

Morningside Monthly Meeting
Report to the New York Quarterly Meeting
July 2020

1. On March 15, Morningside Monthly Meeting began holding meeting for worship each First day at 11 a.m. virtually via zoom. Prior to that date, meeting for worship was held on the 12th floor of the Riverside Church Tower, with Meeting for Children on the 13th floor also at 11 a.m. On March 8, meeting for worship was held in person at Riverside Church tower; with a smaller group meeting virtually. Meeting for Children is not convening at this time.

2. Meetings for Worship with a Concern for Business were held in person on January 5, February 2, and March 1. There was no meeting on April 5. Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business resumed virtually on May 3, and was held June 7 and July 5.

3. Bible study met on the second Sunday of February. Bible study resumed virtually in May, meeting on the second and fourth Saturdays at 10 a.m.

-Moving with Spirit met in person on the first Sunday of January, February and March. No meetings were held in April or May. Moving with Spirit resumed virtually in June and July, meeting at 10 a.m. on the first Sunday of each month before Meeting for Worship.

-Welcome breakfasts met on the fourth Sunday of January and February at 9:30 a.m. at the Riverside Café of Riverside Church.

-The racial justice study group met in person on the fourth Sunday of January and February. The group resumed meeting virtually in May and June.

3. Morningside Meeting's Fall Retreat is scheduled for October 23-25, 2020, at Stony Point Retreat Center in New York.

4. The following minute was approved by Morningside Monthly Meeting at the July Meeting for Worship with a concern for business:

Minute on BLM and Racial Justice for Morningside Monthly Meeting

As Quakers, a core truth we hold is the experience of that of God within each person. From this knowledge, we have a testimony of equality as a centerpoint of our faith. In a society built on genocidal violence, racist systems and institutions, we recognize that equality is not enough. We must testify for equity and justice to more fully manifest the Light within us all.

Black lives matter. Black lives not only matter but inspire, bring joy, and make our community as Morningside Monthly Meeting whole. In our journey of bearing witness and seeking the Light, we see the destructiveness of white supremacy across humanity and hear the words ringing true that none of us are free until all of us are free.

We commit to acting in solidarity with the struggle for racial justice and against police brutality and we take up the demands of the movement for concrete steps to make our world safer for people of color. The police and prison system must be demilitarized and funding for those systems must be reduced drastically. It's time to reallocate critical resources to the community for education, housing, jobs, and mental and physical healthcare. We dedicate ourselves to a continuous and ever-evolving effort to dismantle systemic racism, seeking equality, equity, and justice as we grow as individuals and a Spirit-led community.

5. At the July Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business, Morningside Meeting approved endorsement of the following letter from the Morningside Committee for Prison Ministry, approved sharing it with the constituent meetings of NYQM, and approved forwarding it to NYQM for endorsement:

**Cuomo Minute approved to be forwarded to Summer Sessions by the Witness Coordinating Committee, June 27, 2020
Proposed letter to Governor Andrew Cuomo**

“Blessed are the merciful for they will be shown mercy.” Matthew 5:7

To Governor Cuomo,

This time of sickness and sadness is indeed a time we need to show mercy to one another. In that spirit, we urge you to consider showing mercy to those who are incarcerated, especially those who are particularly at risk of COVID-19. As Governor of the State, there are many steps you have the power to take; we urge you to take this moment to give people hope in a time of despair and grieving.

You could encourage the use of compassionate release for people who are elderly and people who have health issues, thereby saving lives.

You could use the power you have to grant clemency.

We encourage you also to consider clemency for the many incarcerated people who are eligible for parole but are denied parole solely because of the “nature of their crime.” As members of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), we believe that the Inner Light, that each of us has, gives people the power to grow and change. It is important for you to acknowledge that change.

If people in prison have been granted parole, and they have a place to go in the community, you could encourage their immediate release rather than exposing them to the virus while in transitional correctional facilities.

New York State has a very high re-incarceration rate for minor parole violations. Currently this exposes the formerly incarcerated to a greater possibility of infection from the virus. You have the ability to bring a halt to this.

It is urgent that you drastically increase testing of those who are incarcerated and staff to save lives and to let us know how much testing is being done. This protects everyone associated with these facilities. We urge you to be more transparent and active in this area.

You could encourage the HALT Solitary Confinement Bill to come to a vote as soon as possible. To experience solitary is to experience torture. In this time of COVID-19, people in solitary are also at greater risk of not receiving the medical care they might need if they are infected.

As members of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), we know that there are many non-violent ways to address violence that do not escalate into further violence. Programs such as the Alternatives to Violence Project, already offered in many correctional facilities for those inside, could be used for Staff as well. Training Correctional Officers in de-escalation strategies has the potential to improve outcomes for all who live and work in these facilities.

6. At the July Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business, Morningside Monthly Meeting endorsed the following minute from 15th Street Meeting:

2020.6.3 - Friends consider a statement regarding the 13th Amendment to the Constitution

13th Amendment

Section 1 of the 13th amendment of the US constitution states:

Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.

We propose a new amendment to the constitution that amends section 1 to state the following:

Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.

Friends support the spirit and intention of this proposal and approve the suggested amendment.

Jane Alexandre, Clerk
Morningside Monthly Meeting
July 10, 2020