

Annual Reports

Yearly Meeting Committees

Development Committee Report

Our committee is in its 2nd full year. We are pleased to be fleshed out with two new members, bringing good experience. We continue to welcome help from non-committee Friends, willing to join us in visits. Several two-person visits happened in this past year, with encouraging results. We seek to discover the Quakerly passions which Friends bring to our YM, the interests they would like to see advanced as we all look together for increased funding. We want to present not only our needs and opportunities, but also the various ways that Friends can undergird the work now and in the future.

The charge given to us is to show how the Yearly Meeting functions with both program and property, creating the physical and the personal context in which God's work may advance among us. We need buildings and grounds, but we also need staff and their requirements. We function in the sacred space where we gather, but also as witnesses in the larger world, carrying forth the energy and renewal we find when gathered here by the Divine Presence. But we do not live to ourselves alone: over the years ILYM has sought to help Friends' efforts through financial contributions to other groups. If we cut any of these, we are diminished. As we expand all of them, we gain many benefits.

Last annual sessions (Min. 57) clarified the priorities for how we will improve our enlarged property, and one of the projects has now been completed. Other enhancements to our campus await funding which is not yet in hand. The project with the largest price tag would significantly provide more accommodation for those with physical limitations —both at annual sessions and for committee and Meeting events during the year. "Accessibility issues" have been a concern for a long period, with only partial results. Friends who wish to make possible the additional bedrooms and bathrooms at Clear Creek house may earmark contributions for that purpose, which requires serious fundraising. Is this something to which you may be called?

However, the concern for property must be balanced with our concern and commitment to undergird the general operating fund, the budget to carry out the many tasks on which ILYM has agreed. About 40% of of annual budget makes possible the excellent staff support that benefits all of us. Decades ago we had none of the 3 part-time staff positions we now have: Field Secretary, Administrative Coordinator, and Youth Coordinator. It is apparent how the vitality of the whole Yearly Meeting, and the value to our Monthly Meetings, are made possible by such skilled service among us. This must continue!

It has been noted that in recent years both the percentage and the absolute amounts of income from Monthly Meetings has decreased (see Spring 2014 *Among Friends* article.) From ILYM's origins, we have been deeply grateful for the steady commitment of our component groups to make a yearly meeting possible. We hope to express this gratitude in person. Meeting contributions still provide the bulk of unrestricted income.

At the same time, it is both our necessity and our opportunity to ask *individual* Friends and families to pick up some of the responsibility for undergirding our Yearly Meeting's efforts. This may require some change in thinking. But our Development Committee believes Friends will be joyously forthcoming when they are reminded of the wealth of blessing that comes to us because we have a connection as a Yearly Meeting.

That is the "interpretation" part of our task: not only to those of you who regularly participate, but also to those who are less familiar with "What is ILYM?" and why do we have or need a yearly

meeting anyway? The work of outreach among Quakers "back home" is something we hope to share with each one of you. No one committee can do it, and yet you can help convey The Big Picture of what it is we get here. ILYM is not just a week in the summer: it is also a set of activities *throughout* the year, opportunities for us to be Quakers in ways that transcend what we experience in our local groups.

Our major achievement this past spring was to hold an all-day workshop with Michael Wajda of the FGC fundraising staff. We were inspired and enlightened to gain insights into distinctively Quaker ways of approaching money. Rather than something to avoid or dread, we rather can embrace the opportunity to make things happen through our giving, sharing the enthusiasm for turning visions into actions by carefully planned work that comes out of united decision-making. Our 4 active committee members were joined that day by 3 members of Finance Committee, plus 3 other Friends who also have experience in development and interpretation.

As a separate report that we will bring to the floor of annual sessions, Development and Finance will jointly launch some new initiatives which we believe will make possible an organizational future filled with hope and satisfaction. We dearly anticipate working with all of you, and ask that you "Stay tuned...!"

Submitted by David Finke, committee clerk

Environmental Concerns Committee Report

The Environmental Concerns Committee (ECC) met on the ILYM campus on May 17 to work on the grounds of ILYM and assist Maintenance and Planning as necessary. Attenders were Roy Treadway, Dick Ashdown, Neil Mesner, Mason George, Meredith George, Noel and Sarah Pavlovic, Bill and Alice Howenstine, Mike Dennis, John Hackman, Nancy Halliday, and Hal Mead. Much work was accomplished including weeding the new pathway, experimentally treating the invasive tansy, trimming of shrubs and trees, clearing debris from the grounds, and removing a tree branch overhanging one of the Quaker cabins. The outside of one cabin and the inside of the men's shower house were painted. Late in the afternoon we had a brief meeting to discuss issues that the committee is or will be addressing. We also contemplated the possibility of removing/recycling the boards stored in the east end of the barn, but did not reach any leading on this issue.

The ECC proposes next year to inventory the chemicals/oil still stored in the far end of the barn. The purpose of this would be to understand what is there as best we can. We feel that these substances are potentially a liability but that we should proceed cautiously so that we understand what the legal issues are concerning their proper disposal. We were able to direct 24+ florist vases that were in the barn to be re-used. We plan to dispose of any 'trash' that is stored in the barn as well.

On other progress, Adrian Fisher has successfully propagated osage orange tree seedlings that we hope to use to create a fence row at the west end of the ILYM campus. Great work, Adrian!

Since this workday was the last for Roy Treadway, the ECC wishes to thank Roy for his faithful and diligent commitment to the ECC and to Illinois Yearly Meeting. We wish both Roy and Carolyn all the best in their move to Washington state. We will miss both of you.

This year, we successfully prepared and planted the new grass walkway from the Clear Creek House to the Meeting House. Since the grass cover is new, we may have to defer its use until next year. Thanks to steward, Dick Ashdown and local farmer Bob Raine, in making the completion of this project possible.

Following is the ECC committee report to ILYM concerning electricity in the cabins.

Electricity to the ILYM cabins
Report to ILYM from ECC
June 1, 2014

The ILYM Environmental Concerns Committee (ECC) has been concerned about the proposed use of electricity at the Quaker cabins. This concern centers around the issues of using electricity derived from coal fired or nuclear power plants, the disposal of coal ash and nuclear waste, the direct and indirect impacts of CO₂ on our environment and the need to act locally to diminish our impacts on global climate change. These concerns relate directly to our testimonies of simplicity and peace and are consistent with the concept of right sharing or right order with God.

Because the cabins are poorly positioned for solar use due to the presence of trees, we had advocated portable solar devices. These include movable batteries with solar panels, solar charged flash lights, and other solar charged devices. They could be placed in sunny locations to store electricity and then be used in the cabins. A solar unit that could run a CPAP machine overnight costs about \$1800 which is half as much as the cost to provide traditional electricity to the six cabins (\$3800). Thus providing six such devices would cost (\$10,800), more than twice the cost of traditional electrical wiring.

We also have concerns that electrical outlets in the campground will result in Friends stringing electrical cords to their tents. (And in fact, cords in past years have been strung to tents from the Junior Meeting House.) This is a safety concern not only because of the potential for tripping but because it is a potential electrical safety hazard. The latter is an issue in regards to the type of electrical cord used (exterior versus interior) and grounding and the potential for electrocution. We recommend that the Yearly Meeting prohibit the use of electrical cords to tents from any existing or future outlets in buildings.

After holding these issues in the light, we have come to the conclusion that the Clear Creek House is the appropriate place for alternative energy use because of its frequent use in comparison to the cabins, which are used infrequently beyond yearly meeting sessions. (We could also argue that in this case electricity to the cabins is an expensive expenditure that is not cost effective, due to the infrequent use of the buildings). The Clear Creek House could employ a variety of sources including geothermal, solar panels, wind power, and/or solar hot water. ILYM already has a 2011 quote to provide electricity to Clear Creek house by installing solar panels on a pole with an estimated cost of \$8,160. In addition, ECC members are communicating with congregations that have obtained grants to install alternative energy in their buildings in order to explore possible funding options. The rising cost of propane to Clear Creek house is a strong incentive to use renewable energy.

In conclusion,

1. We are not in favor of putting electricity from traditional sources in the cabins, but will not stand in the way if the Yearly Meeting wishes to do so. If approved, we prefer that the funds used for electrification of the cabins be earmarked for that project rather than be taken from the general fund. We would rather see the funds directed towards providing renewable energy sources for the Clear Creek House and garage/addition since those buildings are more heavily used throughout the year.
2. If providing electricity to the cabins is approved, we recommend that the Yearly Meeting prohibit the use of electrical cords from the cabins to tents because of safety issues.
3. We encourage friends to utilize solar charged fans in tents during times of high heat and humidity rather than expecting to plug fans into electrical outlets.
4. We recommend that ILYM use renewable energy sources for the Clear Creek House and garage/addition, and we will provide assistance for ILYM to do so.

Committee on Faith and Practice Report

The Faith and Practice Committee has met five times since the 2013 sessions of Illinois Yearly Meeting.

Much of our attention this year has been devoted to revising the texts “The Light Within and its Religious Implications” and “Testimonies,” initial drafts of which were presented to the yearly meeting last year. We conducted workshops and/or received comments on these sections from Columbia, Duneland, Downers Grove, Evanston, Northside and Southern Illinois Meetings, as well as from numerous individuals, both during workshops at ILYM 2013 and afterwards. We have made significant revisions in light of these comments; the revised texts are attached. The committee proposes that these texts be adopted for a 3-year provisional period.

The committee also worked on two additional sections which are now ready for initial presentation to the yearly meeting: “Accident, Illness, Death, and the Care of the Bereaved,” and “Recognizing Spiritual Gifts and Leadings.” These texts are attached; the committee solicits comments and suggestions for their improvement. Another section, on yearly meeting structure and organization, is also in development.

At its 2013 sessions, Illinois Yearly Meeting charged the Faith and Practice Committee with investigating current and historic practices among yearly meetings regarding reports of “exercises.” We have conducted such an investigation; a report is attached.

The committee would like to remind Friends that all approved texts and circulating drafts of Faith and Practice sections are available on the ILYM website. A number of years ago, each meeting was provided with one or more 3-ring binders in which to keep hard copies; we urge meetings to keep these up to date. As always, the committee seeks comments both from meetings and from individual Friends on all existing text, as well as suggestions for new material.

Finance Committee Report

Finance Committee met face-to-face three times this past year and also held a January teleconference meeting. Our practice is to hold our fall meeting at Clear Creek House; we all enjoy getting to McNabb between sessions.

Roy Treadway laid down the role of liaison from the Stewards in anticipation of moving out of Illinois. Chip Rorem has taken his place. This past year we were joined by Peter Poshepny (Downers Grove), Frank Young (Spoon River, but residing in Terre Haute, IN), and Craig Hammond (57th Street).

This is the first full year our payroll has been processed by Chuc Smith. He and Co-Treasurer Valerie Lester had few problems and once set up the system is working well. The committee raised with Chuc our concern to have a plan in place should something make him suddenly unavailable. It was decided that it is adequate for the Treasurers to have the passwords for Chuc’s cloud-based computer program, which they now do. Chuc will be invited to join us at our fall meeting in McNabb for a joint assessment and opportunity to make any adjustments for improvement. This will give us the chance to all meet Chuc in person, and also carry out our responsibility for oversight of the contractual relationship.

We have a liaison to the Personnel Committee and have recommended that the Personnel Manual be reviewed soon by an attorney for compliance with labor laws. As well, some of the manual’s language needs to be reconciled with language in the ILYM bylaws. A continuing concern is the need

for a hiring check list and spelling out who is assigned paperwork and record keeping responsibilities.

We encourage the Ad Hoc Property Use Committee to look into raising all the fees for site use. And in this coming year we will be working much more closely with the Site Envisioning Committee. Using the CAMP plus additional input we expect to reach agreement as to the amount we want to see in reserves for long-term care of the site. Also, we are beginning discussion with Site Envisioning during annual sessions regarding hiring of a caretaker for the yearly meeting site at some point in the near future.

The development of the proposed budget for the first time relied on a number of committee members in addition to the treasurers to correspond with standing committees and analyze monthly meeting contributions. The review committee processed only one request, to provide half the cost so that Clear Creek Meeting could have the steps painted before the May 31 wedding.

At present Finance Committee is working very closely with Development Committee. We have minuted requests for earmarking of contributions, how bequests will be handled, and under what conditions gifts may be refused. We will be establishing a liaison relationship with that committee. They and we plan to make changes to the online site for making donations to the Yearly Meeting. An announcement made jointly by the two committees on May 27 suggested individuals add to their session registration payments to help reduce the current deficit. Three members of Finance Committee attended the Development Committee's May 17 all-day workshop led by FGC Development Director Michael Wajda.

We are again presenting two versions of a proposed budget. Both are balanced. One budget presumes that all donations to outside groups will be reduced to no more than \$50 each, and every standing committee's budget will be cut. The other presumes the raising of some \$20,000 in new contributions from individual Friends in Illinois Yearly Meeting. Finance Committee is very hopeful that a positive way forward will be found.

Respectfully submitted, Judy Jager, Clerk

Handbook Committee Report

We are in a time of transition and were unable to meet this year, so we do not have any handbook changes to present to yearly meeting for approval. We are hopeful that we will be able to present a report next year.

Sue Styer, Acting Clerk

Maintenance and Planning Committee Report

Co-clerks: John Hackman & Diane Clark-Dennis

2015 Diane Clark Dennis, Michael Dennis, Meredith George

2016 Neil Mesner

Ex-officio: Stewards

During the 9/7/13 and 5/17/14 Work Weekends we were joined by Environmental Concerns Committee and about 20 people on each Saturday. This year we:

- Pulled out the bushes in the SW corner of the garage, weeded extensively, and graded a new path between the Clear Creek and Annual Meeting houses, and weeded that path as well. (9/7/13)
- Trimmed several trees and removed a branch that was over one of the cabins. (5/17/14)
- Repaired the fence east of the annual meeting house
- Stained the last of the 6 cabins
- Installed bed boards on some of the lower bunks in the cabins to see if they help the sagging in the middle
- Painted the men's shower house and replaced the curtains
- and reinstalled the banister bracket, spackled, spot painted the wall in the hallway leading upstairs at the Clear Creek House.

We are in the process of two deferred maintenance projects: refinishing the annual meeting front porch and steps at a cost of ~\$1800 and installing a donated hood above the stove and oven to bring it in compliance with county code at a cost \$200. We are also having the gas company come out to give us an estimate of the cost of increasing opening to the gas line to the stove. During the coming year we would like to propose that there be two work weekends—one in the fall and one in the spring, timed to coincide with the ECC work days. We will also see if we can schedule the fall work to be over Veteran's Day weekend when the high school Friends will be there and could work on the junior meetinghouse. While we get a lot accomplished, we really need more help.

Maintenance and planning, hereby formally for the record, reiterates its request from the last two years to install 2 electrical outlets per cabin at a cost of \$2550 to address accessibility and safety issues. In terms of accessibility there are currently no camp sites for people with medical equipment for health problems (e.g., c-pap) and/or for small children. In the absence of such outlets, people have resorted to stringing multiple extension cords that are dangerous at night or in the rain, coming into the junior meeting house late at night, or have had to stay on the floor in the yearly meeting house. As requested we have reviewed the possibility of solar power, but given the minimum use during the year this did not appear to be cost effective. If there is a need for additional primitive camping space we can designate additional space, but we still need to address the needs of this group of people in a more friendly and safe way, respecting the need to provide for these friends.

Some M & P Committee members deeply respect the concerns and the light that was given to the Environmental Concerns Committee and are also not in favor of putting electricity in the cabins but will not stand in the way if the Yearly Meeting wishes to do so. We do not know how many friends need electricity for medical equipment for health reasons. Priority might be given for these friends to schedule their stay at the Clear Creek House so that they would have the electricity that they need, as ILYM works towards our goal of acquiring renewable sources for energy. (A couple of M & P members are also still members of ECC. The fact is that our meetings for business and planning were joint meetings as M & P met after breakfast only to coordinate the jobs. At the late end of the day we joined ECC in worship with a concern for business). We would also "recommend that the Yearly Meeting use renewable energy sources for the Clear Creek House and garage addition, and we will also provide assistance for ILYM to do so." And along with ECC, we would also "recommend that, if ILYM decides to provide electricity to the cabins that the yearly meeting prohibit the use of electrical cords from the cabins to the tents for safety reasons." (Quoted from the ECC report.)

Only Love for each other will make it possible to maintain, restore and rebuild this campus. Our Work is "Love made visible."

Finally, it has come to our attention when trying to use the tax exemption letter at several area lumber yards that they had a difficult time looking it up by organizational name, address or even the number itself. All filed it under the meeting house phone number: 815-882-2214. Giving this number allows them to quickly and easily look up our exemption.

Ministry and Advancement Committee Report

The Ministry and Advancement Committee (M&A) is charged with encouraging the spiritual development and unity of the Yearly Meeting. We try to maintain contact with all Meetings and Worship Groups. We can be called upon to provide resource people and materials, to offer educational programs or workshops, and to assist Meetings with any problems or issues that challenge their continuing growth and advancement.

At last year's annual session, our committee was asked to survey ILYM's monthly meetings to inquire when their members and attenders would prefer to attend annual session. The responses we received indicated that there is no clear leading to change the time of the annual sessions.

Last June, one monthly meeting's ministry committee requested that M&A members meet with them for a session of worship, worship sharing, and listening about the state of their meeting. As we sat together, their mood began to shift from anxiety and discouragement to new hope and a reliance on the Spirit. We could see the difference on their faces. A later report confirmed that this monthly meeting now has more confidence about its future.

That experience emphasized for us the importance of strengthening our connections with, and support for, members of ministry committees in monthly meetings. Virtually all members of Ministry and Advancement have served in that role, so we are aware both of the joys and the challenges that confront the Friends who share that responsibility in their home meetings. Although we did not succeed in arranging regional gatherings for them in the past year, this will continue to be one of our priorities. And because all Friends are expected to be pastors to one another, all who feel led to participate will be welcome.

As a prelude to our meeting last October, we invited Marcelle Martin (of Earlham and Philadelphia) to lead us in a workshop on prayer. Her introduction of unfamiliar forms of prayer and reinforcement of familiar ones strengthened our personal commitments to daily practice.

M&A also confronted the leading to examine how we, collectively and individually, can be more welcoming and more sensitive to the perspectives of those whose backgrounds or orientations are different from ours. (A similar leading arose at Blue River Quarterly Meeting and also inspired the theme of our current annual session.) Along with our Field Secretary and the Clerk of ILYM, four members of M&A attended the three-day White Privilege Conference held in Madison, Wisconsin, in late March. Two members attended one-day institutes as well. Three plenaries and seven workshops brought to our minds the origins of American racism, its subtle and not-so-subtle manifestations in all aspects of our society, the unacknowledged privileges that come with having "white" skin, and the differences in perception among attendees. A warm welcome from Friends in Madison enhanced our experience greatly.

Another of M&A's responsibilities is "overseeing the process of endorsement by the Yearly Meeting of professional pastoral counselors and chaplains." Thirty-five years ago, Carolyn Treadway became the first pastoral counselor to be endorsed by this body, and the first Quaker in the United States to receive any yearly meeting's endorsement. ILYM's annual session has acknowledged her continuing endorsement every year since. Carolyn advised M&A in December that she had closed her pastoral

counseling practice, concluding a professional career of 59 years. She and Roy are now settling into retirement in Washington State. She asked us to convey to this annual session her “deep gratitude for all the years of endorsements which allowed her to become a pastoral counselor and to do the pastoral work which was so precious to her.”

Beth Burbank’s endorsement by Yearly Meeting as a pastoral counselor, hospital chaplain, and supervisor of ministry students in the clinical setting has continued for 30 years. Although she, also, had been planning retirement this year, an invitation to do supervisory work this summer has prompted her request that ILYM acknowledge her continuing endorsement for a final year. M&A received the required letter from her support committee at Northside Monthly Meeting. Beth writes, “I have been grateful for ILYM’s support of my ministry. When I began, there were 3-5 unprogrammed Friends in either pastoral counseling or chaplaincy throughout the country. Now there are hundreds.... This ministry has been an extraordinary journey in my life, and I look forward to how Way will open for this new season of life.”

Brad Laird has been instrumental in the formation and guidance of a worship group in Elkhart, Indiana, which meets twice a month. South Bend Monthly Meeting supported this outreach and has united in taking the Elkhart Worship Group under its care.

We regret that Brad must lay down his responsibilities on Ministry and Advancement at the conclusion of annual session. He and Monica and their young daughter will be moving to Ghana, where Monica has accepted a teaching assignment. We also will miss Wil Brant and Fernando Freire, who are completing terms this year. We extend our gratitude and best wishes to these three Friends. We also express special appreciation to David Finke and to Maurine Pyle, longtime elders who lovingly and willingly have visited and ministered on M&A’s behalf to some of Yearly Meeting’s more geographically distant groups of Friends.

Further, the Ministry and Advancement Committee appreciates the high quality of ministry provided by our field secretary, Judy Wolicki. In her two-and-a-half years in this role, Judy has been on the road nearly every weekend, offering workshops and pastoral care, leading discussions, and listening for needs and opportunities to serve, always seeking ways to connect Friends and meetings. Judy draws upon a broad base of experience, spiritual depth, and many skills. She finds joy in her work and would like to continue it.

Now as a new program year begins, we hope that you will not hesitate to reach out to our field secretary or to any member of this committee. We want to stay informed of your joys and successes as well as your needs and concerns. We continue to hold each Meeting and Worship Group in the Light, and we ask you, in turn to include this committee in your prayers.

Joan Pine, Clerk Ministry and Advancement

Field Secretary’s Report

Since my last annual report, I have driven over 6,000 miles as field secretary. I have been to Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, and Illinois to attend and participate in conferences on behalf of ILYM. I have attended BRQM and MCGM CFG, presented programs for BRQM and Lake Forest FM, and spent time at Clear Creek, Downers Grove, 57th Street, Evanston, Upper Fox Valley and Madison and Oshkosh MMs, listening, presenting programs, and worshipping joyfully with many Friends. I have also kept in touch by phone, email and letters.

I am delighted to report that, to date, I have visited every monthly meeting within ILYM at least once, and have visited many of them multiple times. I have continued to attend regional meetings and celebrations, and doing so has given me more opportunities for meeting individual Friends and finding out about the hopes, successes, and needs of our Monthly Meetings.

Even in the smallest meetings and my briefest encounters with Friends, I continue to be encouraged by the depth of spirit I encounter in my travels.

Meetings continue to identify their strengths and to seek growth in numbers and depth of connection with the Spirit that, in turn, connects the individuals to one another and to the outside communities they seek to serve. MM newsletters reflect the ways Friends continue educating themselves about issues, and encouraging one another to become involved in issues.

I have continued to offer pastoral care to meetings and individuals, and to engage in what I think of as my primary work – listening for what members and attenders identify as their own and their Meetings' needs, and serving them by offering programs and resources.

With a member of Lake Forest FM, I attended the FGC Consultation on Spiritual Deepening at Pendle Hill in March. We were treated to four days of opportunities to discuss how “to help make the full depth, joy, and fire of Quaker faith and practice highly available, teachable, and experiential for all those who are or will become part of our faith communities.” Sixty-five participants were divided into eleven small groups, each group having the task of developing the outline for a program to address the spiritual deepening theme/opportunity of the topic to which the group was assigned. Topics ranged from “Welcoming Families into the Whole Life of the Meeting” to “Developing Online Education” to “Re-envisioning Religious Education as Life-Long Spiritual Formation” to “Hungering for Deeper Worship,” and other topics.¹

My small group worked on the topic “Supporting Meetings to Create Identities as Spiritual Communities within the Religious Society of Friends.” Over three days we developed a program (using the metaphor of a wheel and the landscape through which it has traveled) to facilitate the meeting's telling of the story of its spiritual journey—past, present and future—as a vehicle for spiritual deepening, connecting individuals and communities, and creating stronger sense of community among Friends.

At the end of March, with many members of M&A and our YM clerk, I also attended the White Privilege Conference in Madison, Wisconsin. I continue to reflect upon what I learned there, and to use what I learned as your field secretary.

At the BRQM Spring retreat in April, I co-facilitated the program entitled “Beads of Privilege: Speaking Truth to Our Own Power” and used what I learned at WP15 in an inter-generational session on “Ally Training and Interrupting Oppressive Behavior.”

In May, I presented a program at LFFM entitled “Gifts to Share and Gifts to Spare: An Exploration” that included a discussion of a Quaker perception of the spiritual gifts enumerated in 1 Corinthians, and an exercise that enabled participants to name each others' and their own gifts.

I remain available to offer programs and resources, support and encouragement—or just to visit and listen.

As I stated in my March report to CC, I continue to seek ways to connect Friends and Meetings to one another. In that report, I suggested the possibility of asking individuals (especially our Quaker elders) to write to MMs or individuals in meetings other than their own—to share news from their own meetings, or spiritual questions and insights, or ideas about how to be peace in the world, or simply to offer support. I believe such a program of support and encouragement would be especially helpful to

¹ As an outgrowth of the consultation, FGC is planning to hire a Spiritual Deepening Planning Coordinator, and I learned recently that they have received a grant to fund the position and to continue the work started by the “Spiritual Deepening” consultation participants.

very small meetings and WGs. I'd like to invite any who might be interested to talk to me about this possibility.

Once again, thanks to YM members for all the ways you support me, nurture and guide me in this work.

Respectfully submitted,
Judy Wolicki, Field Secretary

Nominating Committee Report

Nominating Committee would like to minute our appreciation for all Friends who have served as officers, on committees and as representatives to wider Quaker organizations.

It has come to Nominating Committee's attention that the Yearly Meeting minuted that two of the Stewards be from Clear Creek Monthly Meeting. This is a small Monthly Meeting and the demands of having 2 Stewards can be very draining for the Meeting. Nominating recommends that the Yearly Meeting minute that only one Steward needs to be from Clear Creek Monthly Meeting.

OFFICERS:

Clerk: David Shiner (presides 2015-16, assists 2017)

Asst. Clerk: Janice Domanik (assistant clerk 2015)

Recording Clerk: Wil Brant (recording clerk 2015, assist 2016)

Asst. Recording Clerk: Kent Busse (assists 2015, recording clerk 2016 and 2017, assists 2018)

Reading clerk: Caryn Kuhn (2012 Fall Continuing Committee through 2015)

Co-Treasurers: Ted Kuhn (2016) Judy Erickson (2017)

Stewards: Chip Rorem (2015), Richard Ashdown (2017), Grayce Mesner (2020), Neil Mesner (2020)

STANDING COMMITTEES:

Administrative Coordinator Oversight Committee

Clerk: Dawn Rubbert

2015:

2016: Dawn Rubbert

2017:

Development Committee

Clerk: David Finke

2015: Maurine Pyle, David Finke

2016: Kay Drake

2017: Madelyn George Hjertmann

Environmental Concerns Committee

Clerk: Noel Pavlovic

2015: Sarah Pavlovic, Noel Pavlovic, Chris Goode, John Hackman

2016: Alice Howenstine, Bill Howenstine,

2017: Nancy Halliday, Don Moorman, Adrian Fisher, David Wixom

Committee on Faith and Practice

Clerk: Peter Lasersohn

Janice Domanik, Peter Lasersohn, Colleen Reardon, David Shiner, Sarah Pavlovic

Finance Committee

Clerk: Judy Jager

2015: Judy Jager, Ashlee Miller-Berry, Andrew Harrington, Steve Tamari

2016: Cathy Garra, Bruce Kanarek, Ted Kuhn *ex officio*, Peter Poshepny, Craig Hammond, Frank Young

2017: Val Lester

Ex-Officio – Co-Treasurers

Handbook Committee

Clerk: Elizabeth Mertic, Sue Styer - interim convener

2015: Sue Styer

2016: Elizabeth Mertic

2017: David Finke

Maintenance and Planning Committee

Co-Clerks: John Hackman & Meredith George

2015: Diane Clark Dennis, Mike Dennis, Meredith George

2016: Neil Mesner,

2017: Rachel Mershon, Bill Howenstine, John Hackman, Andrea Kintree

Ministry and Advancement Committee

Clerk: Joan Pine

2015: Pam Wolfe, Ted Ehnle

2016: Joan Pine, Phyllis Reynolds, Chris Jocius

2017: Bridget Rorem, Mark McGinnis, Cathy Garra, Beth Burbank

Peace Resources Committee

Clerk: Michael Batinski

2015: Michael Batinski, Mark McGinnis, Kent Busse

2016: Jan Mullen

2017: Lucas Burkett

Peace Tax Fund Oversight Committee

Clerk: John Knox

2015: John Knox

2016: Dave Moorman

Personnel Committee

Clerk: Mike Dennis

2015: David Rutschman

2017: Mike Dennis, Sharon Haworth

members: ACOC –

M&A –

Youth Oversight –

Finance –

Publications and Distribution Committee

Clerk: Sean West

2015: David Finke

2016: Dawn Rubbert

2017: Sean West

Ex officio Administrative Coordinator: Wil Brant

Ex officio Editor of Among Friends: _____

Religious Education Committee

Clerk: _____

2015: Monica Tetzlaff

2016: Dale Gardner, Joy Duncan, Nelson Hammond, Elaine Mayer-Lee

2017: Bobbi Trist

Site Envisioning Committee

Clerk: Chris Goode

2015: Janet Means-Underhill, Bill Howenstine, Roxy Jacobs

2016: Sandy Bales, Chip Rorem

2017: Angie Reeks, Chris Goode,

Ex-officio Steward - Richard Ashdown

Youth Oversight Committee

Clerk: Kate Gunnell

2015: Warwick Daw, Sara Raffensperger

2016: Kate Gunnell

2017: Brittany Koresch, Mason George, Fariba Murray

APPOINTMENTS TO WIDER QUAKER ORGANIZATIONS**AFSC Corporation**

2015: David Rutschman

2016: Mike Dennis, Diane Clark-Dennis

2017: Bridget Rorem

FCNL

2015: Kevin Brubaker, Wil Rutt

2016: Fariba Murray, Michael Batinski

2017: Dale Gardner, David Rutschman

FGC

2015: _____

2016: Charley Earp, Ashlee Miller-Berry, Janice Domanik

2017: Nancy Duncan

FLGBTQC

2016: Colleen Reardon

Friends Peace Teams

2015: Debra Penna-Fredericks

Friends Secondary School Liaison

2016 Olney: Grayce Mesner

2016 Scattergood: Katherine Young

FWCC (Appointments end in Dec.)

2015: Nancy Duncan

2016: Nancy Wallace

2017: David Shiner

QEW

2015: _____

2016: _____

2017: Nancy Halliday

Administrator Coordinator Oversight Committee Report

Last fall the ACOC performed its duty as a search committee to find a new staffer for ILYM. Wil Brant began his work as Administrative Coordinator at the rise of Fall Continuing Committee, on October 19, 2013. The former AC, Sharon Haworth remained on the payroll for a one month crossover period.

The transition seems to have been a smooth one. Wil has introduced some new electronic technology and regularized email reports to ILYM. Although support from the ACOC has been offered none has been needed. Occasional consultation with the former AC provided needed guidance and information. We thank Sharon Haworth for being available and forthcoming.

The AC is now entering his first "busy period" as preparations for Yearly Meeting Sessions move forward.

No concerns about the communication changes have been received by this committee. We gratefully accept this as a sign that Friends are pleased with the work being done.

Respectfully submitted,

Dawn L Rubbert, Clerk, ACOC

Publications and Distribution Committee Report

Members: Wil Brant, Judy Erickson, David Finke, Zoe Rei, and Sean West (clerk)

Financial Status: Our budget is \$5000. So far we have spent \$3352.43; however we continue to have a backlog of publications that need to be printed.

Update:

Listserves:

- A subscription to phplist.hosted has been purchased and has been in use for a few months now.

Webhosting

- We were looking into using an ILMY credit card but now Val is looking into using PayPal to pay for our webhosting expenses.

Print Publications

- Wil continues to work with David to quantify the specifications so that we can start to solicit bids for printing *Among Friends*, *Minute Books*, and *Plummer Lectures*.
- *Among Friends* – Spring 2014 has been posted online, print version to follow shortly.
- *Plummer Lectures* – Working on 2011, 2012, and 2013
- Our thanks go out to Marcia Nelson who has recently resigned as editor of *Among Friends*. Her work on this publication will be greatly missed.

Submitted by:

Sean West, Clerk

Religious Education

Committee Members:

- Joy Duncan
- Dale Gardner
- Christina Schulz (clerk)--just rotated off Committee
- Erin Taylor--just rotated off Committee
- Monica Tetzloff

Our Committee will be adding to its membership and naming a new Clerk in the months ahead.

Financial Status: As reported at the Spring Continuing Committee Meeting, we continue to have a \$400 budget available to engage in resources or programs.

Echoing Description of Proposed Advocacy-Role Shared at Spring Continuing Committee Meeting, March 2014:

At the Spring Continuing Committee, we made the following request, which we would like to share with friends at ILYM, as well: The Religious Education Committee is asking to be positioned as an

advocate for Religious Education throughout ILYM. Doing so will move this committee beyond a deliverable-service role toward one of community- and culture-building.

Repositioning our work as that of advocacy creates the opportunity for us to identify and analyze influences on the health of ILYM Religious Education collectively and across individual Meetings. As a result, Monthly Meetings could look to the RE Committee for more than religious-education content and delivery-method recommendations.

We share a strong sense that we must shift our work toward the development of thriving, well-established RE structures and processes in individual Meetings and at BRQ, as well as ILYM-Annual, sessions. We feel called to respond to systemic influences that prevent RE from enriching Quaker experiences for Friends of all ages.

Emerging Priorities, Collective Priorities:

We ask that ILYM Friends give thought to the following as strengtheners to the quality of Religious Education offered through this Committee and our BRQ and Annual ILYM gatherings:

1. Planning a paid program specific to Young Friends at the Annual Session.
2. Exploring the value to establishing ILYM roles specific to RE, similar to the traveling support provided by the role of Field Secretary (Children's Field Secretary?).
3. At Continuing Committee, representatives from the Youth Oversight Committee and Peace Resources Committee, respectively, vocalized an interest in supporting RE Committee. We look forward to building relationships that provide a more unified and supportive approach to our service to Friends.
4. As the RE Committee continues its work, informal relationship building with Youth Oversight and Peace Resources Committees will open the way to shared ideas and resources, as well as new connections among Young Friends and Adult Friends.
5. As a body, our Committee will see how the Way Opens relative to the seasoning done to our role definition around advocacy. We remain open-minded about what this will look like in practice and appreciate all Friends participating in what, for us, has been a sea-change type of breakthrough.
6. Individually, RE Committee members (even those rotating off, ha-ha) will continue to work on the health of RE within our home Meetings. And we will remain vocal about and supportive of Young Friend programming at future ILYM and BRQ sessions.

We look forward to the opportunity to discuss, sit in silence, and hold in the Light all that the RE Committee is becoming and will be in service to ILYM Friends. Thank you.

Respectfully submitted by Christina Schulz

Site Envisioning Committee Report

The committee met twice since last annual session, once in person in September at McNabb and once by conference call in February.

Update on Three Pending Campus Projects:

At last annual sessions three projects were approved in the following sequence pending funding:

New Meetinghouse Bathroom:

Funds were approved at Fall Continuing Committee and the water heater/storage closet next to the existing meetinghouse bathroom was renovated this spring to accommodate a much needed second bathroom at the meetinghouse. As some very useful indoor storage space was lost we recommend that some kind of storage cabinet be purchased/built on a portion of the ledge next to the interior ramp leading to the bathrooms.

Campground Bathhouse Renovation:

We are developing plans for renovation of the north campground bathhouse to make it more pleasant and cleanable in the summer and improve its ability to withstand winter all with an eye toward keeping costs reasonable. We are refining this list and are meeting with contractor Paul Ebener during annual sessions about preparing a budget estimate with line item amounts for further consideration.

- New stainless steel toilet and shower partitions. More privacy at shower area.
- New solid surface counters with integral sinks. New GFCI outlets and a device charging station.
- Improve Exposed Piping.
- More hooks. Better hooks. More shelves, especially at shower area.
- New water resistant cleanable shower benches.
- Improved lighting (LED) and Solar-tube skylights.
- New awning windows with screens at existing vent locations. Maybe add mechanical ventilation.
- New Fixtures including some higher toilets, and showers with temperature controlled mixing valves and low flow shower heads.
- New Interior Finishes. Investigate garage non-slip floor surface for floors, good coating/paint for walls and investigate moisture resistant material to be applied to underside of rafters.
- Exterior Walls: Perhaps paint or otherwise finish exterior walls.
- Rebuild two outdoor showers, larger sized and with better privacy and comfort consideration.
- Perhaps prepare for possible year-round use: Insulate roof and walls at the exterior with an exterior insulation finish system and provide some kind of heating. Solar? Other?

Accessible Bedroom/Bathroom addition at Clear Creek House:

A schematic design has been developed with two bedrooms and three bathrooms and Paul Ebener has provided a rough estimate about two years ago of ~\$98,000. A needed septic system will bring the estimate to ~\$120,000. As this project comes closer to fruition construction documents will need to be developed for a more accurate bid and for construction. This project might be a good place to begin use of solar electrical power on the campus.

Barn Preservation:

Our committee feels strongly that the barn building is an asset that will serve us in some way in the future and needs to be maintained until the nature of that service can be ascertained and developed. The barn workshops at last year's sessions were very helpful. Some actions we should take in the near term include the following:

- The barn roof should be kept in repair to insure that the underlying structure remains sound.
- The dairy portion still contains much debris and some hazardous refuse that should be cleaned up and removed as soon as possible. ECC is also concerned about this.
- We will talk with Paul Ebener about the dry rot at the base of the timber frame portions of the barn and whether he thinks it would be able to be restored or whether it might be easier to do as

Tim Narkiewicz suggested and cut it off from the ground and remove the skeleton to a new location on campus and be renewed for some new purpose, perhaps as a dining pavilion.

Quiet Campground:

Our committee developed guidelines for the use of the Quiet Campground area near the northeast corner of the barn. The area is relatively small and the barn helps to block winds that come primarily from the southwest. The bright light pole nearby should be turned off during annual sessions.

- Quiet should be strictly maintained after 9:00 p.m. and until 7:00 a.m.
- A port-a-potty will be located near the campground. The north campground bathhouse will be used for showers. No use of Clear Creek House bathrooms or showers is allowed. Potable water can be obtained from the Clear Creek House kitchen or spigots.
- Campers should declare their campground choice when registering for annual sessions and let Administrative Coordinator know their tent location when checking in.
- Parking for campers will be at designated parking areas at the north campground or the field between the Meetinghouse and Clear Creek House. No parking is allowed near the campground or the house.
- Guidelines will be posted on the barn during sessions.

Record Storage:

We think that some kind of yearly meeting record storage system should be developed to keep minutes, notes, drawings, and other documents in a safe place and easily used by members and transferable as clerks and members change. This may include paper as well as digital documents. This system should be developed with the involvement of other committees and the yearly meeting clerks.

Caretaker:

Our committee feels that the Yearly Meeting should work toward having a caretaker in the near future and makes the following recommendations:

- The position should start out as part-time and as needed.
- The caretaker will not live on site but should be close at hand.
- They should be someone who can work with Dick Ashdown to learn what is required and not so gradually take over most of that work. Being Quaker not required, but should be someone who might share our values and can work well with us.
- We should ask Dick, Stewards, Paul Ebener (our frequent contractor) and Clear Creek Meeting members if they know of local people who might be interested in taking this position.
- Tasks:
 - Facility oversight and alerts to stewards.
 - Mowing and Snow removal.
 - Opening Clear Creek House and the Meetinghouse to visitors.
 - Getting fuel/turning on and off utilities for buildings at proper times.
 - Minor repairs and maintenance, some painting, some cleaning.
- Questions:
 - ILYM may need to purchase mower and perhaps other equipment.
 - How much should the position pay? Hourly? Monthly? Annual amount?
 - How will this be paid for? Mowing payments? Other funds? Discuss with Finance Committee.

- Future:
 - Position might at some point become on site.
 - We should keep ears open to folks in and out of ILYM who would be interested in a symbiotic relationship where they may provide service to the site in exchange for housing in a converted space or new cottage for their use. Might also involve putting some of the land to use for their and our benefit (organic garden, etc?).

Stewards Report

The Stewards are actively involved in the work of ILYM committees. We look forward to increasing the number of Stewards to more fully serve this responsibility.

Projects

- **Completed**
Carol Bartles completed a window and insulation project on the bunkhouse with Ebener Construction. Site Envisioning and Maintenance and Planning along with Ebener Construction completed the meetinghouse bathroom remodeling in time for Beth and Duane Carpenter's wedding.
- **Expected Soon**
Site Envisioning is preparing scope documents for the improvements to the North Campground bathhouse. We will assist as the scope and budgets are approved.
- **Proposed when Funds are Available**
The accessible grade-level bedroom and bathroom remodeling or addition to Clear Creek House awaits funding. We will assist as funds become available.

Committee Involvement and Activities

Dick Ashdown has shifted his *ex-officio* position from Site Envisioning Committee to Maintenance and Planning Committee and Environmental Concerns Committee. Dick continues in his role as site liaison. We seek assistance in shouldering the responsibilities for the annual obligations of the site.

Chip Rorem is serving *ex-officio* on Site Envisioning Committee, and has assumed the liaison position with Church Mutual Insurance. He recently participated in a webinar on Fraud in Church Communities.

Chip has assumed Roy Treadway's *ex-officio* position on the Finance Committee. During the May 6, 2014 Finance Committee Meeting he joined with Andy Harrington to address the ongoing maintenance costs for our campus. We look to identify our historic expenditures and also seek those that are upcoming that have yet to be identified.

We support the effort of the Finance Committee to face our budget obligations. We also support their joint effort with the Development Committee to secure funds to address a sustainable way forward to care for our McNabb Campus. We are encouraged by their emerging focus on having sufficient funds secured for the upkeep of any future capital expenditures in addition to the initial cost of the project. We feel that a focus on the care of our campus will help us make responsible decisions on any expansion we entertain.

We support the emerging interest in a caretaker, and eagerly look forward to expanding the group of Stewards.

Respectfully submitted,

Dick Ashdown and Chip Rorem

Youth Oversight Committee Report

The High School Friends have had several Quakes, one Tremor, and much fun over the past year. Peace Poles have been given to each meeting that hosts a Quake and there has been no significant damage to person or place which has been a blessing! St Louis hosted the November Quake, Evanston the Quake that Rocked the Midwest, and Urbana-Champaign the recent Memorial Day Quake with Tremor, including three middle schoolers. Calendar continues with next November Quake at McNabb, January QTRTM likely at Evanston, and other events to be discussed.

The committee members have really worked hard and long in ensuring that our teens have a safe and nurturing environment, fun-filled and deepening of the spirit. Committee members include Warwick Daw, Fariba Murray, Sara Raffensperger, Rose Dennis, Kate Gunnell, and our newest members, Brittany Koresch and Mason George. Chris Goode is informal committee member and chauffeur. Dawn Amos has provided transportation, useful advice, and coffee at critical times. David Wixom has contributed paper crafting and outdoor advice. Teens at various Quakes have included Gabe & Jackson from South Bend, Marlena & Kit from Southern Illinois; Sean, Gavin, Annie, & Amal from St Louis, Corbin, Kayla & Liam from Urbana; Claire & Laure from Clear Ck/Downers Grove; Ava & Raffi from Evanston; Charlotte & others from Lake Forest; Lindsay & Paloma from North Side; and teens from Ohio Valley and Lake Erie Yearly Meetings.

Teen attendance has been steady, with the common challenges of gaining access to teens so widely flung, transportation, and finalizing the count before our gatherings. We have had waves of participants, and look forward to folding in our newest members at this Yearly meeting. Rose Dennis as Youth Coordinator, and Wil Brant as Yearly Meeting support staff, have worked hard on making sure all means of contact are covered. The teens themselves are using Facebook extensively in contacting each other.

At Yearly and over the next work weekends & Quakes, we will be working with other committees to complete the habilitation of the Jr Yearly Meeting House and the Fox Hole. Our fundraising continues with the sale of silk screened shirts, we believe we remain within budget, and our contributions will be toward Laure Goode traveling with the QYP, and Sean Robey moving into college.

A matter of ongoing concern has been how do we as Friends address issues of safety with our teens (and all children under our care). We talked about background checks, and some very hardworking and committed Friends raised question regarding the forward movement of same. Long-time members of ILYM related past efforts at addressing safety; this committee looks forward to receiving those past documents when available.

We really need specific direction from ILYM regarding detail and management of policy regarding working with teens. We also need the guidance of the larger body regarding the "Guidelines for Friendly Adults, for Teens, and for Parents."

As a committee, we look forward to bearing witness to the growth of our teens and their dreams and plans for the world. We are grateful to Yearly for the support of the committee in seeking out skilled

members to provide for the work, for the material support allowing us to have a Youth Coordinator and to do the wonderful activities, and for the holding of us all in the Light. The teens continue to enjoy Quakes as an opportunity to gather with their Quaker age peers.

Respectfully submitted,
Kate Gunnell, clerk

Reports of Representatives

FCNL Representatives Report

Two of the four General Committee reps and four additional member and friends of ILYM attended the Annual FCNL meeting for five days in November. We visited the offices of Senators Durbin and Kirk and spoke of the need to decrease military spending and increase diplomatic efforts. Additional visits were made to reps and many phone calls, email and written letters were made.

We are appreciative that the Nominating Committee has recommended a full complement of six persons to the FCNL General Committee and that this is being accomplished in the Spring. In this manner new appointees can plan early for attendance at the annual FCNL meeting in Washington each November.

We have been trying to have each meeting update its appointment of a liaison to FCNL. This is a work in progress. This liaison will be responsible for communicating with the meeting and hopefully encouraging meeting members to communicate with their Congresspersons and community by regular visits, calls, e-mails and letters to local newspapers. Let us not keep our light under a bushel!

The attempt to repeal the War Authorization Act of 2001 was initiated in the House of Representative in July 2013 and lost by 36 votes. A recent vote lost by only 27 votes. Our leaders at FCNL continue to promote this action. Our country is having a large debate about military action policies and we hope each meeting will prayerfully consider testimonies against militarism. 11 of our 19 Illinois Representatives voted against repeal. The reps who voted against the bill in May are Lipinski, Roskam, Duckworth, Schneider, Davis, Hultgren, Khimkus, Kinsinger, Bustos and Schock. If these reps are in your district, we hope you will prayerfully consider with your Meeting options to share your views with them. And if your rep voted in favor of repeal, we hope you will thank them and urge them to renew efforts to repeal.

In addition, we hope that there will be a continued conversation about the relationship between the Peace Resources Committee and the FCNL General Committee members.

Kevin Brubaker '15, Michael Batinski '16, Fariba Murray '16, Wilmer Rutt '14

FWCC Consultation

Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) held four regional consultations during 2014, two in South and Central America and two in the United States. The theme for all was "Let the Living Water Flow!" (John 4:7-14). In total over 400 Friends participated in the four events. I attended the Consultation in North Carolina on 4/11-13 and so I can only address this event, although all had the same theme but with different participants and speakers.

On the first evening, we heard from Ashley Wilcox (Friends Freedom Church in Salem, OR). She started by speaking of the dead trees from the 1964 earthquake. The living water no longer flowed through them to give them life. This led into the idea of keeping one's cistern full of living water. When Jesus and the disciples found the living water, they were awed and as a result Peter wanted to build a tabernacle there to preserve it, not realizing that we have to keep finding the living water constantly. Trying to ossify it will be to make it into something like the dead trees, but there is hope since it is always possible to find the living water. She ended with a story of the grass growing where there was once concrete. Concrete seems so permanent, but the living force of grass can even grow there as long as it has living water.

That evening we started to meet with small groups to which we were assigned. Small groups are designed for participants to be able to get to know each other in that which is eternal. They are a worshipful time which feels spiritually safe. During our last small group on Sunday, we used the time to process what each of us experienced over the weekend.

Each participant also attended a workshop of their choice. The possible topics were Conflict Transformation, Cultural Communication, Leadership in the 21st Century, and finally one related the material support program for disaster victims organized by the various branches of North Carolina Friends. As I attended the Cultural Communication workshop, I will relate my experiences there.

To look at cultural miscommunications, it is important to first explore our own values. Many miscommunications occur because we are unaware of our own hidden values. Just before lunch, one of the leaders wrote 'God' on the board during a brainstorming session and one of the participants took exception because she felt that the leader had biased the brainstorming session with her comment and had not left time for others to respond. This exchange was troubling since we had so little time before lunch so it felt very awkward.

Upon returning after lunch, we found that the participant and the two workshop leaders had met and decided to use this situation as an example of cultural miscommunication. All involved were open to doing so and had given their permission. This turned out to be very interesting as both people (the leader who had written 'God' and the participant who had taken exception) were interested in inclusion, but each had left out some other groups in their attempt to be inclusive. Each was coming with hidden assumptions which ran afoul of the other's values. They used the tools presented in the workshop during the morning session to illustrate methods for resolving cultural and value miscommunications.

By the end of the Consultation, we were each asked to think about what we were going to bring home. While I received great insights into cross cultural miscommunication techniques, the really significant conversations were when the group took on really hard topics such as the role of God in our deliberations. Sometimes we as meetings become more concerned about not hurting someone than seeking God's will. As one participant said, I am comfortable with my belief, and if someone disagrees with me, then it is God's work to change that person's heart.

I was also struck by the issue of leadership. As one person said, there are so many people who want to contribute their gifts to the Society of Friends but can't find a way to do so; while on the other end, there are so many slots for nominating committees to fill and they can't find people for them. One Friend said that in his reading of minutes from the 17th century, meetings only had one standing committee; all others were ad hoc based upon the meeting's needs. This allowed the meeting to implement their leadings as the Spirit moved them. It is something to reflect upon.

All in all, the Consultation was well worth attending. Worshiping with Friends from across the Quaker spectrum is a deeply spiritual experience.

Nancy Wallace, FWCC Representative

Friends Peace Teams Report

This year Friends Peace Teams is please to celebrate our 20th anniversary. We are having a large celebration in Baltimore, MD from the 20th day of sixth month to the 22nd day of Sixth month. This conflict with ILYM is the reason your FPT rep is not attending any part of ILYM this year.

Our celebration features presenters from all over the world who will speak and offer workshops on peacemaking techniques. We are pleased with the response we have gotten to our many invitations to join us sent out on our website, in our newsletter, in e-mail and on social media. If you did not receive an invitation, please join us on Facbook or visit our website at www.friendspeaceteams.org to keep up with us in the future. When you make a donation, you will automatically begin to receive our newsletter unless you request otherwise.

For Friends not at the celebration, there will be live video streaming across the world from our celebration as well as some taped video of parts of our celebration for future viewing. We will make thous available on our website.

During the past year, in addition to planning for this celebration, we continued to work hard on our peacemaking efforts as well as our behind the scenes efforts. On the behind the scenes front, we have a brand new website now that connects directly to Facebook and we have been working hard on finding ways to make ourselves more and more transparent to our donors. On the peacemaking front, our Asia West Pacific initiative began working with Palestinian/Israeli people in addition to all of its other great work. Our Peacebuilding *en Las Americas* initiative coordinator, Val Liveoak, attended the first ever National Columbia AVP meeting. And Dave Zarembka is continuing to grow and keep his wonderful work in Africa running smoothly. All of our coordinators have done amazing work with the three initiatives.

Please pick up a copy of our 20th anniversary newsletter or read of copy online from our website.

Respectfully submitted,
Debra Penna-Fredericks
ILYM friends Peace Teams Representative

Other Documents from Business Sessions

Faith and Practice Report on Historical and Contemporary Conceptions of Meeting “Exercises”

Preparing a “report of exercises” was standard practice in yearly meetings of all branches of Friends at least as far back as the mid-19th century. Exercise reports in that era generally took the form of summaries of the major business of the meeting, usually with some reporting of ministry offered in meeting for worship as well.

In Illinois Yearly Meeting, the exercises were originally prepared by the same committee that prepared the outgoing epistles. The exercises and epistles frequently showed significant overlap in content, but served different practical purposes: the exercises were distributed internally to the quarterly and monthly meetings which formed a

part of Illinois Yearly Meeting, while the epistles were sent to other yearly meetings. Starting about 1917, ILYM began sending the exercises to be published in *Friends Intelligencer* (a predecessor publication to *Friends Journal*), apparently to serve as a kind of news report to the wider Quaker community of the major events, business and spiritual concerns of the ILYM gathering.

The original implications of the word *exercise* are not completely clear. Modern Friends have generally understood this choice of terminology as implying that reports of exercises are to be about concerns or issues which “have Friends exercised” — that is, which provoke significant spiritual labor or excitement. It is abundantly clear that earlier generations of Friends used the word *exercise* for laborious spiritual trial and for deeply animating concerns; but it is also clear that they sometimes used it simply as a relatively neutral term for the proceedings or general course of activity in a meeting for business or worship, as in “Having arrived at the close of the business exercises of our meeting, and been favored with great unanimity of purpose in considering all the matters which more especially called us together, we can truly say that great consolation is ours...” (Minutes of Pennsylvania Yearly Meeting of Progressive Friends, 1854). We cannot say with any certainty whether reports of exercises were originally so called with the former concept in mind, or merely the latter.

Many yearly meetings continue to prepare reports of exercises or “minutes of exercise,” but with highly variable understandings of what this involves. Among the historical and contemporary conceptions we have found:

- A summary of those matters expressed in meeting for worship or for business which seem important to record, but which do not represent decisions of the business meeting and therefore would not otherwise appear in the minutes. This conception appears to have been popular especially in the early 20th century, with indications that at least ILYM and New York YM(H) conceived of exercise reports partly on this model.
- A summary of messages offered in meeting for worship. This conception is used at least by Iowa YM(C); but it formerly was a very widespread practice to include some reporting of what was said in meeting for worship in reports of exercises.
- A report of the “spiritual atmosphere” which prevailed at the yearly meeting sessions, together with a recounting of the principal activities which occurred. Roughly this conception is implied by the description of the duties of the Exercises Committee in the ILYM Handbook.
- A record in the minutes of how some particular, deeply felt concern was explored. Usually called a “minute of exercise” rather than a “report of exercises,” this conception is current at least in New England YM and North Pacific YM.
- An expression by the clerk of insights or concerns he or she wishes to raise at the close of a meeting for business, in light of the business just conducted. Also called a “minute of exercise” rather than a “report of exercises,” this conception is in use in Philadelphia YM.

**Faith and Practice Section on
The Light Within and its Religious Implications
approved 2014 for a 23-year provisional period**

Deep within us all there is an amazing inner sanctuary of the soul, a holy place, a Divine Center, a speaking Voice, to which we may continuously return. Eternity is at our hearts, pressing upon our time-torn lives, warming us with intimations of an astounding destiny, calling us home unto Itself. Yielding to these persuasions, gladly committing ourselves in body and soul, utterly and completely, to the Light Within, is the beginning of true life.

Thomas R. Kelly, 1941

Introduction

The Society of Friends encompasses a wide variety of beliefs and perspectives, but perhaps the most distinctively Quaker religious concept is that of the *Light Within*. Also frequently called the “Spirit” or “that of God in everyone,” the Light is a Divine presence within each of us: a manifestation of God in all people. Identified by early Friends as the living Spirit of Christ, the Light serves as a moral guide, a comfort in times of need, a spur to action, and the Seed from which inward spiritual transformation can grow.

Light is that which makes visible, and the first function of the Light Within is to make clear to us our true spiritual nature, laying bare what we may have hidden from ourselves, whether good or bad, and showing us ourselves as we really are. For some, this may mean seeing one’s true worth after years of imagined worthlessness; for others, it may mean recognizing for the first time one’s own capacity for evil. For all, gaining a more honest and complete understanding of oneself is a crucial step in spiritual growth.

By this light it hath pleased the Lord to give me the distinction of things inwardly in my own heart. The Lord hath shewn me by it evil and good in my own heart, and taught me to chuse the good, and refuse the evil. So that as my eye hath been turned to this light, and kept to this light, I have known and walked in the way of life; for the power which hath appeared in this light, hath created me anew, made me a child of light, and taught and caused me to walk in this light, as God is in the light.

Isaac Pennington, 1681

The Light not only clarifies our own inward nature, but also helps us discern how to live our lives. The Light informs and excites the conscience, turning us away from what we know is wrong, and toward what is right and true and just. The Light is the source of authentic “concerns” — the persistent, growing sense we sometimes feel that some moral or spiritual issue requires our attention and discernment; and of authentic “leadings” — the sense that one is impelled by Divine will toward a particular course of action.

We can just let go and contemplate the painful reality as the Light reveals it to us, turning it slowly around the way a child holds a glittering pebble up in the light. In this more expansive, less judgmental state of consciousness we may gradually become aware of new dimensions, or causes, or outcomes of the problem as we continue to hold it in the Light.

William Taber, 1992

The Light can be unsettling but is ultimately a source of inward peace and comfort, both in the assurance it provides that God is always with us, and in the clear conscience it brings to those who do what they know inwardly to be right. Friends have a special calling to build peace in the world; but true peace is rarely built by those who are dominated by turmoil in themselves. Those who would bring peace out to others must find it also within. It is by turning to this inward source of reconciliation and forgiveness that we find the foundation for outward action.

This I told them was their first step to peace, even to stand still in the light...

George Fox, recounting events of 1652

Discerning the Light

Attending to the Light Within requires effort, and a careful discernment of what in ourselves is truly of the Divine Spirit, and what instead is simply the expression of our own egos, desires, or assumptions. The Light endows all people with the capacity to perceive and act in accord with what God would have us do, but our exercise of that capacity is frequently imperfect.

The experience of Friends has been that the Light is most reliably recognized from a state of inward calm and quiet. It is for this reason that in our meetings for worship, including our business meetings, we try to empty our minds and put aside anything which might mask or distract us from our perception of the Light: the stresses and worries of daily life, the bitterness of resentment or anger, the diversion of idle fantasy, or whatever else might so fully occupy our thoughts as to crowd out what we most need to see. We should hesitate to accept as the Light's guidance any impulse which does not persist as these things are set aside.

Give over thine own willing; give over thine own running; give over thine own desiring to know or to be any thing, and sink down to the seed which God sows in the heart, and let that grow in thee, and be in thee, and breathe in thee, and act in thee, and thou shalt find by sweet experience that the Lord knows that, and loves and owns that, and will lead it to the inheritance of life, which is his portion.

Isaac Pennington, 1661

Discerning the Light is most effective when pursued communally. Not everyone is led to the same actions, and we cannot expect that what the Light makes clear to one person will always be made clear to everyone; but checking one's perceptions against the understanding of a broader spiritual community provides an invaluable anchor and partial safeguard against a false sense of Divine leading. The Light does not contradict itself; when Friends' understandings of what the Light requires are not just different but incompatible, this is a sign that more discernment is needed.

Since there is but one Light and one Truth, if the Light of Truth be faithfully followed, unity will result. "The Light itself," says Thomas Story, "is not divided, but one and the same entire, undivided Being continually." The nearer the members of a group come to this one Light, the nearer they will be to one another, just as the spokes of a wheel approach one another as they near the center.

Howard Brinton, 1952

Friends have often found that living as the Light leads us requires personal sacrifice. Early Friends faced severe persecution for their beliefs, and even in modern times Friends have frequently found themselves in confrontation with the state or other powerful interests. Friends who face no such dangers may still find that the lit path conflicts with their natural desires to pursue comfort, pleasure, wealth, or prestige. Sacrifice by its nature involves hardship, but sacrifices to which one feels deeply called can also be spiritually enriching.

The natural Mind is active about the Things of this Life; and, in this natural Activity, Business is proposed, and a Will in us to go forward in it. As long as this natural Will remains unsubjected, so long there remains an Obstruction against the Clearness of divine Light operating in us; but when we love God with all our Heart, and with all our Strength then in this Love, we love our Neighbours as ourselves; and a Tenderness of Heart is felt toward all People...

John Woolman, 1772

Friends should not feel troubled if the Light is difficult to discern, or if they do not feel clearly led to any particular course of action. Our first responsibility is simply to wait and to listen. No more can be asked than a sincere effort to discover and live out what one knows inwardly to be right. Even those most experienced in cultivating the spiritual life report long periods of drought; our part is to keep the ground prepared so that the Seed may sprout in its own time.

T

he first gleam of light, ‘the first cold light of morning’ which gave promise of day with its noontide glories, dawned on me one day at Meeting, when I had been meditating on my state in great depression. I seemed to hear the words articulated in my spirit, ‘Live up to the light thou hast; and more will be granted thee.’

Caroline Fox, 1841

A Religion of First-Hand Experience

A religion based on discerning and responding to the Divine Light within each of us must be a religion of first-hand personal experience. Friends have long held that religion known only through accounts in books, intellectual systems of theology, the mediation of clergy, or in any other way than personally and directly leaves out what is most essential in spiritual life and may even displace the necessary work of opening ourselves to the inwardly transformative power of the Spirit.

And then [George Fox] went on, and opened the scriptures, and said, ‘The scriptures were the prophets’ words, and Christ’s and the apostles’ words, and what as they spoke they enjoyed and possessed, and had it from the Lord:’ and said, ‘Then what had any to do with the scriptures, but as they came to the spirit that gave them forth. You will say, Christ saith this, and the apostles say this; but what canst thou say? Art thou a child of light, and hast walked in the light, and what thou speakest, is it inwardly from God?’ &c. This opened me so, that it cut me to the heart; and then I saw clearly, we were all wrong. So I sat down in my pew again, and cried bitterly; and I cried in my spirit to the Lord, ‘We are all thieves, we are all thieves, we have taken the scriptures in words, and know nothing of them in ourselves.’

Margaret Fell, recounting events of 1652

Through much of our history, Friends objected even to the performance of psalms and other hymns, as “singing the condition of David” — that is, as expressing the spiritual state of King David, presumed author of many of the psalms — which would be a poor substitute for discovering and expressing one’s own spiritual state. Few Friends object to hymn singing nowadays, but we continue to recognize the importance of personal authenticity in religious expression, and the danger of putting vicarious religion in the place of real experience.

To say that religion must be known first hand does not mean that hearing the religious perspectives of others is of no profit; on the contrary, this can be of immense value. But the words of others have an effect only to the degree that they strike a respondent chord in ourselves and so lead us to experience something on a personal level. Other people may give a clearer articulation to what we know only dimly in ourselves, or may present it in a new way or from a novel perspective, or may lead us to see elements of our own views as inconsistent with what we know more deeply to be true.

Conversely, in our own religious speech and conduct toward others, we may expect to be helpful

only if what we say and do finds an echo in what the Spirit already testifies to them inwardly, or to use George Fox's phrase, if it "answers that of God" in them.

...be patterns, be examples in all countries, places, islands, nations, wherever you come; that your life and conduct may preach among all sorts of people, and to them. Then you will come to walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in every one; whereby in them ye may be a blessing, and make the witness of God in them to bless you: then to the Lord God you shall be a sweet savour, and a blessing.

George Fox, 1656

We cannot hope to call forward the Light in others unless our own communication with them flows from the Light in ourselves. Indeed, Quakers have traditionally held that all religious speech, whether ministry or prayer, in meeting for worship or elsewhere, should be under the direct and extemporaneous influence of the Spirit, and not simply recited from memory or composed by the "natural intellect":

The worship, preaching, praying, and singing, which we plead for, is such as proceedeth from the Spirit of God, and is always accompanied with its influence, being begun by its motion, and carried on by the power and strength thereof; and so is a worship purely spiritual...

Robert Barclay, 1678

Diversity of Belief

Our paramount concerns in religious life are to properly attend to God's Light in ourselves and all people, discern what we are called thereby to do, and respond to that call as led, both as individuals and as a community. A sincere effort in all these things leaves room for a wide variety of theological perspectives. Issues of religious doctrine are of secondary importance at best, and at worst serve as a divisive and harmful distraction from the real business of spiritual engagement and building a more just and peaceful world. Partly for this reason, we do not require assent to any specific list of religious tenets as a condition of membership in the Religious Society of Friends, nor does Illinois Yearly Meeting formally affiliate with any organization which requires such assent.

Humanity and Purity, Bowels and Holiness, they are the pure Religion and undefiled in God's Sight, in his Account; not Creeds but Practice, not Profession tho' of true Words, but Experience and good Living.

William Penn, 1692

Just as faith without works is dead, so too is a merely intellectual belief in religious ideas without the quickening power of the Spirit. Instituting a standard of belief in a religious organization encourages the false view that belief, by itself, has some redemptive or salutary effect. But the Light, properly attended to, effects a far more thoroughgoing and deeper transformation than simply coming to believe a doctrine.

For by our works we must be tried, and not by a profession founded on belief or faith; nor by faith only; for belief never saved the soul, except when it has become an operative belief—till the soul is led to condescend to those things that are pointed out to it by the light, and to work by it and with it...

Elias Hicks, 1826

In any organization in which a confession to specific articles of faith is required, some individuals will inevitably feel pressure to make such a confession, whether they are inwardly convinced of its truth or not. Such requirements tend therefore to undermine the integrity of the members, and to promote dishonesty and hypocrisy. Friends value authenticity above conformity, holding that any expression of religious faith should arise from the operation of God's Spirit within, not from external expectations.

And, dear friends, be faithful in what you know, take heed of making a profession of what you are not, and so you be found dissemblers before the Lord; but keep low in meekness and patience, standing in the will of God in all things...and then you shall be brought into a possession of what you have but had a profession, and find the power of what you had but in words, which is hid from all professions in the world, and is revealed no other way, but by the pure light of God dwelling in you, and you in it.

James Nayler, 1653

Many Friends have felt that some important elements of religious Truth resist formulation in words. Any statement of faith to which Friends were expected to subscribe would therefore provide an incomplete and distorted view of what we really regard as most important.

The deepest spiritual insights are wordless. A Friend called one morning to say that in meditation that morning she had had an overwhelming awareness of the reality of the Inner Self, the God Within. Her voice was filled with awe. The awareness was accompanied by a certainty, an understanding that could not be disputed, yet there were no words with which to express what had transpired....A wordless knowing, an indisputable clarity of understanding — such is the eloquence of the mystical experience. It speaks to something deep within us, and we are never quite the same.

Betty Clegg, 1982

Although there is no specific list of doctrines to which we expect our members to assent, this does not mean that there are no specifically Quaker religious ideas. Far from it: Friends have developed a rich system of Quaker religious thought over a period of more than 350 years, and we encourage participants in our meetings to familiarize themselves with it and consider its principles carefully. Nor can it be said that we regard every conceivable religious idea as an equal expression of the Truth which God reveals in all people. In the clearness process for membership, meetings may consider whether an applicant's views are broadly compatible with the perspective of the meeting community as a whole and of Friends more generally. But the utmost caution must always be exercised not to let a concern for doctrine divert us down a divisive and lifeless path.

Christ and Christianity

Early Quakers understood themselves to be engaging in “primitive Christianity revived” (to use William Penn's phrase), and through most of our history, Friends have been united in placing the person and teachings of Jesus Christ at the center of their spiritual life. Present-day Friends recognize and value the Christian foundations of Quaker faith, although an overtly Christian perspective is no longer universal among Friends. To varying degrees in our different meetings, many of us draw as heavily from other spiritual traditions as from Christianity, or understand the Light Within and other Quaker religious

concepts in ways which are largely independent both of Christianity and of other traditional religions. Not a few of us approach such matters from a primarily or entirely non-theistic perspective. Many also of us are committed Christians—and diverse in our understanding of what that entails.

Yet underlying this diversity is a deeper unity, and a commitment to discerning and following the Light Within. We have found by experience that we reap more spiritual fruit through love and care for one another, through forbearance and forgiveness, through service and community, than we do through a vain attempt at achieving a homogeneous theological position.

It may nevertheless be useful and interesting to Friends of all perspectives to have some familiarity with historic or traditional Quaker thought on Christ — not as a normative standard of belief, but as an aid to understanding the original motivations for some of our concepts and practices, as a reference point in understanding our current diversity, and as part of the common heritage of the Religious Society of Friends. Many Friends have also found — sometimes to their surprise — that engaging with the perspectives of earlier generations of Friends serves to advance their own spiritual growth, or to significantly alter their understanding of Christianity.

But as I had forsaken the priests, so I left the separate preachers also, and those called the most experienced people; for I saw there was none among them all that could speak to my condition. And when all my hopes in them and in all men were gone, so that I had nothing outwardly to help me, nor could tell what to do; then, Oh! then I heard a voice which said, ‘There is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition.’ When I heard it, my heart did leap for joy.

George Fox, recounting events of 1647

As understood by Fox and other early Friends, Christ is found first and foremost by turning inward. They perceived the Light Within to be the Spirit of Christ, working in and through all people to guide us and redeem us into the life which God would have us live. Present within us at first perhaps only as a small seed, Christ is strengthened in us as we hearken to such guidance, remaking us anew. The voice of Christ within teaches a life of love, forgiveness, humility, and compassion; and turns us away from all that is contrary to such a life.

What is the *sum and substance of the true religion*? Is it not love from a principle of life? Is it not a travel out of the enmity of the creature into the love of God? Doth not the light of life spring in the love, and gather into the love? Doth not Christ, revealed in the heart, and leavening the heart with the favour of life, teach love to enemies, to bear with them in love, to seek them in love, to forgive them in love, to pray for them in love, to wish good to them, and wrestle with God for mercy towards them, even while they are hating and persecuting?

Isaac Pennington, 1663

In contrast to many of their Puritan contemporaries, who understood salvation as an external payment of our debts by Christ, early Quakers saw redemption in Christ’s inward work transforming and purifying the spirit.

Here is light, here is life, here is righteousness, here is peace, here is heavenly joy, here is the holy power, springing and bringing forth their fruits, and precious operations and effects in the heart; and here is assurance of the love of God in Christ for ever, and that God will never leave nor forsake that soul which is joined to him, and abides with him in

this seed; but it shall be kept by the power of God, through the faith that springs from this seed, unto perfect redemption and salvation.

Isaac Penington, undated

It is not always clear from the writings of seventeenth century Friends how they understood the respective roles of the inward operation of Christ in the spirit and the outward, “historical” crucifixion and resurrection in effecting salvation. This issue became a major point of schism in the 1820’s. In keeping with our general openness to diversity of belief, most of us are now content to regard such questions as matters of individual faith.

Friends and the Bible

Just as we are diverse in the roles we ascribe to Jesus in our spiritual lives, we are diverse also in the ways we use and interpret the Bible. There can be no doubt that to George Fox and the other founders of Quakerism, the Bible was deeply important and influential. Their writings are rich in scriptural allusions, and they clearly took themselves to be advancing the same religion as advocated by scripture, taken as a whole and rightly understood.

Yet it would be a mistake to think that early Friends favored a “Bible-based” religion. Friends have always held that religious belief and practice ought to be based on what God reveals inwardly through the Light. Fox and other Friends claimed that what God taught inwardly could frequently be found also in the testimony of scripture, but it is the Light, not the Bible, which serves as the foundation.

This I saw in the pure openings of the light without the help of any man; neither did I then know where to find it in the scriptures; though afterwards, searching the scriptures, I found it. For I saw in that light and spirit which was before the scriptures were given forth, and which led the holy men of God to give them forth, that all must come to that spirit, if they would know God or Christ, or the scriptures aright, which they that gave them forth were led and taught by.

George Fox, recounting events of 1648

Early Friends believed that the scriptures were written under the guidance of the Light Within, and that therefore there could be no contradiction between scripture, rightly understood, and what the Light reveals to us now. While this may seem to imply that one can “test” apparent revelations by checking whether they are consistent with scripture, Friends have often held that such testing is problematic, because the correct interpretation of scripture — at least for the purposes of spiritual discernment — can itself be reliably garnered only under the guidance of the Light. Without confidence that we are discerning accurately what God reveals inwardly and directly, we can have no confidence in our interpretation of scripture. Indeed, we would have no reason to trust the scriptures at all if not for a respondent spark in ourselves which finds itself echoed in them.

Friends believe that Divine guidance is freely available to all people, to guide our speech and actions. The idea that the scriptures were written under Divine guidance therefore does not accord them a unique status in human history. Revelation continues down to the present day; there can be no closed canon. Many of us feel that other writings, including some from very different religious traditions, express the Light no less than the Bible.

We now recognize that the writings of the Bible reflect to some extent the varying personal experiences and cultural perspectives of its authors; just as our own speech in meeting for worship, though offered under a sense of Divine guidance, may be colored by our limited experience and understanding. The Bible is perhaps all the more useful for expressing a variety of different conceptions

of God and the relation between God and humanity, including some from historical and cultural contexts quite far removed from our own. Yet underlying this variety we perceive a deeper unity: a single Spirit that finds expression in many ways.

Quakerism and Other Religious Traditions

Our experience of the divine-human relationship is that it is constant and eternal, and includes every human being at every moment.

Lloyd Lee Wilson, 1993

Friends hold that the Light Within is present in all people; not just Quakers or Christians. We claim no monopoly on religious truth, and welcome the insights we may gain from other religious traditions.

There is a Principle which is pure, placed in the human Mind, which in different Places or Ages hath had different Names; it is, however, pure, and proceeds from God. It is deep and inward, confined to no forms of Religion, nor excluded from any, where the Heart stands in perfect sincerity. In whomsoever this takes Root and grows, of what Nation soever, they become Brethren in the best Sense of the Expression.

John Woolman, 1760

What is truly important in spiritual life may be found among the adherents of many different outward faiths. This is not to say that all religions are equally true or that all spiritual paths are equally legitimate, for it seems clear that different faiths make different and incompatible claims. But discerning and responding to the Light Within does not require adherence to any particular tradition or organization. In a deeper sense, all those who humbly and sincerely commit themselves to do what they know inwardly to be right are united: on a single path and in a common community, despite all superficial diversity.

The *Humble, Meek, Merciful, Just, Pious* and *Devout* Souls, are every where of one Religion; and when Death has taken off the Mask, they will know one another, though the diverse Liveries they wear here, make them Strangers.

William Penn, 1682

Just as spiritual Truth is not confined to any one outward religion, so neither is any outward religion immune from error, even of the most egregious kinds. History provides innumerable examples of atrocities and crimes committed in the name of religion. Even though Friends are known for our work toward justice, peace and equality, we are far indeed from being able to claim a spotless record. Many of the accomplishments for which Quakers are best known were the result of long efforts by small minorities of Friends who had to labor hard against resistance from other Quakers. Our attitude to other faiths must be one of openness and humility, and we must be diligent in seeking out and uprooting the seeds of injustice, both in our individual beliefs and practices, and in the institutional structures of the Society of Friends.

I was then carried in spirit to the mines, where poor oppressed people were digging rich treasures for those called Christians, and heard them blaspheme the name of Christ; at which I was grieved; for His name to me was precious. I was then informed that these heathen were told, that those who oppressed them were the followers of Christ; and they said among themselves, 'if Christ directed them to use us in this sort, then Christ is a

cruel tyrant.’

John Woolman, 1772

Rites and Ceremonies, Days and Times

Friends have made an honest effort to take that last step which the Reformation did not take. They have wished to exhibit a genuinely *spiritual* religion.... They have wanted every step and stage of salvation and of worship to be *a living process*. They are afraid of phrases which are supposed to have some *sacred* efficacy. They are anxious not to have officials who belong in a special class and are assumed to have peculiar powers that others lack. They do not recognize places or buildings as having any inherent sanctity. They count only on those operations which are truly ethical and spiritual; that is, those operations which produce in the person *a new spirit and a new power to live by*. The religious life, for them, is witnessed by a new creation. There are no substitutes for life; there is nothing that can take the place of a momentous spiritual event.

Rufus Jones, 1927

For Friends, the essence of spiritual life is to attend diligently to God’s promptings within, and respond as led. In our experience, a faithful response to such leadings will serve the practical goals of cultivating peace, forgiveness, justice, and loving care — in ourselves and in the world. The performance of rites and ceremonies is largely extraneous to such goals, and Friends have generally regarded ceremonial performance as inessential to religious life. Seventeenth century Friends took the unusual step of discontinuing the rites of baptism with water and the Lord’s supper, which had been part of Christian practice from the earliest times. Most Friends today continue to view such ceremonies as separable from, and much less important than, the spiritual realities they represent.

It is perhaps not humanly possible to live a life completely free of ritualized behavior, and from some perspectives Quaker practices such as meeting for worship might be seen as rituals. We do not attempt to eliminate everything in our conduct which serves to mark certain activities as religious. But we keep the level of ceremony low, in order to concentrate on what is truly vital.

Friends have sometimes claimed that to those who experience the spiritual reality which a ceremony symbolizes, the outward form becomes superfluous; and to those who have no such experience, it is pointless: an empty form. But rituals often seem much more powerful than we would expect of empty forms and superfluities. A well-designed ritual, like well-composed music, can induce a vivid sense of connection with the Divine. This power gives us all the more reason to be cautious about rituals. Authentic connection with the Divine is not simply a feeling, however vivid, but a regeneration of the spirit, bearing real fruits of love, compassion and forgiveness. An artificially induced feeling may or may not have such a regenerative effect; it is important not to let the feeling itself become one’s primary goal in spiritual practice.

The whole of life is a sacrament. The worst, the poorest and meanest, of us as well as the bravest and the noblest before our brief day darkens, have broken divine bread. If we believed it wholly, for others as for ourselves, we should have peace. Even now, the measure of our peace is our belief in it, and our forgetfulness of it is the measure of our unrest. To forget it utterly is despair. That the daily bread of human existence, with all its hope and joy, its agony and failure, is broken to men by no blind fate, but by an Eternal Wisdom that is Eternal Love,—this is the underlying faith that saves us from madness. But it is a faith that must be proved, and striven for, and actualised, hour by hour and day by day. We must grip it hard, if we are to recognise God’s sacraments as, one by one, they

enter into our experience.

May Kendall, 1902

Ceremonies, religious holidays, and visits to places with religious significance can serve as occasions to rejoice in God's grace and bounty, and may invite a deeper connection with the Divine. However, we might be misled in confusing such observances and the emotions that accompany them with the divine encounter itself. True religious experience contributes to inward transformation and its outward expression in how we live our lives.

For most of our history, Friends did not celebrate holidays; and while simple celebrations of Christmas and Easter have now become common, we continue to hold that all days are equally holy in the sight of God. Similarly, while we may feel special attachment to our old meetinghouses and other places associated with our Quaker heritage, we do not regard them as more holy than the world in general, all of which is consecrated to God's purposes.

**Faith and Practice Section on
Testimonies
Approved 2014 for a 3-year provisional period**

Among the distinctive Quaker principles are those known as the testimonies. These are values that Friends hold corporately, and which are reflected in our witness to the world.

The testimonies express our communal experience of the Light Within and our commitment to its fruits. We show this commitment in our outward lives: in our dedication to living peacefully, for example, and in our love for each other in "that which is eternal." Living out the testimonies in thought and action reflects the influence of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Be faithful in those testimonies of life and light, against all those things that have come up in this night of apostasy from the light, life and power of God.

George Fox, 1675

The testimonies are not a set of distinct tenets, such as those that might be found in a creedal religion. Still, for the sake of clarity, modern Friends often list the testimonies under separate categories such as "simplicity" and "equality." In order to emphasize the unity of the testimonies, the testimony of integrity ("wholeness") is often the first one cited, as wholeness characterizes the testimonies taken together.

Integrity

Perhaps the most fundamental testimony of Friends is that of integrity. This testimony calls us to a way of life aligned with the will of God as revealed by the Light Within us, reflecting our devotion to truth, honesty, authenticity, and wholeness. We endeavor to become whole within ourselves, and to make our actions reflect our words and beliefs. We strive to hold to a single standard of truth, saying what we mean and doing what we say.

Let your 'yea' be yea and your 'nay' be nay; anything more than this comes from evil.

The Gospel According to Matthew 5:37

The commitment of Friends to a single standard of truth has many practical implications. For example, Quakers do not swear to tell the truth in a court of law when instructed to do so, because we believe that swearing to tell the truth implies that we might otherwise lie or distort the truth. We invest our money on the basis of Quaker principles, rather than entrusting it to organizations that offer a higher rate of return but do not act in accordance with Friends' beliefs. Actions such as these might not be comfortable for us, but Friends hold integrity to be of a higher value than comfort.

The Inner Light does not lead men to do what is right in their own eyes, but that which is right in God's eyes.

Ellen S. Bosanquet, 1927

Peace

Friends are widely known for our efforts to bring about a more peaceful world. We shun violence in word and deed, holding that war is inconsistent with God's will. Early Friends steadfastly refused to participate in wars, preferring imprisonment and persecution to harming other children of God.

We...utterly deny...all outward wars and strife, and fightings with outward weapons, for any end, or under any pretense whatsoever. This is our testimony to the whole world... [T]he Spirit of Christ, which leads us into all truth, will never move us to fight and war against any man with outward weapons, neither for the Kingdom of Christ nor for the Kingdoms of this world.

Friends' Declaration to Charles II, 1660

In recent times, Friends who have refused to fight have often requested to serve in some humanitarian way, and many have done so. Illinois Yearly Meeting stands in support of Friends who engage in conscientious objection, war tax resistance, relief and reconciliation work, and similar efforts to promote peace and justice.

Mindful of the presence of evil in the world, Friends attempt to counter it by using nonviolent means of preventing harm to others while bearing in mind that the perpetrators are also children of God. We have ministered to those on all sides of any conflict, in accordance with our belief that God "sends rain on the just and on the unjust," as Jesus states in *The Gospel According to Matthew* (5:45).

The Quaker peace testimony is not simply a denunciation of outward violence, but also an affirmation of the power of inner peace. As Quaker founder George Fox wrote about his response to those who offered him a military commission, "I told them that I lived in the virtue of that life and power that took away the occasion of all wars." Fox understood that once we achieve peace inwardly, participation in war and violence becomes impossible. The closer we come to achieving the inward condition that God wants for us, the better able we are to cultivate peace in our family, our workplace, our community, and the world.

Simplicity

The Quaker testimony of simplicity denotes an inward centeredness that is responsive to the Divine. As we become centered, we are drawn away from the complexity and clutteredness of secular life and led toward the purity and simplicity of truth to which Friends aspire.

Life is meant to be lived from a Center, a divine Center – a life of unhurried peace and

power. It is simple. It is serene. It takes no time but occupies all our time.

Thomas Kelly, 1941

Friends do not have a set procedure for reflecting inward simplicity, but we have found that outward adornments can be impediments to achieving and maintaining it. Early Friends believed that wearing unadorned plain dress helped free them from vanity. Few contemporary Quakers wear traditional plain dress, but we continue to believe that some measure of detachment from material possessions and worldly aspirations helps us attend to the Light.

The increase of business became my burden, for though my natural inclination was toward merchandise, yet I believed Truth required me to live more free from outward cumbers and there was now a strife in my mind between the two; and in this exercise my prayers were put up to the Lord, who graciously heard me and gave me a heart resigned to his holy will.

John Woolman, 1774

Friends regard church rituals and material trappings as having the potential to hinder our attention to God's word. We gather in unadorned meeting houses and wait in holy silence for the Divine Spirit to guide our worship.

Equality

The testimony of equality is based on Friends' belief that there is that of God in everyone. We regard outward differences between people as less significant than the spiritual equality of all human beings. Quakers have always regarded men and women as equally worthy in God's eyes.

The power and spirit of God gives liberty to all, for women are heirs of life as well as men.

George Fox, 1676

Early Quakers refused to address their "superiors" by honorifics or titles, nor would they bow or doff their hats to them. These countercultural practices, which resulted in the persecution of our 17th-century forebears, have informed our tradition ever since that time. Quakers accepted and upheld the equality of people of different races, classes, and sexual orientations earlier than most of the rest of society, and have worked toward economic equality and social justice. In our meetings we strive to create an inclusive environment, one in which all of those attending feel fully welcome.

The testimony of equality does not imply that everyone has the same talents, but rather that each of us is equally a child of God, blessed with gifts that are different from and complementary to those of other people. When we unite as a meeting community, our diverse gifts unite to serve that community.

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.

Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians 12:4-6

Community

The testimony of community is central to Friends' practices. We worship together in order to be receptive and responsive to God's Light, and we minister to all members of our meeting community.

Our life is love, and peace, and tenderness; and bearing with another, and forgiving one another, and not laying accusations against another; but praying for one another and helping one another up with a tender hand.

Isaac Pennington, 1667

Friends' orientation toward community stands in contrast to the individualism that characterizes our contemporary secular world. We interpret Jesus' injunction to love one another as calling us to share concerns and practices with each other. Our collective attention to God's word, undertaken corporately in Meeting for Worship, serves as the foundation of the faith community to which Friends aspire.

As Quakers, we believe that we are called to be responsible and accountable to each other. We respond to the needs of our meeting community in many ways. These include pastoral care and the formation of clearness committees, in which an individual Friend is held in the Light by fellow worshippers who seek God's will for that Friend.

A Quaker community offers loving support, guidance, comfort, and inspiration to all of those who become a part of it. It also serves as a foundation for our witness to other communities of which we are also a part.

We are an imperfect human community, growing into a more perfect relationship with God.

Lloyd Lee Wilson, 1993

As Friends, we are called to bear the testimonies in our hearts, minds, and actions. This is not a matter of memorizing lists of categories, whether those cited above or any others, but of responding to our experience of the Divine and gaining strength and insight from those who have preceded us in doing so. In learning of the courageous witness of our predecessors over the centuries — those devoted Quakers who have witnessed to that of God in all human beings, spoken truth to power, and honored the earth and all its creatures — we orient ourselves toward more fully reflecting Quaker testimonies in our lives and encouraging others to do likewise.

A "testimony" is a declaration of truth...It is not an ejaculation, a way of letting off steam, or baring one's soul. It has a purpose, and that is to get other people...to turn to God.

John Punshon, 1987

The testimonies are neither fixed nor unchangeable. In accordance with Friends' belief in "continuing revelation" they evolve, and our understanding of them evolves as well. Many of the issues to which early 21st-century Friends feel called to respond, such as nuclear power and recombinant genetic engineering, are the products of recent technological innovations which did not exist for earlier generations of Friends. In such cases we endeavor to discern God's will concerning whether a new testimony, or perhaps an extension of an old one, is in order.

Friends sustain and deepen their commitment to the testimonies through various means, including prayer, reading devotional literature, and attending to vocal ministry in meeting for worship. Some of us have found it helpful to regularly ask ourselves questions such as "How am I living the testimonies?" and "How am I being faithful?" In attending to the testimonies, we often find that issues

that seemed complex or even insoluble are better understood and resolved through devoted attention to the leadings of the Holy Spirit.

The testimonies represent our highest values as Quakers. Learning to live in accordance with them is challenging. We often fall short, but we continue to strive.

I don't regard the testimonies as rules to walk by but ideals to aim for, as guides and reminders of how we should try to live.... We have not attained perfection; we are still on our way.

Kathleen Douglas, 2000

Faith and Practice Initial Presentation of Section on Accident, Illness, Death, and the Care of the Bereaved

Death is no more than a turning of us over from time to eternity.

William Penn, 1693

Eternity is at our hearts, pressing upon our time-worn lives, warming us with intimations of an astounding destiny, calling us home to Itself.

Thomas Kelly, 1941

Preparing for Accident, Serious Illness, or Death

Accidents are unexpected, and an individual who has suffered from an accident may be unable to care for herself or himself for a period of time. Serious illness can also occur at any time. Either of these may require an extended period for recovery and rehabilitation, or may even result in death. In either case there will be a need for support from the meeting.

Meetings are urged to prepare for serious illness or injury of members and attenders. This preparation includes establishing ways to provide spiritual and practical support for an individual who is ill as well as for family members. Practical support may be in the form of transportation to medical appointments and visits to the individual in the hospital or rehabilitation, or nursing facility. It may include preparing meals, doing shopping, providing transportation, and/or babysitting. The form of the practical support and how it is provided will vary from meeting to meeting, depending on the size of the meeting and the geographical spread of its members. Spiritual support may include deep listening as well as holding meetings for worship with the individual and the family in a hospital, nursing/rehabilitation facility, or home.

Individuals have a responsibility to prepare for serious illness which may lead to death. Friends are urged to execute documents that give Medical Power of Attorney to someone to make decisions for them if they cannot, a Durable Power of Attorney for someone to take care of financial and other needs when incapacitated, a Living Will stating wishes about the extent of treatment, and a Last Will and Testament that arranges for care of dependents, disposal of assets, and arrangements for disposal of the body after death. These are to be completed by an individual once he or she is an adult. Individuals need to revisit these when there are life changes such as the birth or adoption of a child or the death of a life partner. Part of completing these documents is informing those who will have responsibility for making decisions in accordance with the individual's wishes. It is important to share this information with those whose lives will be impacted. These discussions can be difficult, so meetings may want to provide periodic opportunities for members to gather and discuss the spiritual and practical issues that arise

around serious accident, serious illness, and end of life. The yearly meeting's Ministry and Advancement Committee can support and inform the meeting about how other meetings handle end-of-life issues.

Support of the Bereaved

Death often faces us with the most difficult questions, yet it may be the occasion of our most profound insights into the meaning of life. As Friends seek to surround the bereaved with love and care, the sustaining power of God can bring to all concerned not only courage but a transforming truth about death and life itself. Although life instinctively avoids death, death is not the opposite of life. It is essential to the ongoing, changing nature of life.

North Pacific Yearly Meeting Faith and Practice, p 99.

Once a member or attender of a meeting has died, the meeting should reach out to the family. Those who do should be aware that in some respects grief for the loss of a loved one never ends. There will be moments when the person who has died is just the one we wish to speak with about an experience, and the sense of loss will arise fresh again. As we support those who are grieving the loss of a loved one, we must remember that there is no single path for moving through grief. The meeting should be able to provide listening support to the family and loved ones of the deceased, as well as other forms of pastoral care as needed. Individuals or a designated committee within the meeting will need to keep in contact with the family providing the ongoing listening and spiritual support necessary.

Special attention needs to be focused on the children or the child siblings of a Friend who has died. Children need a safe environment in which to express their grief. There may be the need for the use of art projects, special storybooks, or even a memorial meeting for the child and her or his classmates at meeting.

The grieving process provides an opportunity for spiritual growth for all concerned. Meeting members need to support each other in the process of grieving and subsequent spiritual growth. This may be especially difficult for a meeting when the person who has died has been an important part of the meeting community. At these times the entire community is grieving, and the community needs to provide an atmosphere where all feel able to express their grief openly. Meetings will want to have literature and knowledge of community resources about issues concerning death and bereavement available for use by members.

Memorial Meetings

It is customary to have a Memorial Meeting for Worship, sometimes referred to as a Celebration of the Life, for a Friend who has died. Illinois Yearly Meeting's Ministry and Advancement Committee has prepared a Memorial Meeting Preparation Checklist (pp. XX-XX).

Typically a Memorial Meeting for Worship will include people who are not familiar with worship in the manner of Friends. This means that someone, usually the clerk, will rise shortly after the start of the memorial service and explain a Friends Memorial Meeting for Worship. This time of gathering together in silent worship provides an opportunity for all present to remember the deceased and hold them in prayer. Out of the silence, individuals may feel called to share about the life of the person who died. All are welcome to speak even if they are not members or attenders of the meeting. The messages may focus on the spiritual impact of the Friend's life, or they may be stories about the Friend. Those attending the memorial meeting may find themselves laughing as well as crying as they hear about the individual's life. Others may share a poem, a song, a Bible verse, or another written passage that has special meaning for them at this time. Those present are encouraged to allow a period of silence to frame any spoken message so that all can feel the impact of what has been shared. Many will leave the memorial meeting with a sense that they know the person better because of the spoken

messages. The worshipping community may feel a sense of releasing the Friend who has died.

Following the Memorial Meeting for Worship, refreshments may be provided. This allows time for those present to visit individually with the family and to share with each other in an informal manner. The meeting can be helpful to the family by providing refreshments, and by cleaning up after the family has left.

Meetings may want to find a larger location for a memorial service than their usual meeting place if it is small or the deceased was well known. Sometimes a meeting may need to coordinate the timing or place for the memorial meeting, especially if the individual was a public figure.

Sometimes the family of a deceased Friend may request that there be a graveside service in addition to the Memorial Meeting. This service will also be held as worship in the manner of Friends, although it will normally be a much shorter and smaller gathering. Immediately before, during, and after the lowering of the body into the grave, silence is maintained.

Memorial Minute

In Illinois Yearly Meeting it is customary for the local meeting to prepare a memorial minute for any ILYM Friend who has died during the period between yearly meeting annual sessions. A committee or an individual member of the meeting should prepare the memorial minute and share it with the local meeting. Once the meeting has approved the memorial minute, it should be forwarded to the yearly meeting for inclusion in the yearly meeting minute book. In addition, one meeting member should be appointed to read the minute at the meeting for worship for memorials at the yearly meeting sessions.

Faith and Practice Initial Presentation of Section on Recognizing Spiritual Gifts and Leadings

All Friends are called into a ministry soon or later, whether public or private, in word or deed or silent prayer, of long duration or short.

Lloyd Lee Wilson, 1993

All Friends are called to minister to others, but not all are called to do so in the same way. Offering a vocal message during meeting for worship is the best-known form of Quaker ministry, but it is far from the only one. Ministry may involve caring for those who are ill, teaching First Day school, or even washing dishes after an event at the meeting house. These forms of ministry rarely call for formal recognition, but they serve to deepen the covenant community that is at the core of every Friends meeting.

Ministry is most effective when it takes place according to one's gifts and leadings. In Quaker parlance, a "gift" is a God-given ability that is intended to be used for spiritual purposes, while a "leading" is a call to action based on a Friend's sense that God has "led" her or him to take on a particular cause, for example pastoral care in a prison or hospital. Such leadings typically emerge as a result of prayerful consideration of a concern, and they often reflect the gifts of the person who is led to act on them.

In some cases, a gift or leading may call for special recognition and/or support from a Friend's home meeting. Historically, this has most often occurred when a meeting formally acknowledged that one of its members had a gift of spoken ministry and saw fit to "record" that ministry. Meetings have also "released" certain members to travel based on recognized leadings of those members. Early Quakers felt that they were called to support such members for the benefit of the entire Religious

Society of Friends. While this practice occurs less frequently today, a number of Quaker meetings continue to formally recognize leadings, and some also record ministries.

Recognition of Leadings

Monthly meetings are occasionally called upon to decide whether to formally recognize the leading of an individual Friend. Such recognition means that the meeting takes that leading under its care. An individual wishing to have the meeting take a leading under its care is subject to the meeting's processes of spiritual discernment, which normally involve Ministry and Counsel or a similar committee. As part of its discernment process, that committee might wish to ask that person questions such as the following:

- What is the nature of your leading? Do you have the gifts necessary to take it on?
- Why do you feel you are being called? Is this the right time for you to follow this leading?
- Are there aspects of your leading that you are still seeking to clarify?
- What are the challenges you will face? How will you handle those challenges?
- If the meeting formally recognizes your leading, how will that support you?
- How will following your leading impact your spiritual journey? How will it deepen the spiritual life of the meeting community?

While a committee undertakes discernment and provides recommendations about leadings, the meeting as a body is responsible for deciding whether to take a given leading under its care. Any meeting that chooses to do so should be prepared to provide aid to the "led" individual as necessary and appropriate. In turn, the individual whose leading has been formally recognized is expected to confer regularly with a support committee appointed by their meeting, and he/she should offer a report on their leading to the meeting on at least an annual basis.

Recorded Ministry

The recording of ministers, once very popular among Friends, has become less prevalent over time. London Yearly Meeting, which originated the practice, discontinued it in 1924, and other yearly meetings subsequently followed suit. Illinois Yearly Meeting has not seen fit to make use of this practice since the early 20th century, but the monthly meetings that comprise ILYM are welcome to consider doing so. Any monthly meeting that has not established a position on the recording of ministers is advised to undertake discernment as to whether to permit this practice. If the meeting decides that it is willing to record ministers, it should consider adopting formal procedures in order to be prepared if and when such situations arise. As with the recognition of leadings, those procedures will involve spiritual discernment of God's will on the part of the meeting community.

The recording of a minister does not confer greater status or more privileges upon that Friend than any other. On the contrary, it involves significant responsibility, for the bearer should expect to be held to a high standard.

[W]e do believe and affirm that some are more particularly called to the work of the ministry, and therefore are fitted of the Lord for that purpose...and that . . . there is something more incumbent upon them in that respect than upon every common believer.

Robert Barclay, 1678

As with recognized leadings, recorded ministers should confer regularly, preferably in person, with a support committee appointed by their meeting, and should offer the meeting regular reports on their ministry.

Travel Minutes and Letters of Introduction

If a recognized leading or recorded ministry involves travel outside of one's home meeting, the meeting is expected to provide the individual in question with a "travel minute." That minute takes the form of a brief letter, written and signed by the clerk of the meeting, documenting the meeting's support and requesting "hosting" Friends to offer loving care to the visitor.

It is customary for travel minutes to be read aloud in the meeting that is being visited, usually directly after Meeting for Worship. The clerk or representative of the visited meeting then endorses the travel minute, noting the date of the visit and offering a return greeting to the issuing meeting. The endorsement should attest to the faithfulness of the traveling Friend. Travelers are expected to return their travel minute to their meeting when they return home.

Friends or regular attenders who plan to visit other Friends meetings are welcome to request a "letter of introduction" from their monthly meeting even if they are not doing so on the basis of a recognized leading or recorded ministry. That letter identifies its bearer as a member of a meeting community, extends greetings from that community to the one(s) they are visiting, and asks that "hosting" Friends cordially welcome the traveler.

Additional information provided by Blue River Quarterly regarding their minute of concern regarding the persecution of gay people in Uganda

Welcome to the Friends New Underground Railroad (5/2/2014 – Olympia MM)

In February, the Ugandan Parliament approved new law criminalizing homosexuality, with sentences up to and including life imprisonment. The law also makes "aiding and abetting" homosexuality a criminal offense, carrying a sentence of up to seven years in prison.

Since the law was passed, attacks on lesbians, gays, bisexual, and transgender people have increased, with large numbers of beatings and several murders. There have been many arrests, with few emerging from the jails; lawyers are afraid to take their cases as they might be seen as aiding and abetting homosexuality. LGBT people are being evicted summarily from their homes as landlords don't want to be known as harboring them. University students are being expelled, as are high school students, seminarians dismissed from theological colleges, people fired from their jobs.

LGBT are being denied treatment in hospitals and clinics, and treatment for those with HIV discontinued. Church leaders are calling on parents to turn their own children into the police. Hundreds, perhaps thousands, have gone into hiding as best they can, or are trying to escape the country. A 24-hour 'Christian' radio station, supported with funds from American evangelicals, has been reading the names of 'known or suspected' homosexuals, and calling for their castration or sterilization. Most recently, a new law has been introduced in the Uganda Parliament that would make it illegal for any non-governmental organization (such as Amnesty International) to offer aid to LGBT individuals.

Several individuals in Uganda – both gay and straight – independently contacted members of Olympia Friends Meeting, asking for our assistance to help them make it possible for LGBT people under threat to leave Uganda. Some of these individuals are literally running for their lives. Since then, a new 'underground railroad', in the manner of Quaker practice in the United States prior to the Civil War, has sprung up in Uganda, with conductors, unknown to each other, providing avenues by which those at risk can escape to freedom. Several western countries have policies to accept LGBT refugees, provided the necessary paperwork can be completed.

In April 2014, Olympia Friends Meeting adopted the following “minute” (a “minute” is a statement to guide policy):

Olympia Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends has noted with deep concern the Ugandan Government’s passage of a law targeting the LGTBQ population. This law has created a climate where the life, health, and freedom of all LGTBQ Ugandans and those who help them are at immediate risk. We are appalled at hearing about those who have already been kicked out of their homes, denied basic rights, abandoned, beaten, imprisoned, or killed, or who live in constant fear.

Olympia Monthly Meeting has been called to create a “New Underground Railroad” project to aid LGTBQ Ugandans who are fleeing their homeland for their lives and safety. We have been given an opportunity to provide direct assistance that will save lives. In the first few weeks of this effort we have helped 17 LGTBQ Ugandans get to safety and freedom. Many others remain at risk, and are trying to escape. We call on all Friends, both individually and in their Meetings, Friends' organizations, and all people of good will, to help us in in this effort.

For more information, contact Gabi Clayton, Co-Clerk, Peace and Social Justice Committee, Olympia Monthly Meeting: 360 888-5291; gabi@gabiclayton.com

Send checks to: Olympia Friends Meeting, 3201 Boston Harbor Road NE, Olympia, WA 98506
Updated and additional information is available at friendsnewundergroundrailroad.org.

**Letter read by Northside Meeting
sent to a leader in Friends Church Kenya
regarding the church’s stance on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer concerns**

Northside Friends Meeting
P.O. Box 408429
Chicago, IL 60640

April 6, 2014

Zablon Isaac Malenge
Presiding Clerk
Friends Church Kenya
P.O. Box 465
Kakamega, Kenya

Dear Zablon Malenge,

Northside Friends find themselves deeply concerned with the statement on Quakers and homosexuality issued by the clerk of Friends Church Kenya (FCK), Zablon Isaac Malenge. As a small group of Friends on a separate continent, with a different history yet common heritage, we cannot claim to understand the entire context in which Friend Malenge issues the FCK statement. We believe that FCK is seeking to be faithful to the Light, as we do. FCK has many good calls for Quakers to continue to value truth and uprightness, and we would like to echo that with our own truth.

FCK condemns homosexuality (and accompanying “deviant” sexual and gender practices) “in the strongest terms possible without reservation.” Yet this is not in accord with the truth that Friends in this Meeting, and in other Meetings across the globe, have encountered. This condemnation serves to further the permission of discrimination, violence, ostracization, and harm to be used against gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender/transsexual, intersex, and all other queer people who do not fit into social norms of sex and gender practices. We do not see anger or punishment coming from divine sources. All the violence directed at LGBTQI people comes from a purely human origin, purely human fears, purely earthly will. Such literal reading of texts does not reflect Quaker practices as we know it, of allowing experienced divinity to guide us. FCK has cited the scriptures, and George Fox, and many other (older) documents besides, but Fox also said, “Christ sayeth this, and the apostles sayeth this, but what canst thou say?”

What can we say?

We say, we cannot condone violence or hatred against any member of our beloved body, this human race, all children of the light.

We say, to love thy neighbor as thyself is not to condemn a part of what thy neighbor is.

We say, it makes no difference in the loving, spiritual relationships formed before God, just how those relationships are formed, or maintained.

We say, our view of the truth is but partial, as we are but partial reflections of the divine, and to further this divine love and service to the world cannot mean tearing others down for their gender or sexuality.

We say, sexuality and gender can be gifts from God in all of their forms, and if we trample on those gifts, it is we who need forgiving.

If the “God of yesterday is the same today and tomorrow,” then it is our understanding of that great love which has changed. We see this love as an ever-expanding circle to encompass all, even those we fear or hate, for we know them not, yet trust that they, too, are a part of this creation. We cannot yet even grasp the fullness of this love; yet, we put it into practice as best we can.

Our experience as a Meeting continues to show how the reality of our world interacts with our deeply held beliefs to continue this process of expansion. We have been blessed for many years to have a membership displaying a range of sexual orientations. This has made it easier for us to recognize the inherent humanity of all and the richness that comes from embracing rather than judging our differences. Indeed we feel great joy in the fact that this month we celebrate the recommitment of two women married twenty-five years ago under the care of our Meeting.

We believe FCK is working also with their reality, and we must help each other as we also deal with our limitations. There are inevitable gaps in this Meeting's understanding of God, and we hope that we will be joined together in our quest to be faithful to the Light. So in this Spirit we reach out to say: this is our truth, to love others and love them well.

With God's Light and Love,

Charlotte Wood-Harrington, Clerk
Northside Friends Meeting,
Chicago, IL