

Report to the New York Quarterly Meeting April 15, 2018

1. Morningside Monthly Meeting continues to meet each First Day for Meeting Worship on the 12th floor of the Riverside Church Tower with Meeting for Children on the 13th floor. Meetings for Worship with a Concern for Business were held on February 4, March 4 and April 1, 2018. Bible study continues on the second Sunday of the month. Our welcome breakfasts continue on the 4th Sunday of each month at 9:30 am, at the Riverside Café of Riverside Church.
2. On the third Sunday of each month, Ministry & Counsel sponsored discussions on the Testimony of Integrity, the Testimony of Community and Speaking Truth.
3. Morningside Monthly Meeting forwards our nomination of David Britton for the NY Quarterly Meeting Nominating Committee for approval.
4. The Peace and Social Concerns Committee discussed which legislative priorities we would like to ask Friends Committee on National Legislation to support.
5. The Meeting approved the following Minute of Concern:
Morningside Monthly Meeting would like to share its concerns around the recent firing of Ben Frisch with the members of the Board of Trustees of Friends Seminary and the Care Relationship Committee.
Our first concern is for Ben Frisch, a long-term faculty member at Friends Seminary. The process of dismissal was abrupt, giving Ben no opportunity for growth and change in the areas of concern. Friends have faith that our Inner Light helps us grow and change. In addition, the school's portrayal of Ben that is not consistent with the conscientious and caring person whom we have also experienced as a good listener.
Our second concern is for the students at Friends. The students who were hurt or upset in class by Ben's joke mocking a Nazi salute, have been left with no way to express their feelings to Ben nor to have a better opportunity to understand Ben's background and history that were the context for that joke, however ill-suited to the classroom. Healing did not happen. At the same time, there are many students at the school who consider Ben a mentor and a good teacher. They too have been wounded by the abruptness of his departure. We would like to see the school use restorative practice and restorative justice in addressing this and future situations when hurt feelings and conflicts arise and to reinstate Ben to

his former position. In this way, everyone is able to have the possibility of growing and changing.

Finally, the school leadership has greatly underestimated the impact of this decision on the wider community of people who know and respect Ben in a variety of contexts. Many alumni, former teachers and the wider Quaker community are concerned for Ben but also are concerned about whether Friends Seminary continues to be committed to Quaker values and practice. This decision and subsequent events have broken the sense of community within the school and with the wider community. We support the Board of Trustees and the Care Committee, and we urge them to respect the process and intent of the Essential Principles, Practices and Procedures.

<https://www.nycquakers.org/2015/12/26/friends-seminary-essential-principles-practices-and-procedures/>

6. The Meeting agreed to support the boycott of Wendy's sponsored by the National Farm Workers Union because of its labor practices.
7. Finally we also approved minutes supporting the granting of parole to Herman Bell after 45 years of incarceration and a second minute opposing the firing of the Parole Commissioners who granted him parole, which the Policemen's Benevolent Association and Mayor Di Blasio have requested.

Pamela Wood, Clerk
Morningside Monthly Meeting