

## Minutes of the Witness Coordinating Committee Meeting

January 28, 2012

1. The meeting opened with a period of worship. Those present were Greta Mickey, rep to Friends Peace Teams and at large; Ann Schillinger, Indian Affairs, Task Group on Racism; Patricia Chernoff, Helen Garay Toppins, Black Concerns, Prisons and Barrington Dunbar; Sue Clark, EAQWER; Naomi Paz Greenberg, financial clerk and COPW; Pierre Douyon, Black Concerns; Susan Weisfeld, World Ministries and ad hoc committee on the role of the Peace Concerns Coordinator; and Mary Eagleson, at large and acting as clerk. Christopher Sammond, General Secretary of NYYM; and Jeff Hitchcock, assistant clerk of NYYM were present for parts of the meeting.

Regrets were received from Joan Cope Savage, Newton Garver and Fredrick Dettmer.

2. Those present introduced themselves and reviewed the agenda.

3. The committee considered the proposed operating budget. Ann Schillinger explained the need of Indian Affairs Committee for funds, and after an explanation of its division of funds between operating and Sharing Fund budget requests, it was decided that its operating request should be reduced to \$500 and its request to the Sharing Fund should be increased by \$200. The Peace Concerns budget was reduced by \$100, leaving \$150, the Witness Coordinating Committee amount by \$394, leaving \$500 for travel expenses and \$106 for miscellaneous expenses.

We considered the total amount set aside for appointees. We do not have information about the costs these appointees pay out of pocket. We decided to request that everyone fill out vouchers for travel on behalf of the yearly meeting. Those who are prepared to pay out of pocket would then either indicate that they are not asking for reimbursement, or they might ask for reimbursement and attach a personal check for that same amount. Their travel expenses would then be recorded in the YM books as both expense and income. The clerk will inform all of our appointees that money is available to cover their travel and re-emphasize the need for travel vouchers.

We approve a final operating budget of \$7,056, allocated as shown in the following table.

<b>Committee</b>	<b>2012 amount</b>	<b>Section expense sub-total</b>	<b>\$1406</b>
Barrington-Dunbar Fund	\$ 100		
Black Concerns	\$50	<b>Appointees expense sub-total</b>	<b>\$1000</b>
COPW	\$ - 0 -		
Indian Affairs	\$ 500	<b>CONTRIBUTIONS</b>	
Meeting Min. Needs of All	\$- 0 -	<b>Committee</b>	<b>2012 amount</b>
Peace Concerns	\$ 150	Bolivian Quaker Education Fund	\$ 500
Prisons	\$ - 0 -	Friends Peace Teams	\$ 500
Torture Awar. Work Grp	\$ - 0 -	NCPTF	\$ 200
World Ministries	\$ - 0 -	NRCAT	\$ 125
Witness CC/Section	\$606	NY Council of Churches	\$ 150
(includes \$500 for assistance to attend WCC meetings and \$106 misc. expenses)		NJ Council of Churches	\$ 150
		William Penn House	\$ 125

Rural and Migrant Ministries	\$ 500
<b>Contributions Sub-total</b>	<b>\$2,250</b>
Sharing Fund Overhead	\$2400

<b>Total</b>	\$7056
APPROVED	\$7056

4. We approve a Sharing Fund goal of \$55,000. We estimate that the income from the Trustees will be about \$20,000. Using these figures, we approved the percentages in the following table:

<b>Committee</b>	
AVP (donation)	8% (\$4,400)
Barrington Dunbar	24% (\$13,200)
Black Concerns	10% (\$5,500)
COPW	2% (\$1,100)
Indian Affairs	15.75% (\$8,663)
MMNA Working Group	0%
NYYM Reps Support	2% (\$1,100)
Peace Concerns	5% (\$2,750)
Prisons	10% (\$5,500)

Quaker Earthcare Witness	1% (\$550)
RSWR, Inc. (Donation)	6% (\$3,300)
TAWG	0%
World Ministries	6.25% (\$3,437)
Witness Activities Fund	10% (\$5,500)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>GOAL: CONTRIBUTIONS</b>	<b>\$55,000</b>
<b>ENDOWMENT</b>	<b>\$20,000</b>

5. We considered requests for Witness Activities Fund support.

Christopher Sammond presented a request from the Communications Committee for help with an expanded issue of *Spark* with the theme “Standing Against the ‘Powers and Principalities’”. The issue would include articles on both “Occupy” and anti-fracking. We approve a grant of up to \$600 to the Communications Committee for the purpose of publishing an expanded March issue of *Spark*.

An application from NY Quarterly Meeting which was planned for last November’s WCC meeting was held over until today. It was for support for a training for non-violent civil disobedience which was held last November. The workshop was supported by the 15<sup>th</sup> St. Meeting’s Peace Committee, the NYQM Friends in Unity with Nature Committee and New York Quarter. The total cost for the workshop was \$800. \$150 was paid by the NYQM Friends in Unity with Nature committee and \$275 out of donations from attendees. The coordinating committee approves a grant from WAF for \$375.

6. Our financial clerk, Naomi Paz Greenberg, has requested release from that position. We approve the appointment of Helen Garay Toppins as interim financial clerk until a new financial clerk can be found.

7. We read a minute proposed by Flushing Monthly Meeting on September 11, 2011 on Colombia and the Free Trade Agreement. This had been endorsed by New York Quarterly Meeting on October 23, 2011, with the recommendation that the language of the original minute be changed to reflect the fact that the Free Trade Agreement had been ratified by the U.S. Congress between the time the minute was approved by Flushing Meeting and its endorsement by NYQM. The Coordinating Committee approved bringing this minute forward to the Yearly Meeting for consideration. It is appended to these minutes.

8. We read a background document suggesting a process for recording statements of conscience, then heard a reading of the following minute proposed for forwarding to the Yearly Meeting for consideration:

Witness Coordinating Committee on Conscientious Objection to Paying for War submits the following minute for consideration by NYQM:

**RECORDING STATEMENTS OF CONSCIENCE & TAKING A WITNESS UNDER OUR CARE**

NYQM affirms our minute of April 2006:

The Living Spirit works in the world to give life, joy, peace and prosperity through love, integrity and compassionate justice among people. We are united in this Power. We acknowledge that paying for war violates our religious conviction. We will seek ways to witness to this religious conviction in each of our communities.

The Yearly Meeting has agreed to *receive* statements of conscience, forward them to the Committee on Conscientious Objection to Paying for War, and file them in the Yearly Meeting Office.

NYYM approves accepting requests from regional meetings to *record* Statements of Conscience and take their witness under our care.

When a regional meeting forwards a minute recording a Statement of Conscience, the NYYM Clerk may bring the minute directly to the floor of the Yearly Meeting or may refer it for further seasoning by a Yearly Meeting Committee.

As with travel minutes, the body may rely on the monthly meeting for ongoing support of the witness such as: preparation of an amicus brief, assistance through the Fund for Sufferings, presence or testimony by NYYM staff or officers at IRS or other legal proceeding, letters to legislators or other officials regarding the Yearly Meeting's position on conscientious objection to paying for war. The Yearly Meeting may invite reports from individuals and their meetings on the witness. Friends recorded in witness will be listed in the NYYM Yearbook.

One Friend suggested that if a person were recorded as a conscientious objector to paying for war, there should be a process for reviewing their position and revisiting the question whether they should continue to be so recorded. There was also a question whether someone who had been so recorded would want their name published in the Yearbook. It was suggested that reference to the YM staff should be deleted.

The Coordinating Committee approved sending the minute back to the COPW for further seasoning, asking that it consider the suggestions made above.

9. Helen Garay Toppins reported that no one other than Judy Meikle has come forward to serve as a liaison from NYYM to the Campaign to End the Death Penalty and the Connecticut Network to Abolish the Death Penalty (see Minute #8 from our November, 2011 minutes). An invitation was published in InfoShare, and another will follow. We are awaiting a report from Heather Cook on contact with NEYM with respect to this effort.

10. Helen Garay Toppins reported, on the S.A.F.E. act, that the clerks of the Prisons Committee plan to attend the Black and Hispanic Caucus weekend in Albany, which this year will be considering prison and parole issues.

11. A new edition of the Yearly Meeting Handbook will soon be published, and WCC has been asked to review its portion. In the opinion of our clerk, it is badly out of date and there are some Witness committees which have never submitted a page for it. The committee empowers our clerk, Frederic Dettmer, to appoint one or two members of an ad hoc committee to help him in revision of the Witness section. We request a first draft to be prepared for Fall Sessions in 2012.

12. We reviewed the charge for the Oversight and Care Committee for Greta Mickey, which was approved a year ago. No one has been appointed to this committee. Greta will review a list of Friends she had previously suggested for the committee and send it to the clerk and co-clerk. If none of the Friends on this list are willing or able to serve, we envision going to the Ministry Coordinating Committee for help.

13. The committee took up the report of the Committee to Consider the Role of the Peace Concerns Coordinator (appended to these minutes). Briefly, the recommendation is to change the charge of the Peace Concerns Coordinator from its present form to one of information gathering and dispersing, and of facilitation of networking among monthly meetings and individuals interested in similar topics.

Friends commented that such a Peace Concerns Coordinator could be part of a Peace Concerns Committee, if such a committee were reconstituted. As the consideration of forming a Peace Concerns Committee was begun, Friends were clear that the work of such a committee would need to be carefully defined. It might support Friends with new leadings within the YM, with information and some seed money. However, the coordinating committee is not ready to re-establish a peace concerns committee at this time.

It was suggested that the clerks of Peace and Social Concerns Committees in monthly meetings be asked what they are doing, what they might see as their need for support from the YM. Another suggestion was to send out through InfoShare or Spark an invitation saying that Witness Coordinating Committee is considering how much life and energy there may be for forming a Peace Concerns or a Latin American Concerns committee, and asking anyone who would like to work on either to respond to the WCC clerk.

The committee approves continuing the position of Peace Concerns Coordinator as outlined in points 1 and 2 of the report of the ad hoc committee. The coordinating committee asks Greta Mickey to write up an invitation to fill this position, to be published in InfoShare and *Spark*. The clerk of the WCC will receive any responses and bring forward possible appointees to the coordinating committee. The clerk will send a copy of this minute and the report to the Young Adult Field Secretary.

#### Appendix 1: Flushing minute

*We utterly deny all outward wars and strife, and fightings with outward weapons, for any end, or under any pretence whatever: this is our testimony to the whole world.*

*~ Declaration from the Harmless and Innocent People of God, called Quakers, presented to Charles II, 1660.*

*... no plea of necessity or of policy, however urgent or peculiar, can avail to release either individuals or nations from the paramount allegiance which they owe unto Him who hath said,*

*'Love your enemies'...~ Epistle, 1804 and 1854, London Yearly Meeting*

PEACE TESTIMONY MINUTED BY FLUSHING MONTHLY MEETING, 2002

FLUSHING MONTHLY MEETING PROPOSED MINUTE ON COLOMBIA AND SO-CALLED FREE TRADE

## **AGREEMENT RATIFICATION**

The peace testimony of the Religious Society of Friends has led the Flushing Monthly Meeting to join the many people of the world concerned about the ongoing and deepening humanitarian crisis in Colombia. The result of a decades-long conflict, Colombia's internally displaced population is the largest in the world, estimated by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to range from 3.5 to 5.2 million. These Colombians – many of them peasants, indigenous and Afro-Colombian people – have left their land, which is their only source of livelihood, and have become refugees in their own country or have fled to neighboring countries.

The government of the United States has a long history of intervention in Colombia – starting with U.S. military actions to secure Panama, which was still part of Colombia until 1903. In the past decade, efforts have centered on “Plan Colombia” in which billions of U.S. taxpayer dollars have gone to the Colombian military ostensibly to eradicate coca crops. While cocaine production has not diminished, U.S. aid has served to militarize the Colombian countryside. As a result, large segments of the rural population are caught in the cross fire between the army, the guerrillas, drug dealers, and paramilitary groups. In addition, environmental groups like Earth Justice estimate that Plan Colombia has already fumigated three million acres, which has created serious ecological damage throughout the countryside.

We call on all elected officials, and especially the President of the United States, to put an end to the 'War on Drugs,' rightly named the War on Certain Drugs, invest resources domestically in prevention, education and treatment rather than incarceration.

We call on elected officials to put an end the funding of fumigation programs in Colombia and help Colombia invest in alternative life-sustaining crop production with development assistance to the peasants who have suffered the most during the civil war.

Recent ratification by the Congress of the United States of ‘Free’ Trade Agreements with Colombia, South Korea and Panama serves to further devastate the rural economy in these countries and undermine the ability of peasants to compete with the flood of subsidized U.S. agricultural products that will result. We urge the government of the United States of America to acknowledge the great burden of moral responsibility for the immense harm inflicted on the people of Colombia, to invest resources in true foreign aid, to help to rebuild a broken society, and to invest immediately in programs to support refugees and victims of this decades-long war.

Furthermore, we call on elected officials to direct financial assistance away from military funding and toward programs of healing the great social rifts such as a Truth and Reconciliation process.

**Appendix 2: Report of the ad hoc committee to consider the role of the Peace Concerns Coordinator**

**Report of**

## **The Committee to Consider the Role of the Peace Concerns Coordinator**

Conference Call held January 3, 2012

**Present:** Greta Mickey, Susan Weisfeld, Suzanne Blackburn

The purpose of the initial meeting of this committee was to make a recommendation about whether or not to lay down the position of NYYM Peace Concerns Coordinator (PCC) as it currently exists;

further, if the position is to be discontinued then how would Peace Concerns be addressed on the Yearly Meeting level.

We are clear that the charge of the Peace Concerns Coordinator, as it currently exists, should be discontinued. However, there should be a Peace Concerns coordinating body in some form – perhaps three people willing to do the work on a rotating basis. (The “work” is outlined below.)

The “position” of Peace Concerns Coordinator is now vacant.

Based on the experience of recently-released Peace Concerns Coordinator, Greta Mickey, this committee has identified several needs in the Yearly Meeting in which a Peace Concerns Coordinator and/or Peace Concerns Committee would be valuable or helpful. These are:

(1) **Gateway Person or Group:** We envision an individual or small group of people that would serve as a clearing house for information about Peace and Social Concerns activities in the Yearly Meeting. Modeled after the Peace and Social Concerns Committee in Purchase Quarter, there would be “gatekeepers” within each region or Quarter to receive information about peace concerns activities within the Yearly Meeting. They would then distribute the information to meetings within their region or Quarter. (Monthly meeting committees concerned with peace work who would wish to also receive this information could be on the gatekeeper distribution list as well.)

The Peace Concerns Coordinator/s would receive information, most likely from individual gatekeepers, and then would send it to the NYYM Gatekeepers list.

The Gatekeepers would process the information that comes in and redistribute information to the gatekeepers at their local level. In Purchase Quarter, for example, the Peace Concerns Committee sends information to gatekeepers at each Monthly Meeting in the Quarter. They then disseminate the information if they feel it is of value to their meeting.

In regard to the Gateway mechanism as discussed by this committee, the goal is to share information about Peace and Social Concerns activities around the Yearly Meeting in a manner that is centralized and does not overwhelm the e-mail inboxes of Friends in the Yearly Meeting.

(2) **Newsletter:** Based on the information that is sent to or from the gatekeepers, a Peace Concerns newsletter of activities and resources could be made available to NYYM Friends.

For example, the newsletter could list where Quaker-organized or affiliated peace actions are taking place (vigils, rallies, soup kitchens, discussions, movie screenings, etc.), including contact people for each activity. Knowing that these activities are taking place may inspire Friends to attend or plan something similar in their own area. This might be part of *Spark*, *Infoshare*, the NYYM Website, a stand-alone electronic publication or a combination of all or some of these things.

(3) **Resource People:** There seems to be a need and interest among Friends at the monthly meeting level to consider questions concerning peace and social action. Greta has been traveling as Peace Concerns Coordinator to facilitate discussions of this nature. She is interested in continuing this work, but not as PCC.

We recommend that the YM seek out Friends who are led to facilitate discussions and exercises at the Monthly Meeting and Regional/Quarterly level, serving as Peace and Social Concern Resource People. These Friends can be listed in each newsletter or on-line for others to call upon. They would not be under appointment by the YM; they may or may not have travel minutes. These are people who are led and willing to do this work, and they would also have each other upon which to call for assistance.

(4) **Discussion Topics & Queries:** The newsletter or resource list could also include discussion topics, questions, and queries that Friends may want to consider at the Monthly Meeting or Regional level. Friends may desire a Resource Person to facilitate the discussion or might feel they can use a worship sharing or Claremont Dialogue-type format to consider these questions without other support. Examples of such questions include:

- *What is peace?*
- *What is our meeting's focus on peace? How can we move forward as a body?*
- *What are we doing as individuals to build peace?*

*Is there something we feel led to do together as a faith community?*

We believe it would be meaningful to experiment with this type of information and resource sharing around Peace and Social Concerns. It would include the activities of many of our current Yearly Meeting committees but would also provide a place for Friends to turn if they have more general questions, concerns, or ideas for activities around peace.

In regard to concrete projects and the NYYM Peace Coordinator, at this time there is limited energy for initiating projects by a YM Peace Coordinator, but it is feasible that if a region or meeting, or even the YM wanted to initiate a project, the NYYM Peace Coordinator -- with help -- could coordinate such a project, especially in tandem with other YM committees/sub-committees (some examples: regarding ending torture, Earthcare witness, racial and prison issues, prevention of conflict).

***It is important to stress*** that our recommendation to share information is not so that people will feel that they have to act on all the information they receive. Rather, if they are led by Spirit in some direction, they will have a sense of other Friends led to join them on their journey, whether it is a group of people who support the same cause or the assistance of a Friend who can guide a group in discovery and discernment.

We welcome comments from WCC Friends and do plan to meet again within the next few months.

To contact us directly, our email addresses are:

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