

## **Youth Ministries Committee Meeting Sixth Month 15-17, 2007 at Syracuse Monthly Meeting, Syracuse, New York**

Present were: Lindsey Aldridge, Jean Marie Prestwidge Barch, Bruce Birchard (FGC General Secretary) Elizabeth Duthinh, Robin Greenlier (clerk) Maia Hallward (assistant clerk), Steve Haynes, Kody Hersh, Margaret (Meg) Obermeyer, Emily Stewart (FGC Staff), Rick Townsend.

**6.15.07:01-** We considered a revised draft of the Blue Book description for the Youth Ministries Committee which we have revisited at the request of Executive Committee. After consideration of the draft, we united in clarity that we have considered the concerns raised by Executive Committee and believe this draft now expresses our best understanding of our purpose and process. We note that there are some words which seem to be “charged” or unclear to Friends outside the committee and recognize that we must work to express the ways in which we use these words as clearly as we can with the goal of bringing Friends to understand our meaning.

**6.15.07:02-** The previous discussion led into consideration of our use of some words, which has created confusion and/or discomfort for some Friends. Our use of: “College-Age Friends”, “Ministry”, and “youth” have been particularly troubling to some Friends. The committee moved into a period of silence, out of which we shared our responses to the utility of these words for our needs. Although we recognize that words are an imperfect vehicle to capture our meaning and promote understanding at times, we also are clear that particularly the word “youth” carries the closest approximation to our intention of any word we might choose to use. We recognize a need to be careful about the assumptions which underlie the use of “college-age friends” and point to the more extensive and descriptive language of our new Blue Book description as a guide for naming Friends who are out of high school and embarking on “next steps” in their life journey. While age ranges are sometimes an indication of life stages, they are not synonymous and we must be careful in our naming. We will work to develop a clear definition of what we mean when we talk about youth; Meg, Kody, Lindsay and Steve will attempt to bring this back to us before the close of our meeting this weekend. Once the committee has settled on language we feel is suitable, we will endeavor to disseminate our definitions widely in conversations, publications, activities and on our website with the goal of creating a shared language base among Friends with regard to important aspects of our committee’s work.

**6.15.07:03-** We closed for the evening to depart to those homes where hospitality was being offered or to settle in at the meetinghouse for the night.

These minutes were compiled from notes taken by Meg Obermeyer.

**6.16.07: 04-** We opened with a period of worship, enriched by Graham's vocal ministry. Greetings were received from Lorin Norlin, Atlanta Meeting Youth Coordinator, and from both Christina Repoley and Frank Barch who are unable to be with us this weekend because of work commitments. Regrets have been received from Kri Burkander, Helen Staab, Tom Farley, George Owen and Aliyah Shanti who are all unable to join with us this weekend.

**6.16.07:05-** Clerk, Robin Greenlier read a portion of a minute from Beckey Phipps, clerk of the Traveling Ministries Committee. In this message, Beckey expressed the joy of the TMC at collaboration with YMC. Christina Repoley will serve as one of two possible Youth Ministries members on the TMC.

**6.16.07:06-** We received the written reports regarding the YMC events at the FCG Summer Gathering and the CMR Conference with thanks.

**6.16.07:07-** We viewed the new Quaker Youth website and expressed our thanks to Emily, for the considerable work she has put into formulating this site, and to Lindsay and Steve for their assistance. The site includes a broad variety of opportunities to connect, both through written material and pictures as well as interactive possibilities. We want this site to be open, accessible and available to youth and for intergenerational conversation as well. We also want to be clear about our definitions, particularly what we mean as "youth" and to help others understand the scope of the Youth Ministries Committee and our work. Members of the committee are asked to publicize and to contribute to the site. Meg, Lindsay, Kody and Steve will work on a definition of our use of the term youth for our consideration tomorrow.

**6.16.07:08-** We turned to consider the question of correspondents to YMC. Robin reviewed the history of this issue, noting that there had been many who were concerned at our initial formation that we would drain the younger people from all other committees, becoming the nexus of all the action about, with and for young Quakers. She reminded us about the three routes through which people can become full members of this committee.

As we considered the role of correspondents, we recognized that we see potential for building a productive two-way communication network, allowing for spreading our message, and also for gleaning from those who are interested and involved in this work. Thus, this level of involvement in our committee would grow from our relationship through the work with others who are not members of the committee, primarily discerned by staff and clerks. Emily currently receives updates and information from others and would continue to be our point person in this regard; additionally, as our work unfolds, it may become clear that a particular sub-committee's work has a clear link to others outside the committee and the linkage could be through that venue. For those who want to follow the progress of our work, we will continue the practice of including our minutes on the website.

**6.16.07:09-** We have agreed that we will join with Ministry and Nurture to offer a safe, fun intergenerational community-building activity during which no business will be conducted for Saturday night at Central Committee. This activity would offer an alternative to the usual trip to the neighborhood pub. Many see the importance of creating a time and place to play together as a community, allowing for new people to get connected and a “work free” zone for those who are so involved in the work of Central Committee. We would want to see music and games as well as food for both body and spirit. We might also provide people with “conversation starters”. Needed funding can be provided from the General Secretary’s discretionary fund. Emily and Meg will join with Bowen Alpern and perhaps others from Ministry and Nurture; Maia will also offer assistance, with planning and work on site as way opens.

**6.16.07:10-** Robin briefly reviewed the material we had received in advance from Quakers Uniting In Publications, which outlines their specific notions regarding our proposed collaboration on the youth book project. She reminded us of our deliberations in March regarding this collaboration and our minuted support for the idea. She also notes that the terms of the collaboration as they outline it speak to our strengths as a committee. This book is being conceptualized as an inspirational catalyst, providing a space to give voice to powerful spiritual experiences of Quaker youth across all branches of Quakerism, a goal we recognize is central to our stated purpose as a committee. QUIP has already made it clear in taking those suggestions we offered from our March meeting that they value our contributions to this project, something we deeply appreciate and hope will continue as this collaboration ripens and develops. Several members of the committee expressed interest in supporting parts of this work—Robin, Maia and Jean-Marie would be interested in the writing workshops; Jean-Marie and Emily in serving jointly as an advisor, Emily in doing connection and outreach; others expressed enthusiasm in our committee being involved though they are unclear about the specific role they might serve at this time. We are clear to respond positively to Quip’s request that we collaborate on the development of this youth book project.

**6.16.07:11-** We reviewed our practice of monthly updates for which Emily sends out reminders around the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month wanting them back by the 15<sup>th</sup>. We see it as a good way to maintain connections with one another and appreciate that some who are not able to get updates in by the 15<sup>th</sup> feel free to send them out anyway. Many feel that it is a good way to develop deeper community and get to know one another better; we may also want to find ways to be more open to responding to one another. Other committees have expressed interest in developing similar webs of connection.

**06-16-07:12-** We reconvened after a break for lunch and fellowship. Clerk, Robin Greenlier outlined the plan for the afternoon. We have three categories of work before us for consideration: conferences, a small grants program, and publication opportunities. Robin presented the general topics in order that the committee could discern a general way forward; we then divided into three subcommittees to develop plans and proposals

for doing the work that was discerned. Finally each group reported on their deliberations to the full group for consideration and discernment of next steps.

**06-16-07:13-** We have already made commitment to and discerned general way forward for three undertakings. Two, in collaboration with other committees, already have planning committee members in place. These are:

1-Fall 07 TMC Consultation. Kody, Maia and Emily are working as the YM liaisons to TMC to work on this consultation, which will focus on Emerging Gifts of Ministry.

2-Spring 09 we are collaborating with CMR in planning a conference with Maia, Christina and Kri as our liaisons to this CMR Planning Committee.

Two other conference activities require more planning at this time:

1-Spring 08 we have committed to doing a second YAF Conference at Earlham over Memorial Day weekend.

2- A follow-up to the recent FAP conference has been proposed. We explored taking the lead on such a conference. The conference in 5<sup>th</sup> month at Pendle Hill was attended by 25 youth workers; the proposed conference would continue and elaborate on the work initiated in the first conference and was requested by 23 of the 25 Friends in attendance at the 5<sup>th</sup> month conference. February 2008 is an available date for this conference at Pendle Hill and they would provide support services; we would request that RE collaborate with and support us in this undertaking.

Were we to undertake this FAP follow-up conference, we would be involved in two conferences in the first half of 2008: the FAP conference in February would provide an important opportunity to support those who work with Quaker young people and to help develop consistency and share best practices across a number of yearly meetings while the May YAF conference would provide for moving forward important work among young adult Friends seeking to share spiritual sparks and ignite fires of faith across the boundaries between branches of Quakerism, a process initiated at Burlington this past winter. Both constitute important aspects of our work.

The conferences sub-group consisting of Emily, Rick and Elizabeth considered the needs and imperatives of supporting these two conferences and they discerned and recommend that we should go forward with both. For the FAP conference, we would invite RE to collaborate with us, intending to present this conference in Second Month 2008 at Pendle Hill. We will confer with Kri regarding possible facilitators; Lisa Graustein and Chris DeRoller are both possibilities. The sub-committee acknowledges that this will be in close proximity to the YAF conference May 2008, but see the demands on our committee as manageable. The YAF conference will have a planning committee consisting of Friends from Earlham, from across the spectrum of Friends and Philadelphia Yearly Meeting with whom we will co-sponsor the conference. Emily expressed the need for support/sounding board people from YMC as there were for the recent YAF Conference.

While the work will be considerable, our coordinator feels it is possible. The committee affirmed the importance of these gatherings in moving our work forward.

**06-16-07:14-** Emily and Robin provided us with a brief history to create a base from which we could explore ways in which we allocate money to support ministry for, by and about younger friends. They noted that several months ago, two young adult Friends had requested financial assistance for their Travel in the Ministry this summer; their proposal, Traveling in the Ministry, Interfaith Work Among Quakers, is attached. The Clerk, Assistant Clerk and YMC staff person with guidance from Deborah Fisch, Associate Secretary for Programs and Traveling Ministries, explored this request and discerned that it was consistent with our goals and purposes and within our budget to provide \$2,500 in financial assistance for the effort. As this request moved forward and subsequent requests then came to the committee, the Clerks and staff person realized that the question of how to allocate funds to support youth ministry needed more consideration by the full committee and that they were not able to move forward without further discernment.

In our purpose and function statement, we list “lift up and attend to the concern for ...supporting and encouraging the Ministry of younger friends.” Certainly providing funding for travel is well within this purpose. While support of larger undertakings (for example funds for YFNA) would not be within our budget, the financial support we could make available to individuals could be of significance in supporting their work. As we explored the scope of travel we would see clear to finance, we recognized that support for travel by younger Friends focused on intergenerational community enhancement would be most clearly within our sphere. We were concerned with the need to build accountability into any funding process. As we labored with this issue, we revisited concerns about the interface between our work in this area and the work of the TMC; we want to be clear neither to duplicate their work nor to create two parallel or incompatible tracks. We see our goal is to reach out to younger Friends than those who currently commonly travel through the TMP, to evoke their ministry and perhaps also to give financial support after they have completed their discernment. We may also want to look with the TMP at how to facilitate the clearness process for Friends who do not have firm connection to a home meeting, an impediment particularly common among younger Friends who are often in a period of geographic transitions. Connecting youth, and supporting inter-visitation were concepts underlying our initial impetus for this funding line; these concerns are different from, though not incompatible with promoting traveling in the ministry. How might our committee use travel to facilitate connections among young Friends? We want to keep aware of how we construct our relationship with TMC and will pass this concern on to Christina Repoley, our TMC representative. In addition, Kody, Maia and Emily will bring this concern to TMC as they work in the joint planning committee for the Fall conference on “Emerging Gifts of Ministry”.

Taking these considerations into a small group discernment of way forward, Kody, Meg Maia and Bruce discussed the use of money for support of youth through travel. They concluded and recommend that we should focus on supporting inter-visitation by young people to gatherings, whether yearly meetings or regional gatherings (like the Quake that

Rocked the Midwest) outside their own yearly meeting. Further, they suggest that we would work to inform youth about funding opportunities from their own yearly meeting to attend yearly meeting sessions. We would undertake to develop a list of queries, which would include both practical and spiritual concerns. Some queries for the Friend might be:

- Have you asked for funding from your monthly or yearly meeting?
- Does the group you propose to visit have funding available?
- Where would this fit into your spiritual journey?
- How will this feed you and also encourage connections among friends?

There would also be queries to support our evaluation of the application. For example:

- What other opportunities have been available to this Friend?
- Is this an isolated Friend?
- What will the impact be on this Friend, their target of travel and those they will return to?
- How will the money be distributed?
- Will there be a cap?

High School and YAF Clerks inter-visitation may be a specific goal of this program.

Robin identified several needs moving forward for this sub-committee:

- 1.) There is a need for development of a yearly meeting inter-visitation program to include youth and also perhaps high school and YAF clerks. The possibility was also lifted up that we explore opportunity to have clerks of the FGC Gathering HS and YAF program once they have been trained at Pendle Hill participate in a gathering for High Schoolers and YAFS who are strongly involved in their local or regional programs.
- 2.) We are clear to spend this year's budgeted money to finance travel to support discernment by sub-committee members with a small group from TMC to look at the issues of how to support and encourage travel in the ministry by youth.

Although our future expenditures will be guided by these principles, we will honor the grant already promised to two YAFs for their proposed travel in the ministry this summer.

**06.17. 07.15-** The YMC has discerned that support for younger Friends and those who work with them through the development and distribution of written resources/publications is a significant piece of our work. We have developed a website and several members have written articles, but we have not moved forward with compilation of publications of written resources. How are we led with respect to publications? What is needed to respond to the needs of others regarding understanding of our work and what might we do? How might the pieces we have received by Christina Van Regenmorter and Deborah Shaw fit into our work?

A subcommittee consisting of Steve, Robin, Lindsay, and Jean-Marie examined these questions. The subcommittee had four groups of ideas they felt needed written materials, which could be gleaned from pre-existing sources or developed with a small investment of our time in the form of lists or brief descriptions. The topics would include:

- Language (like what's "eldering"),
- How-to's (like how to develop a YAF program),
- Lists of Ideas (like guidelines for FAP's) and
- Journals/writings by young Friends.

One article we already have in hand would require more editing and then could be sent on to Publications for their consideration. Jean-Marie and Emily will work with Christina Van Regenmorter to move this forward. There may also be materials which have been generated for other publications and not published and which might be appropriate for us to consider.

While we may self-generate and web publish the more simple lists or groups of queries we will also continue to contribute to and support larger works, like the QUIP project. We would like to have the How-to and Idea's lists seeded by members of this committee to provide a template for others to follow when we invite submissions to these lists on the web. Steve and Lindsay will work on the review of submissions. We would also like to further consider the use of Deborah Shaw's pamphlet; members of the Youth Ministries Committee will commit to reading this pamphlet before Gathering and Emily will send out a reminder for feedback this week.

We adjourned for dinner with the intention to reconvene on First Day morning.

These minutes were approved in the face of the meeting.

**06.17.07: 17-** We reconvened and grounded our work in a period of silence.

**06.17.07:18-**We looked to those needs for follow-up so that we may move forward with the considerable work we have discerned this weekend:

1-Maia, Rick, Meg and Jean-Marie will work on framing and fleshing out the yearly meeting inter-visitation program; Maia will facilitate the work of this group.

2-Steve, Robin, Jean-Marie and Lindsay will work on brainstorming, collecting, and editing material for publication; Lindsay will facilitate the work of this group.

3-Kody, Maia, Rick and Jean-Marie will serve as a sounding board for Emily for the FAP conference.

4-Emily and Robin will serve as coordinators of the interface work of the Traveling Ministries and Youth Ministries committees.

**06.17.07:19-** Meg, Lindsay, Steve and Kody shared the preliminary definition of “youth” they have generated for our consideration. At their suggestion, we have appointed Meg, Lindsay, Steve to define “youth” and Meg, Kody, Steve and Bruce will serve as an intergenerational group to define “ministry”.

The convener of each of these groups will submit a brief summary report for our monthly email updates.

**06.17.07:20-** Minute of Appreciation for Syracuse Meeting

Members of the Youth Ministries Committee of Friends General Conference minute our gratitude to the members of Syracuse Monthly Meeting for their warm and generous hospitality during our meeting 15-17 of 6<sup>th</sup> month 2007. We were nurtured throughout the weekend in a wonderful old house where caring attention to our needs was bountiful. Abundant bedding was available, both at the meetinghouse and in home hospitality where pillows provided for our youngest member’s needs. Wide windows, which allowed the cool breezes and the warm sunshine through, and wonderful food, from coffee cake to cheese, nurtured our bodies and our spirits. We were able to work and enjoy the flowers and plants as we sat on the welcoming front porch. We express our particular gratitude to Evy and Renee for their work in organizing our hospitality and for wonderful oatmeal, to our home hospitality hosts, and to Rick for his work in providing for our needs.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jean-Marie Prestwidge Barch, recording