

## Annual Review of Witness Coordinating Committee Activities in 2013

Witness Coordinating Committee has managed the Sharing Fund, and has presented proposed minutes on gun violence and weaponized drones to the body of the Yearly Meeting. It is laboring with concerns to reestablish a peace and social justice committee and to encourage divestment from the stocks of companies engaged in extraction and production of fossil fuels. The Indian Affairs Committee supported the Two Row Wampum Renewal, including the paddling of two rows of canoes down the Hudson at the end of July and early August. The WCC and its constituent committees have spent considerable time working on revision of the Witness section of the NYYM Handbook, and several of the committee descriptions are moving towards approval by the body. The section describing WCC itself includes modified guidelines for applications to the Witness Activities Fund; this section has been approved at its second reading.

The minutes on gun violence and weaponized drones presented at Summer Sessions were not approved by the body. These came forward from several monthly and regional meetings, and a working group was appointed to labor with reconciling divergent views on the purpose and language of such minutes. This work is continuing, and will include suggestions for actions individuals and monthly meetings may wish to take.

A group has met to work on a charge for a peace and social justice committee. This is also an ongoing labor. Since in one sense everything the WCC does is work towards peace and social justice, the task of the ad hoc group is to narrow the focus of the proposed committee to a workable charge.

The motion toward divestment from fossil fuel companies has grown out of a widespread concern within the yearly meeting which began with protest against the extraction of natural gas from the Marcellus Shale, which underlies parts of New York and Pennsylvania. Friends involved in this work soon became aware that in addition to the serious environmental consequences of hydraulic fracturing (hydrofracking), the extracted gas contains radon. Radon decays within a few days, but because the proposed wells are very close to the metropolitan region, the use of gas from them by people in New York would release radon into their homes. Further, proposed pipelines to transport the gas to New York Harbor would cross both densely populated areas and wetland reserves. An ad hoc group, including members of the Earthcare Working Group, is discerning whether and how to ask the Trustees of the yearly meeting to move yearly meeting funds out of Friends Fiduciary's regular portfolio into a "green" portfolio they have agreed to offer in 2014.

NYYM representatives to a variety of Quaker organizations are part of the Witness Coordinating Committee, and they serve as our networking "neurons," keeping us apprised of the activities of those organizations.