared exit table
- An additional group discount of 10-20% (depending on number of registrations)

**New York Yearly Meeting**  
**Consent Agenda**  
**Spring Sessions, April 10-12, 2014**

The items below are for Friends' consideration in preparation for Meeting for Business for Sunday, April 12, when Friends will be asked whether we can act on the items without discussion. Prior to that time, Friends are asked to familiarize themselves with the Consent Agenda, to read the written material pertaining to each item, and to contact the named Friends with questions or concerns. General questions can be brought to the Yearly Meeting Clerk, Jeffrey Hitchcock. Any item brought to the Clerk with unresolved concerns will be removed from the Consent Agenda and at the Clerk's discretion will either be sent back to the originating committee or brought to the Yearly Meeting for worshipful consideration.

<b>Decision Concerning</b>	<b>Information Available</b>	<b>Friends Available for Consultation</b>	<b>Actions Proposed (to be recorded as YM minutes)</b>
Release from service – Nurture Coordinating Committee, at-large member (2015)	Julia Giordano, Bulls Head-Oswego	Elaine Learnard and Deb Wood, co-clerks, Nominating Committee	Friends are asked to accept this request for release from YM service
Release from service – Representative to Rural and Migrant Ministry (2015)	Jane Simkin, Poplar Ridge	Elaine Learnard and Deb Wood, co-clerks, Nominating Committee	Friends are asked to accept this request for release from YM service

**Report of the Priorities Working Group to New York Yearly Meeting  
Spring Sessions  
April 2015  
Oakwood School, Poughkeepsie, NY**

We bring to Spring Sessions a revised proposal for minutes to complete the work we were given/assigned when Yearly Meeting met for Spring Sessions in 2011 here at Oakwood. These minutes address implementing the Statement of Leading and Priorities that was adopted last summer (Minutes 2014-07-31) and assessing that implementation. We read a first draft at Fall Sessions in November 2014, and the working group asked “that everyone read and sit with the two sets of proposed minutes in their entirety, share them with your meetings and engage one another and the PWG in considering how these recommended actions can serve the needs of all parts of the Yearly Meeting.”

Since November, we have received comments in writing and in person on the proposed Implementation and Assessment Minutes (“I & A Minutes”). The version we bring back to you reflects our further discernment in light of the suggestions and concerns we heard from Friends.

**Explanation of Revisions:**

Throughout the revised draft of the I & A Minutes, we tried to make the language clearer, simpler and more direct. We also eliminated quotations from previous minutes, as they interrupted the flow of the document without materially contributing to understanding the purposes of the proposed Minutes.

*Implementation Minutes:*

1. In the implementation minutes, hortatory language (for example, “We commend all Friends’ attention to the Leadings and Priorities...”) has been replaced with more clear direction (ex., “All in service to the Yearly Meeting will be guided by the Leadings and Priorities...”).
2. We revised item # 2 and deleted item # 5 in order to eliminate a specific direction to Financial Services Committee to actively include the regional meeting treasurers in its work, and replaced that direction with a request to FSC to “seek to include regional and monthly meeting treasurers in its discernment.” The original minute had called for the participation of the regional treasurers as a mechanism for keeping the concerns of the *monthly meetings* in the forefront of the budgeting process. Friends reminded us that, while regional meeting treasurers in the past may have been well-acquainted with the financial concerns of the monthly meetings in their regions, this is no longer a reliable assumption. The revision broadens FSC’s consideration to include both regional and monthly meeting treasurers, but leaves



the methods for seeking their input to FSC to determine.

3. We revised item # 4 to include fundraising so that all financial planning and activities of the Yearly Meeting are coordinated through Financial Services Committee. We also eliminated a reference to a specific committee to make clear that the direction to coordinate with FSC applies to all groups and persons in the Yearly Meeting. Finally, please note that the direction to coordinate financial responsibilities with FSC will not apply to the administration of restricted funds (“to the extent consistent with the directions and limits of any gifts or trust instruments”) so that we will continue to honor the wishes of historical donors.

Assessment Minute:

A frequent response to the proposal to create a Priorities Assessment Committee (“PAC”) was, “why do we need another committee?”; “why can’t this work be handled by an already existing committee?”. Some Friends also questioned the point of creating a committee with “no teeth”; *i.e.* a committee that lacked enforcement authority.

The Priorities Working Group concluded that a group to serve as the “eyes and ears” of the Yearly Meeting, but not the “enforcer”, was most appropriate and that no currently existing committee could serve this role. Our reasons for proposing this new committee include the following:

1. First, in 2011 the Yearly Meeting Body directed PWG “to design a process to assess the implementation of these priorities.” (Minute 2011-04-35)

2. Assessing implementation serves the invaluable purpose of keeping us faithful to our decisions. The Yearly Meeting has undertaken revitalization projects a number of times. Each of these projects produced insightful and well-received recommendations for fulfilling our revitalization goals. Too frequently, however, we moved on without implementing many or any of the recommendations. As a result, many Friends developed a sense that our revitalization efforts are doomed to failure because of inadequate, long-term attention to their faithful implementation. In creating the Priorities Working Group, Friends were determined to break this cycle of preparing visionary revitalization reports and then over time forgetting or ignoring their recommendations. We discerned that, in order to facilitate implementation over a number of years, we would benefit from a mechanism to regularly remind us and keep us focused on our commitment. Hence, a Priorities Assessment Committee.

3. Revitalization efforts are unsettling and frequently difficult because they disrupt and displace long-standing habits, customs and traditional ways of doing things. Over time, we tend to revert to comfortable behaviors and focus. A

group with on-going responsibility to monitor and report on our progress in implementing revolutionary changes, and to remind us and advise us if we stray, can help us remain faithful to carrying out our commitments.

4. The primary goal in undertaking the process of, first, developing priorities and, now, implementing them was, and continues to be, to bring the Yearly Meeting back to its most basic responsibilities of serving monthly and regional meetings and Friends' worship, witness and ministry in their home communities. Currently, there is no Yearly Meeting group, officer or employee which or who is primarily focused on this goal. The proposed PAC can help maintain and deepen these connections. It can help achieve the accountability and transparency needed to assure that all our Yearly Meeting resource allocation decisions – whether they be about budgets, staff, volunteer activity or other “treasure” – will be firmly rooted in the priorities of the monthly meetings.

5. We have long used practices to oversee and guide our decisions and actions and to counsel Friends under the weight of a leading. Oversight and clearness committees, ministry and counsel, elders and overseers all serve in this nurturing, supporting and advising role. The Yearly Meeting is under the weight of an imposing leading, our approved Statement of Leadings and Priorities. We should do no less for ourselves as a Body than we do for ourselves as individuals grappling with leadings and seeking to “find the guidance of the Spirit.” (Faith and Practice, p. 27) PWG believes that creating a new committee devoted solely to assisting us in implementing our priorities can provide immeasurable benefits in helping us remain disciplined and faithful.

6. The PAC is structured to consist of Friends whose primary, and perhaps only, service to the Yearly Meeting will be their work on this committee. And the committee will include Friends, perhaps even a majority of Friends, recommended by the regional meetings, who should be closer to the joys, concerns and conditions of the monthly meetings. In these ways, the PAC is expected to reflect greater objectivity about Yearly Meeting activities than normally expected for Yearly Meeting committees and substantial awareness of the needs and desires of the monthly meetings. This is a relatively unique set of characteristics for a Yearly Meeting committee and, in some ways, mirrors the composition of the Priorities Working Group, which we found particularly apt for understanding the concerns and expectations of our monthly meetings.

7. The PAC will be primarily engaged in listening and observing, and then reflecting back to the Yearly Meeting the fruits of their consultations and interactions. The committee will report to the Yearly Meeting body, as well as the regional and monthly meetings, at least once a year. It will then be up to the Yearly Meeting to determine how to respond to those reports. These functions are envisioned as a deep, dynamic and ongoing process, and not a substitute for

reasoned discernment of the Body. Faith and Practice (at p. 29) counsels that “God-directed personal conduct calls for discipline in every area of our lives.” The PAC can nurture and guide the Yearly Meeting in maintaining that discipline, but ultimately decisions to adhere to or depart from our approved Statement of Leadings and Priorities must be made by all of us acting as the Body of the Yearly Meeting.

This is the 11th report from the PWG to the Body. We believe it should be our last, regardless of whether the proposed implementation and assessment minutes are approved. PWG has completed the service approved by the Body at Spring Sessions 2011. We have exhausted our energy, insights and gifts. If further work is needed for designing a process to assess the implementation of the Leadings and Priorities, others must step forward to embrace the challenge. Accordingly, with deep appreciation for the responsibilities entrusted to us by the Body, the Priorities Working Group requests that the Body approve a minute to lay down this working group.

**PRIORITIES IMPLEMENTATION AND ASSESSMENT  
MINUTES  
(March 30, 2015)**

These Implementation and Assessment minutes were offered for first reading at Fall Sessions 2014, have been revised in light of comments received, and are being offered now for action by the Body. They reflect discernment of “a process to assess the implementation of these priorities” as the Body directed in 2011 (Minute 2011-04-35).

**PROPOSED MINUTES:**

**Implementation Minutes**

1. All in service to the Yearly Meeting will be guided by the Leadings and Priorities in planning and undertaking their functions and activities. Financial Services Committee will use the Leadings and Priorities in proposing budgets and in discerning priorities among requests for funds. In making all budget requests, committees and other groups and Friends in service to the Yearly Meeting, through their Coordinating Committees if possible, will provide information as requested by Financial Services Committee explaining how the proposed expenditure(s) further the Leadings and Priorities.
2. The Treasurer of the Yearly Meeting Trustees and the clerk of Witness Coordinating Committee’s Finance Sub-committee (or whoever oversees the Sharing Fund and the Sharing Fund Endowment) will be members *ex officio* of Financial Services Committee. Financial Services Committee also will seek to include regional and monthly meeting treasurers in its discernment.
3. Financial Services Committee will address revisions to its description in the Yearly Meeting’s Handbook made necessary by these minutes, if any.
4. All committees, groups or persons undertaking fundraising or spending within the Yearly Meeting, to the extent consistent with the directions and limits of any gifts or trust instruments, will coordinate their fundraising and spending planning and actions with Financial Services Committee, so as to jointly further the implementation of the Leadings and Priorities.

**Minute Establishing a  
Priorities Assessment Committee**

A Priorities Assessment Committee (“PAC”) will be established within the section under the care of Ministry Coordinating Committee, as follows:

1. Purposes & Objectives: To advise Friends on progress, concerns and insights in the implementation of the approved Leadings and Priorities.
2. Functions & Activities:

1. The PAC will report at least annually to Yearly Meeting sessions, and will provide its reports to all monthly and regional meeting clerks.

2. The PAC will communicate, consult and visit with regional meetings and monthly meetings to learn how the meetings are being affected by the implementation of the Leadings and Priorities and how the Spirit is at work among Friends.

3. The PAC will communicate, visit and obtain information from all parts of the Yearly Meeting in order to assist the committee in discerning our faithfulness in implementing the Leadings and Priorities, which may include (i) reviewing the budgets, fundraising and spending decisions of all parts of the Yearly Meeting and Yearly Meeting staff work plans, (ii) requesting information and materials from the Yearly Meeting Clerk, General Secretary, Trustees, Financial Services Committee and the coordinating committees, committees and other groups within the Yearly Meeting, and (iii) participating in Budget Saturday (or any successor activity).

4. The PAC will include consideration of the Yearly Meeting's allocation of volunteer resources and support for volunteer activities in assessing the Yearly Meeting's progress in implementing the Leadings and Priorities.

5. The PAC will recommend to the Yearly Meeting a process to revise, renew or replace the Leadings and Priorities.

3. Organization and Membership:

1. The committee will comprise not fewer than six(6) nor more than twelve (12) appointed members serving three-year terms, one-third appointed each year (to the extent possible), plus the Yearly Meeting Assistant Clerk as member *ex officio*.

2. Appointments will be made by the Yearly Meeting on the recommendation of the Nominating Committee. In making such recommendations, Nominating Committee will (i) solicit proposed nominations from the Regional Meetings, and (ii) recommend three (3) to six (6) additional members (depending on the number of nominations proposed by the Regional Meetings) who are not, and during their terms of service on the committee will not, be officers or employees of the Yearly Meeting nor members of a coordinating committee or Financial Services Committee (other than the committee's representative to Ministry Coordinating Committee and the Yearly Meeting Assistant Clerk as *ex officio* member).

3. No appointed member will serve more than two (2) consecutive terms.

4. The committee will appoint its own clerk, assistant clerk and recording clerk, and name a representative to Ministry Coordinating Committee.

4. Finances: Expenditures incurred by the committee will be provided for by an allocation

in the budget of the Ministry Coordinating Committee.

5. Laying Down: The committee will be laid down at such time as the committee discerns, and the Yearly Meeting affirms, that ongoing assessment of the Leadings and Priorities no longer serves a necessary or valuable role in assisting the Yearly Meeting to be accountable to the priorities, transparent in its finances and integrally connected to the monthly meetings it represents and supports.

6. Initial Organization and Appointments: In order to establish the committee's intended cycle of appointments, the initial appointed members will be evenly divided (to the extent possible) into one-year, two-year and three-year terms by Nominating Committee. The Yearly Meeting Assistant Clerk is requested to convene the initial meeting of the committee, at which the committee will appoint a clerk, assistant clerk and recording clerk, and name a representative to Ministry Coordinating Committee.

## **NEW YORK YEARLY MEETING STATEMENT OF LEADINGS AND PRIORITIES**

In approving this Statement of Leadings and Priorities, we commit to focus the energy and resources of our Yearly Meeting for the coming five years on achieving a vision of growing and vital monthly meetings which are open and loving communities, effective in their outreach, active in the world, and skillful in nurturing the spiritual lives of Friends of all ages. We envision a yearly meeting structure which is devoted to furthering this vision, is an effective focal point for organizing our collective work in the world, and which communicates that work broadly. We envision a yearly meeting structure which is accountable to these priorities, transparent in its finances and integrally connected to the monthly meetings it represents and supports. We envision a yearly meeting where there will no longer be “yearly meeting Friends” and “monthly meeting Friends,” but rather one, whole yearly meeting devoted to faithfully living out the leadings of the Spirit. We reaffirm our commitment to utilize these Leadings and Priorities in “preparing budgets, staff work plans, and other services and initiatives of the Yearly Meeting and its committees and constituent parts.” (Minute 2011-4-33.)

### **We Envision A Yearly Meeting Deeply Grounded In The Practice Of Our Faith**

We hear a clear sense from Friends that the core of all they do centers in their Meeting for Worship and their life as a community. In support of this, their primary focus, Friends seek help in spiritual deepening, in developing clerking skills, in understanding principles of meetings for business, in understanding the role of vocal ministry and afterthoughts, in practicing pastoral care and conflict transformation, in participation in first day school and adult religious education programs. We, the Body of Friends gathered through our New York Yearly Meeting, recognize as a Priority for the Yearly Meeting the development of programs to teach and share our spiritual skills with each other, and to help meetings to revitalize themselves.

### **We Envision A Yearly Meeting Made Up Of Strong, Vital Monthly Meetings**

Meetings and Friends seek information and assistance with the necessities of operating a meeting, such as insurance, cemetery maintenance, fund-raising and advancement. We, the Body of Friends gathered through our New York Yearly Meeting, recognize as a Priority for the Yearly Meeting the development of programs to help sustain our monthly meetings financially and to increase membership.

### **We Envision A Yearly Meeting Gathered Together Into One Body**

Friends express a deep yearning for increased contact and connection with each other. Regular interaction among Friends throughout New York Yearly Meeting helps sustain and deepen our Society. We, the Body of Friends gathered through our New York Yearly Meeting, recognize as a Priority for the Yearly Meeting the pursuit of greater contact and spiritual relationship among Friends.

## **We Envision A Yearly Meeting That Nurtures Our Children, Youth, And Young Adults**

We hear Friends' call to focus attention on integrating our children, youth and young adults into the fabric of our community and to provide opportunities for them to experience and reflect on our spiritual practices. We seek to offer abundant opportunities and welcoming spaces for exploring and growing into the Light. We seek to make our monthly meetings a place where they can develop loving relationships with peers and adults, where youth are supported as they transition to adulthood, and where young adults are recognized for their gifts and encouraged in their participation in their monthly meetings and beyond. We, the Body of Friends gathered through our New York Yearly Meeting, recognize as a Priority for the Yearly Meeting the nurturing of our children, youth, and young adults.

## **We Envision A Yearly Meeting That Supports and Amplifies Our Witness**

Meetings and Friends look to the Yearly Meeting to be an active presence in the broader society for Friends' faith, values, ministry and witness. Through the Yearly Meeting, Friends can magnify our impact on our communities, nation and the world. Our collective voice speaks more loudly than those of individual Friends or monthly meetings. The Yearly Meeting affords the opportunity for Friends carrying common concerns to act in concert. We, the Body of Friends gathered through our New York Yearly Meeting, recognize as a Priority for the Yearly Meeting the responsibility to be an active voice for Friends' faith, values, ministry and witness in the world, and to support Friends active witness.

## **We Envision A Yearly Meeting That Is Accountable and Transparent**

Meetings and Friends express concern that the Yearly Meeting organization has not been fully accountable and transparent in its operations. We envision a yearly meeting whose structure and operations are well understood by all Friends, and which is a faithful expression of the leadings of those Friends that make up the Yearly Meeting. In approving this Statement to guide our activities in the immediate future, we also bear a duty to assure that these Leadings and Priorities are faithfully implemented. We, the Body of Friends gathered through our New York Yearly Meeting, recognize as a Priority for the Yearly Meeting the responsibility to hold itself accountable to the above priorities, ensuring their faithful fruition.

*While particular committees may be well-suited for pursuing parts of this vision, these are the Priorities of the Yearly Meeting as a whole. We are all responsible for all the aspects of this work. The Priorities arise from considerable and consistent input from Friends across the Yearly Meeting. Their realization will require the worshipful and focused dedication of everyone within the Yearly Meeting, including all our committees and working groups, all our staff, and all concerned Friends and meetings. We are called to work together to make this vision a reality.*