

# MIDCOAST MONTHLY MEETING FOR BUSINESS

DECEMBER 20, 2020

Clerk Guy Marsden opened the meeting with a period of silent worship. The MINUTES of the November Meeting for Business were approved.

Andy Burt's video produced for the Maine Council of Churches was noted. In it she joins with other religious leaders to speak in favor of basic public health practices such as wearing a mask.

Membership lists for the committees of the meeting will remain essentially unchanged in the coming year. Andy Burt has asked to transfer from Pastoral Care to the MOPC Committee.

For MINISTRY AND COUNSEL Jim Matlack mentioned the success of the memorial service for Nancy Booth as well as confirming the selection of Diane DiCranian as the new Clerk.

Jean Crawford reported for PASTORAL CARE. She drew attention to a message from New England Yearly Meeting which provided definitions for various leadership roles in a Friends meeting—e.g. Elder, Minister, Steward, Activist. Meetings are encouraged to consider naming ministers and elders. It was less clear that this practice was suitable for a meeting as small as Midcoast. A special meeting with more participants was proposed as the setting in which to hold further discussion about roles, responsibilities, and titles among members of Midcoast.

A search is under way to identify suitable recipients for donations given in honor of Nancy Booth and Viki Diamond. The next Listening Session will be held on January 4<sup>th</sup> at 11 a.m. The Book Group will next meet on December 31<sup>st</sup> at 10 a.m.

Diane DiCranian brought to the meeting's attention a message from A.F.S.C. intitled: NO WAY TO TREAT A CHILD in which abuses and sufferings along the U.S./Mexico Border and among Palestinians under Israeli Occupation are depicted and deplored. Local meetings are encouraged to sign on to this A.F.S.C. letter. The text of the letter will be appended to these MINUTES. A called meeting to discuss Midcoast Meeting's response is set for Sunday, January 31<sup>st</sup> at 11:30 a.m. after the conclusion of regular meeting for worship. The decision was also made to hold Meetings for the Conduct of Business regularly at 11:30 a.m. rather than 2 p.m.

FINANCE Bruce Rockwood gave an overview of the current financial status of the meeting. Due to the pandemic some expenses have been much reduced. Account balances are healthy and the meeting is in sound financial condition. No advances have yet been taken from Pooled Funds. Friends are encouraged not to forget their pledges in support of the meeting. A budget for the new fiscal year will be developed in the early months of 2021.

Deep and heartfelt appreciation was expressed for the committed and exemplary service that Guy Marsden has rendered in his years as Clerk of Micoast Meeting.

## October 2020 Message from Northeast Kingdom Quaker Meeting

Greetings from Northeast Kingdom Quaker Meeting, from land that was originally Abenaki, to all Monthly Meetings in NEYM. During Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business on October 18, 2020, we continued our ongoing discernment to work for the liberation of all imprisoned children—those held in Israeli detention centers as well as others along the U.S.-Mexico border.

Spirit has led us to explore, discern, and season our meeting's support of *No Way To Treat A Child* over a year when Northwest Quarter approved Minute 2020-3-8 and NEYM felt unable or chose not to address the question during summer sessions. Spirit leads us now to ask all Friends to learn about and take action regarding this internationally supported effort to release Palestinian children from Israeli military prisons.

We invite your Monthly Meeting to extend our Yearly Meeting's current Calls to Action by accompanying AFSC's well-established pursuit of human rights for the indigenous people of Israel/Palestine. Here is our journey:

**Worship:** Quarterly meeting for business in Middlebury, Vermont on December 8, 2019 was a "gathered" meeting. Having endorsed AFSC's No Way To Treat A Child Campaign in November, Northeast Kingdom Quaker Meeting was now asking the Northwest Quarter to support passage of H.R. 2407 entitled *Promoting Human Rights for Palestinian Children Living Under the Israeli Military Occupation Act*. The quarter's clerk requested an extended period of worship sharing.

Pain was evident in an immediate plea — "how can I talk about this in my community without being called antisemitic?" Life stories in subsequent messages, clarified that criticism of a government is not equivalent to antisemitism, and that our equality testimony applied as much to Palestinian children illegally incarcerated in Israeli military prisons as it does to Friends' commitment for the human rights of all people in the United States.

**Seasoning:** Spirit was present at this Meeting for Worship for Business that asked monthly meetings to weigh and season the work. Friends at the next Quarterly Meeting in Burlington, on March 8, 2020, approved a minute [<https://neym-ip.org/northwest-quarter-minute-on-no-way-to-treat-a-child/>] asking New England Yearly Meeting to consider supporting AFSC's "No Way to Treat a Child" campaign for endorsement of HR 2407.

**Living into a minute:** Too often Friends think the work is done when we issue a minute. Inaction following NEYM's Middle East Minute 2017-46 [<https://neym-ip.org/neym-statement-2017/>] led our presiding clerk, on September 26, 2019, to ask all monthly meetings to examine how we are living into it; consequently, in November 2019, Northeast Kingdom Quaker Meeting had considered AFSC's [campaigns for justice in Palestine and Israel](#). The right of a child to live freely overpowered the pattern—nationwide—of Monthly Meetings avoiding any discussion about Israel/Palestine because of its controversial nature.

These were preliminary steps for Friends to live more fully into our equality testimony, whether it is to prevent a child's incarceration in an Israeli military prison or a cage on the U.S. border with Mexico. Those planning the agenda for 2020 summer sessions, however, abruptly delayed further consideration of "No Way To Treat A Child" until August, 2021 despite the pandemic's impact upon children detained anywhere. That is why Northeast Kingdom Quaker Meeting now urges all Monthly and Quarterly Meetings in NEYM to examine AFSC's campaign for justice in Israel/Palestine: Let us respond to the Yearly Meeting's current *Calls for Action* transnationally, as well, by endorsing the next Congress's version of HR 2407 and working for an end to the blockade of Gaza.

***"This time we cannot cross until we carry each other. All of us refugees, all of us prophets.***

***No more taking turns on history's wheel, trying to collect old debts no one can pay. The sea will not open that way. This time that country is what we promise each other, our rage pressed cheek to cheek until tears flood the space between, until there are no enemies left, because this time no one will be left to drown and all of us must be chosen.***

***This time it's all of us or none."***

***—Aurora Levins Morales, Jewish Puertorriqueña Poet and Activist***

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#### **Further Resources:**

Two Friends, who have received a Traveling Minute from Northeast Kingdom Monthly Meeting, can be reached at [shjrhodewalt@gmail.com](mailto:shjrhodewalt@gmail.com) and [scott.rhodewalt@gmail.com](mailto:scott.rhodewalt@gmail.com).

Additional resources available for starting dialogue within your Meeting include:

- 1) The Israel/Palestine Working Group of New England Yearly Meeting <https://neym-ip.org>;
- 2) Quaker Palestine Israel Network's website <https://qpinblog.wordpress.com>;
- 3) This "**Minute on the Military Imprisonment of Palestinian Children by Israel,**" Approved by Burlington Friends Meeting 9 February 2020:

Responding to the NEYM presiding clerk's call that we "live into" New England Yearly Meeting (NEYM) Minute 2017-46, Burlington Friends Meeting endorses American Friends Service Committee's "No Way To Treat A Child" campaign in order to address the systematic ill treatment of Palestinian children under the age of 18 in the Israeli system of military detention.

Since 2000, AFSC reports that at least 10,000 Palestinian children have been detained by Israeli forces and held in military detention. Often arrested in their homes at night, they are bound, blindfolded, and taken by military vehicle for interrogation. The process includes verbal abuse, threats, and in three out of four cases,

physical violence. They are denied legal counsel and the presence of their parents. Subsequent trials take place in military courts where half receive custodial sentences averaging three to twelve months, some serve up to three years.

This treatment of minors violates the United Nations 1990 Convention on the Rights of the Child—ratified by 194 countries, including Israel—that guarantees detainees: due process, the presumption of innocence, legal representation, and an impartial judicial process, “which reinforces the child’s respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of others and which take into account the child’s age.” (Article 40).

The “No Way to Treat a Child” campaign is endorsed by 24 human rights organizations including AFSC, and urges public support for U.S. House of Representatives 2407, a bill introduced by Representative McCollum, that would forbid the use of U.S. funds to “support the military detention, interrogation, abuse, or ill-treatment of children in violation of international humanitarian law”.

Burlington Monthly Meeting will begin “living into” NEYM Minute 2017-46 by working to build public support for H.R. 2407 as one of several possibilities for action. Realizing that a public voice on this matter is urgent and appropriate, we ask that NEYM’s presiding clerk and secretary issue a public statement of support for “No Way To Treat a Child” and specifically for H.R. 2407.