

Enclosures for preparative, monthly and quarterly meetings, as well as worship groups in New England Yearly Meeting from Annual Sessions 2004

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In minute 04–34, you find what the *Faith and Practice* Revision Committee presented to us. You have already received a mailing from this committee; but I want to re-emphasize your part in this process.

04–34. Jan Hoffman, clerk, and other members of the *Faith and Practice* Revision Committee came forward. After three years of work, they have compiled a sequence of substantive minutes showing the evolution of the Yearly Meeting’s discernment on a variety of concerns. Jan also pointed to the work of the “Recognition, Support and Accountability for Gifts and Leadings” subcommittee. Jan summarized the process for approving *Faith and Practice*, reiterating that the most important task ahead of us is to make sure that the revised *Faith and Practice* represents the whole Yearly Meeting and not just those who come to the annual Sessions.

The committee has established a process to approve the revised *Faith and Practice*. A first draft of prepared sections will come to Sessions, with feedback expected from monthly meetings by February 1 of the following year. A final draft of those sections will come to the subsequent Sessions for preliminary approval, with the second approval of those sections one year later. The entire process takes three years for “Faith and Practice” sections, as they are presented to us.

Jan read the proposed “Preface” and asked us to form small groups to identify the particular words that came alive, and those segments each of us felt needed more consideration. She asked us to take this back to our monthly meetings, and to return feedback to the committee by February 1, 2005.

Proposed Preface to the Revision of the 1985 New England Yearly Meeting *Faith and Practice*

This book is a witness to the lived faith of Quakers in New England, a devotional resource of encounters with God, and a handbook of procedures. As a witness, it presents glimpses into the unfolding faith and testimony of Friends to their experience and understanding of the Divine. It presents lives transformed by the Spirit and by discipleship to Jesus Christ, and testimonies rooted in spiritual conviction.

As a devotional resource, the book contains records of Quaker spiritual experience which are drawn from the past and reach forward to the present. This experience is rooted in the Judeo-Christian tradition of one God, in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, and in the Christ Spirit. But they all speak to a living mystical experience that can never be completely described. This *Faith and Practice* honors the variety of spiritual experience among New England Friends, and uses many different terms to name the divine.

Friends know that direct experience of God is possible, and that each person can live in direct relationship with the Divine. We are not unique in this belief. Our more distinctive gift is to understand not only that this capacity is given to every human being, but that an entire community can live in such a relationship. We have experienced that together we can receive divine guidance. What is required is faith, love, and respect as spiritual leadings are tested, nurtured, and upheld.

We recognize that there is dynamic tension between the individual and the community when we hold ourselves open to divine guidance. The living Word may be offered in terms that do not always resonate with us personally. We are called to hear the Spirit, not the words alone, and to release each other to speak of our experiences of the Living Presence in the language that is given to us.

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As a handbook, the book outlines the practices and procedures Friends have found helpful in living lives faithfully centered in the Spirit, both as a religious body and as individuals. It reflects practice which is the result of group discernment. It also holds up a vision of how we are being invited to deepen our communities and bring light to bear on new realities. Our structures and procedures are open to change in responsive obedience to the Inward Teacher.

We are called to be faithful, to listen humbly to God's voice among the myriad of others calling for our attention, and then to live out the truths we have been shown. Every generation faces its own challenges as it moves from experience and faith into witness. How we respond to the challenges of our generation is the way we take our place in a living, evolving tradition. Living as Quakers requires sympathetic attention to the past and diligent attention to the Spirit and to each other.

In each section we have upheld the standard that practice grows out of experiential faith. When procedural questions arise, this book is designed to serve as a helpful guide for individuals and meetings. Further assistance may be sought from Friends of long experience and known commitment.

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Enclosed are minutes 04–18 and 04–30 that show our acknowledgment of the issues of corporate restructure and reflect current thinking in the YM, action will come in the future.

04–18. (extract of the whole minute) ...In November, Permanent Board appointed an ad hoc Committee on Corporate Restructure, thereby formalizing an informal discussion that had been underway for several years. This committee has examined the corporate (i.e. legal and financial) relationships between the YM and its “subsidiaries”—Moses Brown School, Friends Camp, and New England Friends Home. It has developed a proposal for a new arrangement for ownership of the Moses Brown School real estate, in order to assure better stewardship of those resources for the mission of the school. Detailed information will be coming to these Sessions for seasoning.” (from the report of the PB)

04–30. Eden Grace, Clerk of Permanent Board, introduced Phil Stone (Worc), and members of the ad hoc Corporate Restructure Committee. As the committee members work on many issues related to our structure, but particularly with regard to Moses Brown School, they find that the key question is the alignment of our corporate structure with our spiritual condition. Phil reminded us that the committee is only reporting this year and is not requesting that any action be taken. After discussion, committee members encouraged Friends to talk with them about the complex issues under their care. Friends accepted the committee’s report.

Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Corporate Restructure

Introduction:

In response to a request by Moses Brown School for a review of its legal relationship to the New England Yearly Meeting (NEYM), an ad hoc committee was appointed by the Permanent Board in November 2003 to review the present corporate structure of the New England Yearly Meeting. Committee participants include: Phil Stone (clerk), Betsy Cazden, Rebecca Leuchak, Jim Nagle (for Moses Brown), Jeanne McKnight, Mary Lee Morrison, Finley Perry, Richard Ristow, Jonathan Vogel-Borne, Susan Davies, Betsy Muench, and Dorothy Zug. Committee members include four attorneys and two accountants.

Report:

The scope of the review expanded from its original focus on Moses Brown to include the two other institutions which operate under the care of the NEYM: Friends Camp in China, Maine and the Friends Home in Hingham, Massachusetts. In recent months the committee decided to return to its original focus on Moses Brown School. That decision was influenced in part by advice that separately incorporating the Friends Home might have an adverse effect upon its present non-profit, tax exempt status. As to Friends Camp, it was felt that the employment of a new camp director, and the need to identify legal counsel in Maine, warranted deferral of additional discussion at this time.

Our discussions concerning Moses Brown have been extensive. The committee is working towards a proposal to establish a corporate structure, encompassing at least separate incorporations of the Moses Brown School and NEYM, with an appropriate financial distinction between the two, and an appropriate isolation of liability exposure.

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Members of the committee have been meeting with interested constituencies, in particular the Providence MM. The major concerns that have been raised and which are under discussion at this time include: resolving legal encumbrances to the proposal; retaining governance of Moses Brown School as a Quaker School; and reaffirming the ongoing and future relationship of Moses Brown School to NEYM and to Providence MM.

The committee is also looking at the relationships of other “affiliated” Quaker programs and institutions in New England that are not formally or structurally part of the New England Yearly Meeting, although they are part of the life and work of New England Friends. Existing organizations that might be so recognized include the following: American Friends Service Committee-New England Regional Office (AFSC-NERO), Beacon Hill Friends House, Cambridge Friends School, Committee on the Suffering & Concerns of Wampanoags, Farm & Wilderness Camps, Friends Committee on Maine Public Policy, Kendal at Hanover, Lincoln School, Lyman Fund, Obadiah Brown Benevolent Fund, Quaker Missions (Mattapoissett MM), The Meeting School, West Falmouth (MA) Quaker House, and Woolman Hill.

We note that there are and will continue to be different degrees of connectedness between NEYM and any given New England Quaker organization.

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ad hoc Procedural Review Committee, as shown in minutes 04–18 and 04–19.

04–18. (extract of the whole minute) ...In November the Nominating Committee brought to us a concern that our committee structure and procedures were in need of review. This had been envisioned as part of the follow up to the Long Range Planning Committee’s report in 2001, and is not properly part of the work of the “Faith and Practice” Revision Committee. We therefore appointed an ad hoc Procedural Review Committee, taking as its charge the substance of the Long Range Planning Committee’s description of a periodic “audit” of our Yearly Meeting’s practices and procedures. This Committee has begun to meet, and its members are enthusiastic about the task. Judging from the response from around the YM, Friends have been eagerly awaiting an opportunity to submit their observations on how we can improve our procedures!” (from the report of the Permanent Board)

04–19. Debbie Humphries (Hart) spoke for the ad hoc Committee on Procedural Review and its goal, to reconsider the committee structure of our Yearly Meeting so that our service is more a joy and less of a chore. The committee is thinking about recommending a Jubilee Year of rest and reflection, and asked for Friends’ involvement in that discernment.

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Finance Committee presented a “stretch” budget which reflects the increases we requested during our 2004 budget discussions: minutes 04–18 and 04–61.

04–18. (extract of the whole minute) ... We engaged in deep worship at our May meeting around the question of how God was calling us to respond to a projected shortfall in next year’s budget, and felt strongly convinced that we should stay faithful to the ministries to which we have been called, and work diligently to fund them, rather than curtail our leadings out of a feeling of scarcity.” (from the report of the Permanent Board)

04–61.

Finance Committee Report

Assuming that the June month projections for income and expense in the current fiscal year (ending August 31, 2004) prove to be accurate, the Treasurer’s report will show that both income and expense are more or less on target and that income has been sufficient to meet expenses.

A proposed budget has been prepared for fiscal year 2005 (October 1, 2004 through September 30, 2005). The new budget should be considered a “stretch” budget because it expects significantly increased contributions from individuals and families. This is necessary because, in recent years, as planned, the YM has been spending from previous reserves and our income has been less than expenses. That reserve was completely spent in fiscal year 2004, also as planned. Finance and ad hoc Development Committees have worked together to set optimistic, but realistic (we hope), goals for increased income. Friends should note that the increased income will need to be sustained in the future because the current need will continue and is not a one time event.

Costs for staff have increased because of our increasing dependence on paid staff and increases in the cost of living, especially the cost of health care. Youth programs requested additional funding to support increased stipends for the elementary and junior high retreat coordinators and that increase is in the proposed budget. Finance Committee heard clearly the message from the floor of Sessions 2004 that the YM is eager to support youth retreats.

To keep the budget from “stretching” to the breaking point, most other expense lines of the proposed budget show little or no change. We also propose to spend somewhat more from our reserves than is our usual practice.

Note that the dates of our fiscal year change in 2004, so a separate budget is proposed for September 2004 to fill the gap between fiscal year 2004 and 2005.

We were encouraged this year by the receipt of an unsolicited, unrestricted, large contribution. That gift somewhat eases concerns about the budget for fiscal year 2005 (and beyond). It is a reminder that we should expect pleasant surprises.

Finance Committee is also charged with reviewing the accounts of the YM Treasurer and other organizations within YM that have their own treasurers. We were especially fortunate this year to get excellent reviews of the Treasurer’s accounts, Sessions accounts, and Friends Camp accounts. The accounts were found to be in generally good order, but each review reported several recommendations of ways to improve our practices.

During the year, Finance Committee made several recommendations to Permanent Board to authorize spending beyond the budget approved last year. All were accepted and are reported in the treasurer’s report.

We continue to be concerned about several issues, including:

- What is the best way to use the limited time and attention of committee members? We feel torn between overall responsibility for large scale oversight of NEYM and all its various parts, including Friends Camp, Friends Home, and even Moses Brown School, and the felt need to pay detailed attention to specific expenses and practices.

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- Our YM financial structures are too complicated and not in keeping with our desire for simplicity. In practical terms, this overburdens our Treasurer and Bookkeeper, makes it difficult to do standard reporting using accepted standard methods, and even difficult to use standard financial software. Even people with specialized financial training need too much time to understand our practices. Ultimately we should present a simplified single set of financial statements that accurately reflects a complete picture of the activities and financial position of all the entities under NEYM's control.
- We note that the per capita cost of running the Yearly Meeting is growing, mainly because we are becoming increasingly dependent on our growing paid staff. As this trend continues, it may have significant consequences for the YM, not all financial, and not all anticipated or intended.
- Many members of the Finance Committee are unsophisticated about financial practices and we were fortunate to spend some time learning about standard accounting procedures and reporting from a committee member who is a CPA. We called that "Accounting 101."
In the coming year, the committee will attempt to address these issues, and will continue its oversight of budgeting and spending.

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The Development Committee described ways “to insure adequate funding for the vision and ministry” of NEYM in minute 04–18 and 04–31. Several of our wider Quaker bodies have also asked that we increase our contributions to them.

04–18. (extract of the whole minute) ...Last August, Sessions approved creation of a two-year experimental ad hoc Development Committee, and asked Permanent Board to implement that decision. We therefore appointed a slate of names on recommendation of the Nominating Committee, and approved a charge for the committee. We have received regular progress reports from the ad hoc Development Committee as they have undertaken their work. Their report appears separately in these documents, and their work to date promises to be the beginning of much new excitement around fundraising in the YM. The Permanent Board has had the opportunity to learn the responsibilities of a Board toward a Development Committee, including setting clear fundraising goals. Together with the Finance Committee, we are active in discerning how much God calls us to stretch and risk, and where the demands of good governance call us to be prudent. (from the report of the Permanent Board)

04–31. The clerk recognized Betsy Cazden (Con), clerk of the ad hoc Development Committee, who recognized members of the committee and the incoming clerk, Gerald Sazama (Stor). Friends accepted the ad hoc Development Committee report.

ad hoc Development Committee Report

The ad hoc Development Committee was approved by the Yearly Meeting in 2003 as a two-year experiment. Its charge, approved by Permanent Board, is to do “short-term and long-term work to insure adequate funding for the vision and ministry of New England Yearly Meeting.” The charge also recognized that the Yearly Meeting’s financial stability is “intimately intertwined with spiritual life and vitality, with the health of the Yearly Meeting as a corporate body, and with the outreach and ministry of Friends in the world.” A core of six members was appointed at the November Permanent Board meeting, with one member added in February.

The committee has met four times: on December 20 in Manchester, New Hampshire; February 22, also in Manchester; April 2 in Hartford; and May 15 in Hanover, New Hampshire. All but one member have attended some or all meetings, and the one who did not was prevented by bad weather and unavoidable work commitments. Several members of the committee have done considerable work between meetings.

By agreement with the Finance Committee, in this initial year the ad hoc Development Committee has concentrated on donations to the Yearly Meeting by individuals and families, while the Finance Committee has maintained its previous pattern of contacts with monthly meeting treasurers. The ad hoc Development Committee has undertaken several specific tasks.

1. New mechanisms for giving.

The committee believes that more NEYM members and participants would donate if it were easier to do so. Mechanisms used by other non-profits (including Quaker organizations such as FCNL and FWCC) include accepting credit and debit cards, on-line donations, and automatic debits from donors’ bank accounts. After extensive research, including consideration of both monetary costs and staff time, the committee has decided to contract with Caring Habits, Inc., to set up all three services for NEYM. (Caring Habits also serves Friends World Committee and Friends Meeting at Cambridge, both of whom recommended it, as well as other progressive New England non-profits.) Permanent Board has approved the funds for the one-time start-up costs. We hope to have the automatic debit program in place by Yearly Meeting in August.

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We are working closely with the Yearly Meeting staff, which is exploring acceptance of credit and debit cards for other Yearly Meeting activities. We also intend to explore whether the automatic monthly debit program could be extended to allow people to designate part of their monthly donation for their monthly meeting, without undue burden on NEYM staff and treasurer.

2. Improved reporting on donations.

We discovered that the treasurer and bookkeeper maintain some records on individual donors, but not enough to know much about why people give (and why many donors give some years but not others). Previous reporting has also not been detailed enough to allow measurement of the results of fund appeals. Jill Horton-Lyons, the NEYM bookkeeper and a member of our committee, has assisted us in designing quarterly reports that will enable better tracking of donor patterns.

3. Committee questionnaire.

As part of the broader goal of linking NEYM's financial needs to the active life and work of Friends, we circulated a visioning questionnaire to Yearly Meeting committees and staff. We are grateful for the time that many people put into responding. We have just begun reviewing and digesting these responses. We anticipate forwarding some of this information to the ad hoc committee that is reviewing Yearly Meeting procedures and policies for the Permanent Board.

4. Conversations with donors.

We do not have much information on our donor base. The donor list is maintained on a spreadsheet, independent of the Yearly Meeting database showing committee service. What we do know is that we have some very steady donors, and many sporadic donors. We also know that many Friends consider that their donation to their monthly meeting includes their fair share of support for the Yearly Meeting budget. Others, however, are motivated to donate directly to the Yearly Meeting in addition. It is difficult to know how best to increase overall income, unless we understand better how NEYM Friends think and feel about these questions.

We intend during the coming year to undertake interviews with selected individuals who have given directly to NEYM, as well as with selected individuals who are or have been very active in NEYM activities but choose not to donate directly. These are to be information-gathering calls and visits, not solicitation calls. We welcome ideas, feelings, and opinions from anyone in the NEYM community.

The Finance Committee will be recommending a "stretch" budget for the coming year, with an ambitious goal for increased income directly from individuals and families, together with a modest increase from meetings. We believe that NEYM Friends have the resources to meet this challenge, and look forward to working with you during the coming year(s).

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Minute 04–74 is not an action minute, but one which describes our unity on this concern about the exclusion from leadership roles of non-celibate unmarried couples, whether they be heterosexual, gay or lesbian Friends. Also enclosed is a summary of Friends United Meeting's personnel policy.

04–74. Friends heard the second draft of the Friends United Meetings minute of exercise and asked to include explicit reference to FUM's hiring policy and practices.

Minute of Exercise on FUM's Personnel Policy Concerns

New England Yearly Meeting Friends gathered at our annual sessions reaffirm our belonging to Friends United Meeting, not only as co-founders, and firmly led co-participants in its ministries, but as Friends whose faith has been strengthened and recharged by God's presence in our worship, work, and fellowship with FUM Friends. FUM remains one of the most important places where we meet Friends who challenge our beliefs, and where African, Latin-American, Middle Eastern, and North American Friends meet face to face, growing in love and understanding. Since the 1940s when we were called to re-unite our previously separated Yearly Meetings, and since the early '90s when we developed special bonds of love and mutual ministry with Cuba Yearly Meeting we have learned to live with our differences, and we have come to feel how painful it would be to live in isolation from other Friends.

At the same time that we cherish our membership and participation in FUM, many of us are troubled by FUM's personnel policies and practices, which exclude non-celibate gays and lesbians, and unmarried heterosexual couples from leadership roles. Within NEYM we have struggled for years with same-gender marriage, and while support is not universal, we have watched as Friends' understanding of the truth has grown to include the belief that individuals' sexual orientation is no measure of their ability to express God's love through committed long-term relationships.

In the same vein, over the years we have grown to understand that God's gifts of ministry and leadership are bestowed with no consideration of sexual orientation or marital status. Indeed we have been blessed countless times by the ministry and leadership of those who would not be allowed to serve under the FUM policies.

While some are hurt, and some are angry, we are "*all*" troubled by the lack of unity on this issue. In the interest of creating a more perfect world, gospel order requires us to seek together for God's will, and for the love, which has been wounded by our differences.

We invite the FUM Board to come again to New England, to work among us, to worship and be hosted by all of us, to see our lives speaking. We make ourselves available to be invited to worship and testify among FUM Friends, and among other yearly and monthly meetings about these concerns.

As we continue discernment within NEYM, we ask the General Board of FUM to consider, as we have at NEYM 2004 Sessions, "*Who is your neighbor?*" Jesus taught us that love and compassion for the neighbor who does not look like us is more important than the written law.

Friends approved the minute.

New England YM representatives to the Friends United Meeting General Board were charged to carry our concern during the upcoming FUM Board meeting. We direct that this minute of exercise be sent to our monthly meetings and quarterly meetings under the care of the Ministry & Counsel working party on FUM's personnel policy concerns, accompanied by whatever other materials seems necessary for consideration. We expect M&C to bring a minute based on the discernment over the year to the 2005 Sessions.

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History of FUM policy regarding appointment of homosexuals.

Until 1988, Friends United Meeting had not been able to openly discuss or reach a decision regarding its position on homosexual relationships. That year, staff made a decision not to appoint a gay man to the Quaker Volunteer Witness program, and to request that the Board adopt a personnel policy that would give staff guidance on the issue. In response, Friends United Meeting received a flood of letters from individuals and meetings, and staff conducted visits in several member yearly meetings to test possible policy options. Ben Richmond prepared a "Working Paper on Appointment of Homosexuals to QVW" to discuss the issues involved and made recommendations for policy. This paper was circulated to the Board prior to the October 1988 meetings, and in the concluding minute on the subject requested that the paper "be saved as a contextual and historical document." After a preliminary discussion within the World Ministries Commission (which oversaw the QVW program), a revised version of the recommendations from that paper was presented to the General Board.

Board minute 88 GB 52 reflects the thorough and tender discussion of the issues involved. Three paragraphs were separately approved:

- (a) We affirm the civil rights of all people to secular employment, housing, education and health care without regard to their sexual orientation. In particular, we condemn violence, whether verbal or physical, against homosexuals, and call for their full protection under the civil rights laws.
- (b) We reaffirm our traditional testimonies of peace, simplicity, truth speaking, gender and racial equality, personal integrity, fidelity, chastity and community. We recognize that there is diversity among us on issues of sexuality. For the purpose of our corporate life together, we affirm our traditional testimony that sexual intercourse should be confined to the bonds of marriage, which we understand to be between one man and one woman.
- (c) The lifestyle of volunteers under appointment to Quaker Volunteer Witness, regardless of their sexual orientation, should be in accordance with these testimonies.

According to the same minute, the General Board also approved adding the following statement:
These policies are based on Friends beliefs as interpreted by Friends United Meeting since its beginning.

In March 1991, the General Board Executive Committee approved (91 GBEX 18) circulation of an "Organizational and Personnel Policy Manual." It took the QVW policy and extended it as follows:

Friends United Meeting holds to the traditional Friends testimonies of peace (nonviolence), simplicity, truth speaking, community, gender and racial equality, chastity, and fidelity in marriage. It is expected that the lifestyle of all staff and volunteer appointees of Friends United Meeting will be in accordance with these testimonies.

Friends United Meeting affirms the civil rights of all people. Staff and volunteer appointments are made without regard to sexual orientation. It is expected that sexual intercourse should be confined to marriage, understood to be between one man and one woman.

This wording has been retained in all subsequent editions of the Personnel Manual.

The 1988 minute placed the personnel policy within the framework of traditional Friends testimonies and said that the policy applied to the corporate activities of FUM. The wording of the 1991 Personnel Manual explicitly applied the policy to all staff and volunteer appointees of FUM.

prepared by Ben Richmond, spring 2003

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Minute 04–71 changed the name of the NE Friends Committee on Unity with Nature to Earthcare Ministry Committee and approved changes in their *Purposes and Procedures* to refocus their committee.

04–71. The Clerk recognized Molly Anderson (Camb), clerk of the New England Friends on Unity with Nature Committee, and members of the committee. Molly presented a minute, which changes the name of the committee to the Earthcare Ministry Committee and outlines new purposes and procedures. After making minor changes to the text of the minute, Friends approved the minute and accepted the report of the committee.

Minute on name change

The New England Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends recognizes that threats to sustainability of the earth and its biosphere come from many aspects of our lives, and we commit to finding and living solutions. We realize that individual actions are not sufficient: often we are constrained by social, financial and infrastructural factors that prevent our making choices congruent with our values as Friends. Therefore, we commit to take actions designed to dismantle those societal barriers to responsible earthcare, and to put in their place incentives and support for making socially just and environmentally responsible choices. The specific actions we take will be informed by a shared vision of how we can live in ways that respect and restore biodiversity, natural beauty, and the earth's ability to heal past abuses.

Awareness of serious environmental problems and their spiritual connections is widespread in New England Yearly Meeting, as demonstrated by our enthusiastic endorsement of the Earth Charter in 2002. At present, our foremost task related to earthcare is to act collectively on that awareness. In recognition of this new emphasis, the New England Friends in Unity with Nature Committee will be renamed the Earthcare Ministry Committee, with the following purposes and procedures:

Purposes: The Earthcare Ministry Committee encourages New England Yearly Meeting and its constituent monthly meetings, quarterly meetings, committees and staff to actions based on awareness that current rapid destruction of our planet and its fragile ecosystems is diametrically opposed to Quaker beliefs and values, and that the Religious Society of Friends must take an active stand against these trends and practices, inseparable from our other activities.

Procedures: The committee will help Friends to create a collective vision of how we can live peacefully and respectfully in the world, sharing finite goods with other inhabitants. It will work to identify specific actions that can turn this vision into reality, and help monthly meetings and other units of the Yearly Meeting to carry them out. As part of this mission, it will connect the Yearly Meeting with the national Quaker Earthcare Witness committee (formerly Friends in Unity with Nature) by sharing information and calls to action. The committee also will encourage a growing awareness of global interconnections among social injustice, war, environmental harm, and the emphasis our society places on materialism and consumption.

New England Yearly Meeting charges every committee with integrating the need to transform our lives and society to care for the earth, supporting the activists among us, and including that witness in our new *Faith and Practice*. We call on every monthly meeting, worship group and individual Friend to “let our lives speak” and to lead others, inside and outside the Religious Society of Friends, to uphold ecological integrity by making radical changes in our lives.

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We united in principal with Racial, Social, & Economic Justice Committees' recommendation as regards the Freedmen's Fund in minute 04-75.

04-75. Members of the Committee on Racial, Social & Economic Justice came forward. Sam Lowe (Fram), co-clerk presented this recommendation:

Recommendation

The Committee on Racial, Social, and Economic Justice (RSEJ) [formerly known as the Committee on Prejudice and Poverty (P&P)] recommends that NEYM give over its Freedmen's Fund, capital (some \$100,000) and interest entirely (between about \$4,000 and \$10,000 annually), to an African American organization such as the United Negro College Fund (UNCF) or the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

Rationale:

We feel this action is appropriate because certain African American organizations are in a better position to decide the recipients of these funds than is CRSEJ. A second reason is our committee's desire to join the movement for reparations and to raise the issue where it matters: in our pocketbook. Finally, by relieving CRSEJ of this duty, divestment would allow us to more effectively implement our main task, education.

The guidelines of the Freedmen's Fund require disbursal of funds to traditionally Black post-secondary educational institutions in the South for assistance to students who are descendants of slaves and pursuing careers in education. We would request the new disbursal agency to follow this pattern. In addition, contributing to such an agency engages the spirit of reparations, an objective our committee unites behind.

As a step toward discerning this matter further, our committee is sponsoring a workshop at 2004 Sessions entitled, "Reparations: The Legacy of Slavery and NEYM's Freedmen's Fund."

We unite in principle with the committee's recommendation to transfer the Freedmen's Fund to an African American organization. We ask the committee to work with Permanent Board and Yearly Meeting legal counsel to explore the feasibility of executing a transfer consistent with our legal obligations as trustees of these funds.

Friends accepted the annual report from the Committee on Racial, Social & Economic Justice

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Minute 04–66 has included in it a full report by the attenders at the *Safe Churches Policies and Procedures* conference. For now I have enclosed portions of the report. Please review the minute book when it arrives at your meeting in January.

04–66. (extract of the whole minute)

...Annual Conference on Safe Church Policies and Procedures...

The conference as a whole was focused on the reduction of liability and so, although faith-based was in many ways disappointing, holding up concerns for protecting the institution of our churches from fault as the main goal of the advised actions.

Churches, the conference repeatedly asserted, give less attention to issues of child safety than virtually any other type of institution. Churches are well behind in developing policies and procedures to protect against harm (and to demonstrate sustained concern should a suit arise). This is certainly true of NEYM. The contention was that our laxness now makes churches a magnet for pedophiles that no longer have such an easy time reaching children through school or secular after-school programs. I personally am less convinced by this corollary. But I certainly see structuring our programs in ways that reduce the opportunity for abuse as a valuable goal, one to weigh against other goals of trust and intimacy.

Negligence can legally be found when an institution has a duty to protect, that duty is violated, the harm is foreseeable, and an injury (physical, psychological, or emotional) in fact results. All those participating in our programs are considered invitees and hence we are responsible according to Tort law for their well-being—we have a “duty” to protect them. Churches are similarly responsible for the actions of volunteers, employees, and independent contractors.

The conference’s overwhelming message was that churches need rules, regulations, policy, procedures, training, and supervision in place. Doing so should reduce the chances of harm; having all these pieces documented and in place should also reduce the likelihood that the church would be found negligent should harm occur. Their experience shows that, in general, it takes churches 12 to 18 months to create and implement safe church policies. It is important that the policies developed be broad and elastic. Narrowly focused policies will rarely fit the specifics of any real crises.

The conference did provide a moving definition of restorative justice. This was not the centerpiece of the kinds of practices being described, but it was one of the things that I carry from this conference as a goal for what our policies should seek to achieve as a response to harm: full acceptance of responsibility, full acknowledgment of other’s hurt, and full replenishment of the damage done.

...This panel offered its practical guidance through following the details of one particular recent case. It was presented by a panel that consisted of the teenage girl who had been abused, her mother, the pastor of their church, and their lawyer. The event was clearly a healing and empowering one for the young woman, but its generalizable, practical lessons were often overwhelmed by the specifics of this case and the emotional intensity of this public forum for this family. The case was particularly complicated because the abuser was the uncle of the young woman and a powerful member of this congregation; nearly a third of the congregation was part of this extended family. Thus the pain and division within the family caused by the abuse and the young woman’s decision to make it public also produced vindictive and destructive divisions within the congregation. Hence the issues of healing the church were large and complex, and much of the session focused on these issues as well.

For the pastor, reporting is of course mandatory, even though this takes many decisions out of the victim’s hands. The panel did focus usefully on strategies the pastor used to ensure that the police and courts were supportive of the girl, making the legal process a little less abusive (although there were many quite horrific examples of her treatment by the police). In particular we were informed that the filer (i.e., the pastor) has a right to stay in the room for police interrogations. Again in terms of the value of policies and procedures, having a standing reporting team means that if there is a need to

Enclosures for preparative, monthly and quarterly meetings, as well as worship groups in New England Yearly Meeting from Annual Sessions 2004

report an incident there are people in the church who already know how to do that, and may even have experience doing it. To have such a standing team makes a church better prepared to offer support, and avoids the more painful aspects of these procedures. Keeping a written record of reports that may be actionable is another instance of good practice that may prove useful in any legal proceedings, both against abusers or in protecting against charges leveled at the church.

The other main message in the session was that church personnel are rarely adequately trained and equipped to deal with trauma, and that it is important to recognize these limits, as one offers support and assistance. If you are not trained to respond to trauma, asking the victim questions is likely to raise further pain. For dealing with abuse, both the individual and the church community will require professional support both legally and psychologically.

... The emphasis is largely on issues relating to hiring and managing staff, both paid and volunteer. Many of the attenders were distressed by the emphasis on treating volunteers as if they were job applicants. Chatfield stressed the need for clear expectations, documented policies and procedures, training, and background checks, especially for staff and volunteers in sensitive positions, especially First Day School teachers.

It was disappointing that the emphasis was so strongly on protecting churches from liability and relatively weak on protecting people from harm. Certainly they are correlated and lots of things that we do to protect ourselves from liability will also help protect people from harm, but I (Dave Baxter) think I heard nothing that would help protect people even if it had little or no impact on liability.

Little, perhaps nothing was said about the safety of volunteers from false accusations or even misunderstandings.