

## **PEACE AND SOCIAL CONCERNS COMMITTEE REPORT**

Bob Welsh, Clerk, June 2015

This has been an eventful year for the Committee, thanks mainly to the initiative taken by Florence Yaffe of Celo Meeting, a committee member. Florence invited a Friend from New York Yearly Meeting, Deborah First, to come and meet with SAYMA Friends in the Asheville area to discuss peacemaking in Israel-Palestine. Deborah, who has a lengthy history of working and travelling in the Middle East, came in February and met for a day-long session with Friends representing six of our Monthly Meetings. Out of that session came a first draft of a minute of concern, and, as Friends know, the result is that at this Yearly Meeting we have minutes from four of our Monthly Meetings on how we might work for justice and peace in the Israel-Palestine situation.

In the spring we received from New York Yearly Meeting a minute calling for the release of Native American leader Leonard Peltier, who has been in prison for many years and is now old and in ill health. Two of our Monthly Meetings took up this minute, approved it and have sent their own minutes to Yearly Meeting calling for his release from prison. Peace and Social Concerns Committee has prepared a Leonard Peltier minute for consideration at this year's sessions.

At Yearly Meeting this year and following it, the Committee must wrestle with the question of when and in what kind of setting the Committee should meet during the year. In the past year we have met only by email, with very modest results. SAYMA's charge to the Committee, recorded in our Handbook, says that "The committee is to convene gatherings of concerned Friends twice a year to follow up on minutes and concerns." Fulfilling this charge will present a real challenge to the committee and hopefully an opportunity for its role in our Yearly Meeting to grow in importance.