

**Scarsdale Friends Meeting**  
**Minutes of the Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business**  
**11 December 2011**

The meeting began with a period of worship.

Those present were Carol Holmes, Bowen Alpern, Norma Ellis, Ruth Bryan, Anne Wright, Alice Clague, Eunice Laughlin, Gallia Taranto, Nancy Styx, Robert Lohaus, Matthew Scanlon, Frederick Hoffmann, Carol Wilkinson, Ted Taylor, Mary Eagleson, clerk, and Virginia Blanford, recording clerk.

1. Matthew Scanlon reported for the **Naming Committee**.

The following Friends have agreed to serve on the Nominating Committee:

Juan Dempsey	Class of 2015
Ruth Bryan	Class of 2014 (convenor)
John Bryant	Class of 2014
Will Reid	Class of 2014
David Heston	Class of 2013

The committee approved the nomination of Juan Dempsey to this committee and accepted the report.

2. The committee on **Building and Grounds** submitted the following report:

1) The committee met with Allen Ross, the architect for the lift and second story renovation. He presented us with preliminary drawings which we reviewed and have posted for the Meeting to review. There are no actions that need to be taken by the Meeting in regard to these plans at this time. As we move forward we will need to decide exactly how we might want to use the new space before construction begins. As part of this first stage of investigation, Allen will now take these plans to get a more accurate bid on the construction work. There will not be an additional charge for this. We should have these numbers by the next Business Meeting.

Should the Meeting decide to move forward with this project we recommend that there be a new Renovations Committee created which would also oversee the work in putting together a Storage Management Plan and addressing the space needs of the different Meetinghouse users.

After some discussion, the meeting agreed with the need to appoint a storage management committee. The clerk asked for volunteers for an initial ad hoc committee to evaluate the storage needs of all building users, and to create a plan for storage management throughout the meetinghouse. It is expected that some members of this committee would be included in an oversight committee for the renovation project, should the meeting approve going forward with this. Volunteers for this committee included Virginia Blanford, Susan Weisfeld, Anne Wright, and Alice Clague. This committee is charged with offering a written plan to the meeting for storage management, including use of the potential new space, at the February meeting for business.

Matthew Scanlon and Alice Clague will comprise a subcommittee to work on storage needs for meeting documents, both print and digital.

2) Nursery School Director Abigail Dowd presented the committee with a request to remove the wall separating the 3's room (the large classroom on the south side of the building) from the one next to it. The committee decided to separate this request from the overall Renovation plan, as the Nursery School's need is quite urgent, and we cannot say when the larger renovation will actually take place, if at all. Allen Ross assured us that the wall in question is not a supporting wall. The Nursery school will take on the task of doing this work through donations of labor and funding from the parents. The thought at this point is to remove the whole wall and put pocket/sliding doors in its place.

The Building and Grounds committee agreed that we would not want an accordion divider but rather something more substantial with some sound-proofing. Further, 1) the Nursery School will agree to clear the room daily so other user groups can use it in the evenings, and, 2) the wall will not be removed until shortly before the installation of sliding doors is to take place, which probably means this summer.

Abigail Dowd will report back to Building and Grounds as she firms up exactly what the plans are for this renovation. At this point, Building and Grounds is asking the Meeting for approval of the concept and authorization to proceed with the project once the committee is satisfied with the nursery school's plans.

The clerk asked the **Nursery School Committee** to provide further background for the requests from the Nursery School of building renovations, and Alice Clague offered the following report:

A change is planned to increase the size of SFNS. In the 2012-2013 school year, a second 2 year olds' class will be added to develop a larger student population. The following year, the 2s will graduate to a larger 3s class, which will subsequently lead to increasing the size of the 4s class. To increase the space available for the 3 year olds' class, the Scarsdale Friends Nursery School requests the removal of the cinder block wall between the 3s room and the First Day classroom, as proposed in the Building and Grounds report. A folding or pocket door is proposed in that space that can be closed as needed. The cost will be paid for by the Nursery School. A parent in the Nursery School, with a business in construction, has offered to volunteer the labor required to accomplish the job, if the meeting approves.

Friends approved the removal of the specific classroom wall and its replacement with pocket doors, but noted that accepting volunteer work brings concerns about oversight and quality control and asked that the Building and Grounds committee create a reliable plan for oversight. Friends emphasized that the room must be left usable for First Day School and other meeting activities, as the Nursery School has proposed. (A Friend also noted the continuing need for the meeting to be sensitive to the use of Nursery School equipment by meeting children on First Days.)

The meeting accepted the reports of the committee on Building and Grounds, as well as the Nursery School committee.

3. Alice Clague additionally reported for the **Nursery School committee**.  
In regard to replacing the asphalt this fall, the Nursery School has indicated it will contribute \$2,000 for asphalt under the sandbox. It has also replaced the climbing rope in the playground, since the red rope had become unsafe. The Nursery School expects to develop a plan for the space outside the 3's classroom before winter break which begins on 12/20.

The meeting accepted the report.

4. The clerk reported that Tim Miller has requested to be reimbursed going forward for the \$15 monthly fee for hosting our Meeting website, a fee that Tim has been paying out of pocket for many months. Friends noted the difficulty of transferring websites from one server to another, expressed appreciation for Tim's contribution to date, and approved payment of this sum to Tim. The clerk was instructed to ask Tim to send an invoice for a subscription to cover these fees going forward.

5. Carol Holmes reported for the **Quaker Quest exploration committee**.

#### **Quaker Quest Report to Scarsdale Meeting**

In talking with a number of Friends, I have found there is confusion about both what Quaker Quest is and what is needed in order to go forward with a Quaker Quest program.

- There is some sense among Friends that Quaker Quest is an adult religious education program, a kind of variant on the classic Quakerism 101.
- Others are uncomfortable because they understand it to be a program aimed at converting people to Quakerism, and "we don't do that."
- Still others understand the program but feel that Quaker Quest takes more energy and commitment than the meeting has.

To begin, here is what Quaker Quest is:

**Quaker Quest is an outreach program designed to give members of the general public an experience of 30 minutes of waiting worship, an opportunity to meet Quakers, and a chance to explore in small-group discussions their own beliefs and experiences and arrive at their own answers, or at least clarify their questions. (There can be as few as 3 public sessions or as many as 6 to 9. Each cycle of sessions is repeated immediately on a different day at a different time.)**

- **Quaker Quest is not proselytizing nor evangelizing.** In fact, it may be the opposite, since nowhere in any Quaker Quest session will anyone be told: These are the answers, here is what to believe, this is the way to God. Instead,

participants will be turned toward their own Inward Teacher. Their own path will be illuminated by their own Light.

The experience of Quaker Quest may result in participants attending Friends meetings (possibly even Scarsdale). It may result in their returning to the childhood faith they discover they had never really left behind. Or it may confirm them utterly in their atheism.

- **Quaker Quest is not a variant on Quakerism 101 or any kind of Quaker adult religious education program**—except insofar as preparation for holding the public sessions involves the members of the meeting getting comfortable talking openly about what we believe and what our experience is of such things as worship, prayer, the divine, the Light, the Bible, peace activism, social witness, etc. The Experiment with Light groups that are in the process of forming are a step in that direction.

### **What the Meeting Needs to Do Before Holding Public Sessions**

Along with getting comfortable talking about our faith publicly, we would also need to examine the ways we welcome newcomers—the literature we offer, how we behave at social hour, how accessible the meetinghouse is (both how can people get here and how can they get in once they're here), and, in general, how ready we truly are to knit newcomers into our community.

The inreach experience of talking with one another about our spiritual lives and of examining our readiness (or lack of it) to receive newcomers could open up new channels of energy in the meeting—even if it turns out that public sessions are never held.

The inreach experience is a vital part of Quaker Quest and should not be rushed. FGC recommends that a meeting **wait at least six months** after approving the holding of public sessions to begin the public cycle. (FGC also brings to the meeting a half-day workshop shortly before public sessions begin to help make sure all is ready.)

**In terms of the energy and commitment from the meeting, here is what's needed for each public session** (remember, as few as 3 sessions, as many as 9),

- three presenters who speak an absolute maximum of 6 minutes each on the evening's topic, followed later in the evening by another 6 minutes each in a response wrap-up
- three or so Friends to serve as hosts and small group facilitators
- one or two Friends responsible for refreshments
- and possibly two Friends to provide shuttle service from the train station and the closest Westchester bus stop to the meetinghouse

Before the public sessions begin, a group is needed to create and implement a publicity campaign to reach as wide and diverse a segment of the general public as possible: posters for store windows, public service announcements on Westchester radio, perhaps a banner on the meetinghouse. Albany Friends Meeting got a grant from New York Yearly Meeting to put placards in the Albany city buses.

Possible next steps:

- Naming a core committee to begin working on inreach, even if we never proceed to public sessions
- Doing the full-day FGC workshop again, possibly for the Spring retreat, to get further clarity about Quaker Quest and to include those who weren't there the first time
- Continuing set up the Experiment with Light groups

The Meeting accepted the report and approved moving forward with a core committee to develop initial plans for a Quaker Quest program, focusing initially on inreach. Volunteers included Carol Holmes (convener), Carolyn Andrews, Matthew Scanlon, Bowen Alpern, and Norma Ellis. One Friend raised again the issue of renaming the Meeting to provide a more welcoming and diverse context, and the clerk agreed to address this in a future meeting for worship with a concern for business.

6. Ruth Bryan reported for the committee on **Ministry and Counsel**.

There will be a service at 5:30 PM on Christmas Eve, with candle light, carols, and readings. Anyone who would like do a reading should contact Ginny Blanford.

It is time again to prepare a State of the Meeting report. This year, New York Yearly Meeting has asked us to consider the following:

1. How does ministry thrive in our meetings? How do we identify and support the ministries rising among us? Do we communicate our faith with tenderness and honesty to each other, to our meetings, and to the larger world?
2. Every meeting carries part of the long legacy of Quaker faith and practice. What do we contribute to that legacy? Are we called to participate in non-Quaker movements that express or could use Quaker values?

In preparation for answering their queries, we will have a session on Sunday December 18 to explore what our individual ministries are, as well as to ask how the Meeting can help us to identify our gifts and follow our leadings. This event will take place at 12:30 after social hour. Our State of the Meeting report, due in February, will derive in part from this session, which is a little different from our usual practice. The meeting accepted the report.

7. In response to a request from New York Yearly Meeting, the clerk of the meeting proposed that the Meeting send the following evaluation of Yearly Meeting secretary Christopher Sammond:

Most of the Friends in Scarsdale Meeting have had little personal contact with Christopher Sammond since he led our meeting retreats in 2005-6. Those who

chose to comment were appreciative of his spiritual leadership, which has come in the form of articles in *Spark*, his periodic reports on the state of the yearly meeting, and his role in the meetings for discernment. It is clear that he is deeply committed to the growth and spiritual development of the yearly meeting, and that he sees his role in this as facilitator of the work of others. Scarsdale Meeting accepts this as the appropriate role and understands that if we were to call on him to work specifically with our monthly meeting, he would be available.

The meeting approved sending this paragraph as the corporate response of the meeting. The clerk will add to it individual statements Friends that she has received from Friends.

The meeting closed with a period of worship. The next meeting for worship with a concern for business will be on January 8, 2012.

Respectfully submitted,  
Virginia Blanford, Recording Clerk