

**Scarsdale Friends Meeting**  
**Minutes of the Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business**  
**11 January 2009**

The meeting began with a period of worship, out of which the clerk read Query #13 from New York Yearly Meeting Faith and Practice:

Do we maintain Friends' testimony against war? Do we "live in the virtue of that life and power which takes away the occasion of all wars"? Are we exerting our influence in favor of settlement of all differences by truly nonviolent methods? Do we strive to transmit to everyone an understanding of the basis of our peace testimony?

Those present were Bowen Alpern, Nancy Stix, Mary Eagleson, Alice Clague, John Bryant, Matthew Scanlon, Susan Weisfeld, Lucinda Antrim, Charles Davey, Carol Wilkinson, William Seltzer, clerk, and Virginia Blanford, recording clerk.

1. Susan Weisfeld reported for the **Communications Committee**.

The communications committee met this past week. Susan Weisfeld will convene meetings, and Anne Wright will serve as clerk at the meetings. Marylin Cole was co-opted to work on the Web calendar in conjunction with serving as building use liaison.

1. Political uses of meeting Web-site and listserv

Members had consulted with 2 lawyers (one a member of Purchase Monthly Meeting) and had consulted the IRS Website and the IRS booklet on tax exempt status for churches etc. Their findings were reported and the matter was discussed.

A tax exempt organization:

- can't raise money for a candidate.
- can't do anything OFFICIAL to influence an election – e.g. can't have "vote for Obama" posters or parties with Scarsdale Meeting's endorsement.
- can't do electioneering. ([campaigning](#) for [elective office](#) on behalf of oneself or another [candidate](#)).

According to these lawyers, the Federal Election Commission (FEC) only cares if you contribute to any candidate in any way, solicitation, fund-raising event, etc. Although we will not base our policy on this, *there is no issue if no complaint is made*. (When Purchase Monthly Meeting allowed a member to rent their space for an Obama party, there was a complaint. The matter had been discussed and approved by their monthly meeting at which Peter Close, a lawyer in general practice, was present. David Hood had begun to attend meeting after an absence of about 15 years; he reported the event, and now the IRS and the FEC must investigate.)

We discussed whether the email listserv was an official organ of the meeting (i.e. expressing the opinion of "the meeting" or a communication channel). Though the tendency seemed to be to consider that it was a tool or communication channel, this was not fully clarified.

We agreed to add a statement to our email listserv guidelines with a summary of our policy and a disclaimer will be added to a header or footer of each email. A committee member will draft these statements for our next meeting.

The need for clarification of the law was stressed; in particular, Friends were concerned that we not shut down reasonable and necessary dialogue based on an overly conservative interpretation of the law. The committee clerk stressed that the law prohibits only overt electioneering and not discussion of issues. Friends pointed out the dire consequences that would proceed from losing our tax-exempt status and agreed that we should tread carefully in this area, where the law is less than crystal-clear.

With appreciation to the committee for raising and exploring this issue, the meeting asked the committee to bring a draft policy to the meeting for approval.

## 2. Website proposal

We received the Website proposal from the advancement committee. Most committee members had seen and reviewed this previously. We discussed the building of a Website and what must come first. Before the site can be mounted we must agree to user status (or levels of access to the site).

### Working Draft of Levels of Users – User Status

1. Visitors/drop-ins
  - Address of meetinghouse and contact information for the meeting
  - Calendar – read only
  - News Flashes with next event coming up with time, date, directions, etc.
  - FAQs
  - Publications about Quakers and our beliefs and practices
2. Registered
  - Access to the online Newsletter.
  - Can enroll for the listserv.
  - Minutes, additional publications or documents, Meeting Handbook, etc.
3. Author – given to members, can change content
  - Can see the full meeting directory
  - Can see other documents
  - Can post news, other documents
4. Publisher – can publish what authors have written
  - Publishes posts from authors – by departments
  - Calendar – committee clerks and former committee clerks or seasoned Friends may add events to the calendar. Calendar editor will monitor it for appropriate posts and building use.
5. Administrator
  - Can change almost anything (I would like to call the position Web weaver—AW).

Content for the public/ guest/ “drop-in” section would be provided or reviewed by the Advancement Committee (a lot has already been provided and is being entered bit by bit). Other areas of content would be solicited or “assigned” as we work on building the site.

Elin Waring has agreed to be overall Web Administrator and to put up a template for use of the others who are entering materials. John Bryant (a guest on the committee this week) has begun entering content from the Advancement Committee’s proposed materials in our “sandbox”. This is a preliminary site that is used as a new Website is being constructed, or may be used to learn to build a Website. You learn by playing in the sandbox, and when the new site is ready to be looked at a bit, we will publish that address so that Friends may view the site as it is under construction and send comments to the Communications Committee.

We see the need for a Web team, all of whom may not need to be on the Communications Committee, but we have not yet discerned how that will be constructed. Those whose names have been given to us to date include Elin Waring and Marilyn Cole (already on the committee), Timothy Miller, Leah Cullen and John Bryant. With their agreement, this team will work out how they will share the tasks of keeping up our Website. One member of this team, or a member of the Communications Committee, will serve as a liaison between the “techies” and the “users.”

In the discussion that ensued, the following points were made: first, that the user levels continue to reflect a more complicated structure than is necessary, and that these levels should be reduced to three: open access visitors with access to everything except the full meeting directory; registered users with access to the directory, who might be enabled to make changes in certain areas; and the publisher, who could make all changes; second, that there is a need for significantly more education and thought before final decisions are made, because building a Website is a difficult process; third, that Meeting documents should be accessible to all who visit the site, without the need to log in or register; fourth, that committee reports, if posted to the Website, be available (like the Meeting directory) only to registered users, since these are often internal working documents rather than seasoned minutes; and fifth, that the creation and maintenance of a consistent and complete directory, for use as labels, needs to be included in the committee’s responsibilities. Finally, Friends pointed out that the request for revamping the Website has been in place for several years and was based on the difficulty that many of us have found in navigating the current site.

Friends urged that the new Website be as accessible, transparent, and appealing as possible for both Friends and seekers. The committee was requested to provide a timetable for launching a new Website at the next meeting for business.

2. Mary Eagleson reported for the **Peace and Social Concerns Committee.**

The Peace and Social Concerns Committee was charged with discerning how to distribute the Meeting’s contributions budget of \$500 among the charitable

organizations we have recommended to Friends for their personal giving. Because there were 21 organizations on that list, dividing \$500 among all of them would have made the gifts too small to be significant. The committee agreed, therefore, to reduce the number of organizations by considering three criteria: size, our work with them, and whether they are Quaker. The following are the amounts and organizations we recommend to the Meeting (including addresses, for the convenience of Friends who wish to make individual donations):

Alternatives to Violence Program (AVP) \$50

PO Box 54

Poplar Ridge, NY 13139

**(Please note:** This address is different from the address given in the December newsletter.)

American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) \$40

Attn: Karla Zarate-Ramirez, Donor Services Unit

1501 Cherry St.

Philadelphia, PA 19102

Bolivian Quaker Education Fund (BQEF) \$50

11253 Boston Road

East Concord, NY 14055

Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) \$40

245 Second Street, NE

Washington, DC 20002

Friends Peace Teams Project, African Great Lakes Initiative (AGLI) \$50

c/o David Zarembka

3031 Laclede Station Road

Maplewood, MO 63143

**Make checks to:** Friends Peace Teams Project (memo line African GL Initiative)

Guatemala Friends Scholarship Loan Program \$50

Redwood Forest Friends Meeting

Box 1831

Santa Rosa, CA 95402

**Make checks to:** Redwood Forest Friends Meeting (memo line GFSLP)

Hudson Link for Higher Education in Prison \$50

P. O. Box 862

Ossining, NY 10562

John William Montessori School, Ghana, \$50

c/o Nana Fosu Randall

13 Glenbrook Avenue  
Yonkers, NY 10705

**Make checks to:** Friends of John William Education Center

Nicaragua Street Children Project        \$50  
Amigos de Si a la Vida  
PO Box 30191, Seattle, WA 98103-0191  
<http://www.asalv.org>

Sharing Fund of New York Yearly Meeting        \$70  
15 Rutherford Place  
New York, NY 10003

Youth Service Opportunities Project (YSOP)    \$50  
15 Rutherford Place  
New York, NY 10003

Knowing that most charities are struggling for funds at present, we hope that the generosity of individual Friends can help to make up for the amounts the Meeting is unable to give, both to the above organizations and to those which were dropped from the list. Please note that the address given in the December newsletter for AVP has changed.

The Meeting accepted the report and approved the contributions.

3. Alice Clague distributed the **Treasurer's report**, which is attached to these minutes. She noted the following:
  - The document does not reflect investment losses for the final months of the year; our overall investment losses will undoubtedly be greater.
  - The Meeting is doing well thus far in terms of revenues and expenses vs. budget.
  - Final invoices for the renovation have not yet been paid, but these are not expected to exceed the amount approved by the Meeting.

The Meeting accepted the report.

4. Matthew Scanlon reported for the **Advancement Committee** that the Meeting will host a poetry reading with Lyn Clague sometime in the coming months.
5. Mary Eagleson reported for the **Nominating Committee** that William Seltzer has resigned from the Purchase Quarter Peace and Social Concerns committee, and that Bowen Alpern is willing to replace him. The committee recommends that the Meeting accept William Seltzer's resignation and appoint Bowen Alpern to serve in his place.

The Meeting accepted the report and approved the appointment of Bowen Alpern.

6. Other business.

One Friend asked whether planning for the spring retreat has begun, and the Meeting requested a report on this from the retreat planning committee.

The meeting closed with a period of worship. The next meeting for worship with concern for business will be on Sunday, February 8, 2009 at rise of meeting.

Virginia Blanford, Recording Clerk  
William Seltzer, Clerk