

Minutes of the Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business
held July 13, 2003

1. After a period of silence, the clerk read Query 19 of Scarsdale Friends Meeting: "Do our daily lives so demonstrate the testimonies of Friends as to commend them to others?" Those present were Bowen Alpern, William Seltzer, Anne Wright, Cecile Vickrey, Mary Ellen Singesen, Lucinda Antrim, Henry Elkins, John Laughlin, Eunice Laughlin, Ron Rieder, Elin Waring, John Randall, Curtis Williams, Marjorie Williams, Norma Ellis and Mary Eagleson.

2. Bowen Alpern reported for the ad hoc committee to explore the possibility of requesting a visit from the FGC Traveling Ministries Program, as follows: The committee has met three times. We are in dialogue with Deborah Fisch, the director of the Program. We are convinced such a visit could be of value to SFM. We believe that planning for such a visit would benefit from an opportunity (perhaps more than one) for members and attenders to worshipfully express their hopes and concerns for the meeting. We plan to continue meeting, and are working to develop a proposal for action. We are reporting to both Ministry and Worship and Oversight and Counsel committees.

The members of the committee are Bowen Alpern, Lucinda Antrim and Ron Rieder. The meeting accepted the report.

3. Lucinda Antrim reported for the library committee, in part as follows:

"The Library Committee is investigating replacing the existing blue sofas and the round table with several comfortable reading chairs and a rectangular table with four chairs. We would also like to replace some of the existing lighting with other floor and table lamps, as well as, perhaps, replace the rug with an oriental.

"These items would be donated from the estate of Cindy Antrim's mother. We have several estimates of shipping charges. The least expensive option, about \$350, requires Cindy to rent a truck and move the items. We have an estimate of \$700 (the least expensive of three estimates) for a moving company's services...

"We have communicated with the clerk, asking her to represent the interest of various committees who use the room, and have communicated with the First Day School Committee about the Youth Group (which uses the library for its First Day School meetings) to inquire about its amenability to the proposed furniture arrangement. The clerk feels that the arrangement would suit committee meetings, and the First Day School also feels that the arrangement would suit its class's needs."

The meeting accepted the report, and approved accepting the donation and paying \$700 for transportation. It directed the finance committee to explore all options for financing the transportation. The finance committee is also asked to clarify the process of approval for donations in kind.

4. Mary Eagleson reported for Peace and Social Concerns. She reported that the committee has

reconsidered its earlier request to the meeting and presents an alternate request:

“The committee would like to give support and oversight to the Rockland State Hospital visitation project, and to serve as liaison between project volunteers and the business meeting. By oversight, we mean that the committee would receive reports on the work, prepare guidelines for visitors, etc. By support we mean financial support and some help with organizational details. What the committee is seeking from the Meeting as a whole is interested volunteers, practical support in terms of gifts of food, magazines and books, etc., and spiritual clearness for those individuals who visit the hospital.

“In a consultation with the present and past clerks of the meeting, it was suggested that volunteers read the guidelines for women volunteers in prisons. The following queries were suggested for clearness of volunteers: 1) What can you bring? 2) What is the promise implied by your visits? Will the relationships you develop be limited to the institution? 3) How long can you continue to make such visits?”

The committee plans to apply to the Yearly Meeting Witness Activities Fund for additional funds for food, enabling them to increase the number of visits to the hospital.

Recognizing that Peace and Social Concerns has taken on the role of oversight of this project, the Meeting accepts the report and approves the activity.

5. Mary Eagleson reported for the representatives to NYYM on the report to the Yearly Meeting of the ad hoc committee on Staffing Structure and on the subcommittee named “Committee on Committees”, as follows:

“We recommend that the Meeting support Recommendation 1, that NYYM create a staff position called “general secretary.” We note that there is no specific “pastoral” responsibility associated with this position. Suggested functions are listed in the report.”

The financial aspect of adding another employee was deeply troubling. We have an increase of \$2000 in our contributions to Quarterly and YM for 2003; if the YM should hire the general secretary, we could expect to see an additional \$2800 for our meeting in 2004, in addition to any additions in the quarter. For the yearly meeting as a whole, the increase of 17% in the budget from 2003 to 2004 might return us to the situation in which the budget was simply not met, year after year. This was why the budget was reduced several years ago, and since then budgets have been met. The clerk asked the clerk of finance committee to prepare a note of clarification of the financial implications.

“We feel that Recommendation 2, calling for the formation of a Regional Representatives Council, is undeveloped. It has some merit, but it is not clear how it fits into the structure of the Yearly meeting. Would this council work in parallel to the YM business meeting? Would it take over some of the work now done by the Yearly Meeting? Would it take over most of the work, leaving the Yearly Meeting sessions more a time for worship together? We would ask the Committee on Staffing and Structure to work out how the Regional Representatives Council would fit into or beside the yearly meeting structure. A corollary would be to consider how regional meetings themselves fit into the structure. At

present, many are weak, in part because the same individuals are working to support three levels of structure: monthly, regional and yearly meetings, and do not have enough time and energy to do all three.”

It was noted that there are costs associated with forming a Regional Representatives Council, and the Committee on Staffing and Structure has not addressed them at all.

“Recommendation 3 is not an action. It is not a bad idea, but it still leaves regional meetings out of the structure.

“The essential proposals of the Committee on Committees are that the creation and laying down of committees should be the task of the coordinating committees, not the Yearly Meeting. Guidelines on what constitutes a living committee and when to lay them down are included in the report. It is proposed that each coordinating committee would have an oversight committee which would review the committees in that coordinating committee and would either nurture or lay down those which were failing. There would also be a transition oversight committee to help the oversight committees of the coordinating committees with their tasks. The nurture coordinating committee would be disbanded and its substituent committees reallocated to other cc’s. The YM on Ministry and Counsel would be converted into a committee under M&C coordinating committee.”

We appreciate the work of the Committee on Committees in providing for a simpler structure and feel they are moving in the right direction. However, the change should be weighed against the family feeling which develops within a coordinating committee. There is a concern that some committees are being maintained for reasons of history, not leading. If there is so much difficulty filling committees, it may be time to lay some of them down.

We accept the recommendations of the three representatives, with the provision that when they participate in Yearly meeting discussions, they will note the concerns raised in today’s discussion.

It was noted that both our meeting and the yearly meeting are shrinking, and this will lead to some really painful choices. It is hoped that we will move more deeply into worship and support of each other as we necessarily curtail the things we do.

The next business meeting will be held September 14 at 11:15.