

Reflections on the Friends Council on Education 2006 Minute

The close of the year is a time to reflect on the past and make commitments for the future. My commitments for the future are taking shape around a minute that was created and approved by the Board of the Directors of the Friends Council on Education. I am the clerk of this body and had the experience of a powerful gathered meeting at our October session. The Board met at Moorestown Friends School in the morning, and 70 or more heads of member Friends schools gathered later that day and the following one for their annual fall meeting. As we met, the tragedy of the Nickel Mines shootings, terrorism, and international warfare weighed heavily upon us. The Friends Council on Education celebrated its 75th anniversary in June and we reflected on the past and what our work and emphasis would or should be in the future. The following minute was approved by the Board and later by all the assembled heads of schools.

A Minute

*From the Board of Directors of the Friends Council on Education
October 5, 2006*

As inheritors and stewards of the Quaker tradition in education, the Board of Directors of the Friends Council on Education seeks to share its vision of a global community that is guided by deep listening to the needs and aspirations of our children and of all children of the world. Let us, together, urge and actively work toward an end to all war and to the widely prevailing practice of seeking to resolve human conflict by violence, and rather, promote a lasting and unequivocal commitment to reason, trust, and justice.

As we further discern how to make Quaker traditions and testimonies visibly present, we draw strength and inspiration from the spiritual energy that moves in and among us and through all humankind. We, therefore, invite others to join in the sacred work of ensuring that young people everywhere have the inherent right to live in a world guided by peace, love and hope.

Haverford Monthly Meeting endorsed this minute at its Meeting for Business on November 12. The School Committee discussed this minute on November 21 and will have it on the agenda at the January meeting. The faculty will consider this minute at its meeting later today. I hope that these groups will be moved to endorse it as well. What is a minute and what does endorsing it signify? Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends book of Faith and Practice defines a *minute* as “the record of a corporate decision reached during a meeting for worship for business. More broadly, the account of a single transaction in the written record of a meeting for business or other body.” Another form of written output from a meeting is an *epistle*: “a public letter of greeting and ministry. Such letters are sent from a Friends meeting or organization to other Friends groups, to supply information, spiritual insight, and encouragement.”

The Friends Council on Education message is technically a *minute*, approved at its business meeting, but it is being used as an *epistle* – that is, it has been sent out to all

Friends schools and they have been invited and encouraged to consider the message and let it work amongst their communities to see how – or if – it will take shape and what it will inspire each community to do.

I am moved by the emphasis on the needs and aspirations of children throughout the world; on ending all war and to the widely prevailing practice of seeking to resolve human conflict by violence; on a lasting and unequivocal commitment to reason, trust, and justice; and envisioning a world guided by peace, love, and hope.

As we end 2006 and prepare for 2007, these are the aspirations that will guide me and I will seek to follow in whatever work I am doing. I take heart that our students learn and practice peaceful problem solving each day. I rejoice that we aspire to have global awareness and perspective. And I am inspired by the differences and diversity that seems to flourish in our small community.

I am encouraged by this bold vision and invitation issued by the community of Friends schools.

Martha B. Bryans
December 2006