

Meeting for Worship for the Conduct of Business
Asheville Friends Meeting
08/08/2004
Clerk: Barbara Esther
Recording Clerk: Steve Livingston

Meeting gathered at 11:45 a.m. Twenty-one Friends were in attendance: Peter Buck, Lynnora Bierce, Egan Bierce-Wilson, Alice Brown, Jim Cavener, Jim Collins, Valerie Collins, Al Dupree, Agnita Dupree, Barbara Esther, Michael Galovic, George Gjelfriend, Steve Houseworth, Steve Livingston, Miles Loftis, Satchel Loftis, Susan Mitchell, Phil Neal, Alan Robinson, Dan Teslow, and Mary Teslow.

The clerk offered a reading from Thich Nhat Hanh's "A Walking Meditation".

"Place your foot on the surface of the earth the way an emperor would place his seal on a royal decree.

"A royal decree can bring happiness or misery to people. It can shower grace on them or it can ruin their lives. Your steps can do the same. If your steps are peaceful, the world will have peace. If you can take one peaceful step, you can take two. You can take one hundred and eight peaceful steps."

Clerk Barbara Esther thanked all who were present for giving their time and attention to the Meeting's business on such a beautiful summer afternoon. She suggested that we see where we were in our agenda at 1 p.m. and decide if we wanted to continue thereafter or hold over unfinished business. She suggested that we break at about 12:15 for a snack.

We reviewed the agenda. The reports of House and Grounds and Peace and Earth were held over due to the absence of the clerk of those committees. Due to the absence of the clerk of nominating, Barbara Esther offered to present the committee's very brief report.

Nominating Committee brought one nomination to the Meeting.

Meeting approved the nomination of Steve Livingston to serve as Recording Clerk for the term ending 6th month 2006.

Minutes of the 5th month Meeting for Business were reviewed. A Friend asked that we adhere carefully to Friends' custom of referring to those Friends offering comment or standing opposed to the sense of the meeting as simply "a Friend" rather than by their given name.

A Friend warned that in expressing gratitude for service to the Meeting, we should avoid too much effusiveness lest it create a precedent that would place an undue burden on the Friend's successor, and perhaps ultimately render our more humble gratitudes meaningless.

Friends approved the minutes of 5th month with the above notations.

Finance Committee report was given by Treasurer Val Collins.

"Item 1 - The management of coffee sales has been absorbed by Barbara Esther for Peace and Earth. Peace and Earth has asked that the Meeting pay for the coffee up front (\$500), and re-absorb the money as the coffee is sold. The Finance Committee recommends that the Meeting add a revenue and Expense line to account for coffee sales. The Finance Committee recommends that Peace and Earth come up with a simple accounting mechanism for the amount of coffee they have sold and have in balance, and with a mechanism for alerting Finance to which monies are tied to coffee sales.

"Item 2 - The Finance Committee would like the appropriate person(s) or committee to determine whether the Meeting should spend money on newspaper advertisements. The Finance Committee is willing to provide information on the amount spent in advertising through the *Citizen-Times* and to research the amount required to advertise in the *Mountain Express*.

“Item 3 – Finance Committee members share a concern that there is no functioning Long Range Planning group in the Meeting. Our major concern regards the options of growing larger (and the Building Fund), or splitting, and using the money for other concerns. The Finance Committee is bringing this forward not for the purposes of actions at this time, but to encourage our seasoning about how we use our money.”

Friends united in giving thanks for Al Dupree’s many years of faithful service in his leading to provide the Finca La Bella coffee to the Meeting. Barbara pointed out that David Clements had offered to take over the coffee sales for Peace and Earth, and Friends recognized that his experience as Treasurer would make the accounting part of the process easier for all.

Meeting approved adding a line item to the budget for income and expenditures relating to coffee sales. Friends also approved the expenditure of \$500 for initial inventory of coffee.

Friends asked that consideration of our advertising expenditures be referred to Ministry and Counsel.

Val offered that the Religion section of the *Citizen-Times* does not enjoy a large readership, that the “Cosmic Buffet” section of the *Mountain Express* might be a better choice.

Regarding item 3 of the report, a Friend supported the need for Long Range planning, referring to the properties nearby that have recently changed hands.

Another Friend supported the need for Long Range Planning around the impending issues of property improvement, for example the plan to build the extended deck on the back of the house.

The Clerk reminded Friends that the Meeting’s Long Range Planning Committee has traditionally included a representative from each of the Meeting’s standing committees, its clerk being offered by Nominating Committee.

Meeting approved reinvigorating the Long Range Planning Committee, charging Nominating Committee with the task of identifying a clerk, and asking each standing committee to provide a representative.

The Finance Committee report was accepted.

Ministry and Counsel report was given by Susan Mitchell.

“Ministry and Counsel Committee met upstairs at the meetinghouse at 12:30 p.m., 8/1/2004. Present were Martha Huggins, Rusty Maynard, George and Kristi Gjelfriend, Alice Brown, Susan Mitchell, and Steve Livingston (clerk).

“Our Meeting began with a few minutes of silent worship.

“We approved a ‘letter of introduction’ drafted by Elizabeth Roebing’s clearness committee and with one minor correction, for her to carry as she travels to the Dominican Republic. There was a clear sense that we still hold her in our care and wish to maintain an active relationship with her. We did not find that an appointed mechanism such as an oversight committee was appropriate, however.

“We considered how we might best support the work of the whole community by holding a committee clerks’ meeting and assisting in the writing of the annual State of the Society report. Our sense was that we should try to get the committee clerks together prior to the upcoming retreat, and that we should pull back from the idea of a “retreat” to a more feasible three-hour meeting. We felt that the meeting of committee clerks would naturally support the work of writing the State of the Society Report. We suggest that the actual writing of the body of the report be accomplished by one person, with the support and input of the committee clerks and other concerned Friends. We did not feel it necessary that the clerk of meeting be the author of the report. We also wish to suggest that Meeting allow the writer of the report some latitude in not being confined to a particular format.

“We considered how to support the Friends who have volunteered to facilitate rise of meeting. We want to be sure that the clipboard with the list of suggested order is available to the Friend each week, and that the list includes asking members of Ministry and Counsel to stand and be identified for the sake of newcomers who may wish to know.

“Meeting adjourned at 2 p.m.”

The Recording Clerk offered that the Retreat Planning Committee had also recognized the value of a committee clerks’ meeting, particularly in the presence of our Retreat facilitator Deborah Fisch.

Meeting approved holding a committee clerks’ meeting on 9/23.

Barbara offered to help convene the meeting.

The clerk asked for guidance on the question of who will clerk our Meeting.

A Friend offered an analogy to his experience in the Unitarian Universalist Church, where cleanup duties were delegated by a roster devised by random arrangement of the church’s membership roll. If a congregant wished to be excused from the duty it was incumbent upon him or her to convince the next person on the list to take the task instead. The Friend offered that Ministry and Counsel might adopt this example to respond to our present need.

Another Friend spoke in favor of rotating the clerking role to give more Friends the experience of clerking.

Another Friend suggested that we wait on the Light for further revelation, and our Meeting went into silence.

Out of the silence, a Friend gave thanks that several of the tasks previously relegated to the clerk of Meeting were being assumed by other individuals and committees in the meeting. This Friend also spoke of the value of a standing clerk, in terms of consistency and continuity. She suggested that Meeting consider a one-year term, with the hope that the length of the commitment might be the only thing standing in some otherwise willing and capable Friend’s way.

A Friend reminded us of the value of a clerk’s support committee and/or a co-clerk. Friends favored Meeting providing financial assistance to any Friend willing to go to Pendle Hill this fall for Arthur Larrabee’s clerking workshop.

[Barbara here was the comment about offering the workshop as a “bribe” to a potential clerk, but I didn’t feel right about the way it fit in to our discussion or the way it might fit in to our account of the discussion]

Friends agreed that the Nominating Committee should again look for a Friend who is led to clerk the Meeting, and that our community must see to the proper support of the next clerk. Barbara then asked how to proceed concerning the next month’s meeting for business. No Friend rose to offer to clerk it. Barbara offered that she would if no one else came forward to do so.

A Friend with many years’ experience observed that he had never seen a Meeting without a clerk, and asked that Friends examine what there might be in our Meeting’s “makeup” that has brought this condition about. He suggested that Nominating Committee look at our roster of recorded members and determine for each member why they could not serve as clerk. Does membership not include service to the Meeting? How much “seasoning” is needed before one is “seasoned enough” to clerk? What if the circumstances call for “push come to shove”?

Friends responded to a request for an orderly procedure to accept a volunteer to clerk our next business meeting.

Friends approved that any volunteer for interim clerking should contact Ministry and Counsel, and empowered Ministry and Counsel to accept the volunteer. Ministry and Counsel is asked to announce to the community each week whether or not there is a Friend willing to serve in this capacity.

Peter Buck read the draft of the letter for Elizabeth Roebing.

“A Letter of Introduction from the Asheville Friends Meeting for Elizabeth Roebing:

“Dear Friends,

“This letter introduces Elizabeth Roebing who has been a member in good standing of the Quaker Meeting of Asheville, North Carolina (part of the Southern Appalachian Yearly Meeting and Association, Religious Society of Friends) for the past 14 years. We have appreciated her ministry as a writer and activist for peace, social justice, and the environment. We have been blessed by her authentic presence. While she has described herself as a bee in our bonnet yet the honey, in due time, has been sweet. We commend her to you in silent waiting and in purposeful and playful action.”

The letter of introduction for Elizabeth Roebing was approved as written.

The report of Ministry and Counsel Committee was accepted.

Lynnora Bierce read the report from the Retreat Committee.

“The retreat committee is making nice progress toward planning the Fall retreat. The dates again are Sept 24, 25, and 26 and the retreat will be held at the Bonclarken Retreat Center near Hendersonville. We will be hosting Deborah Fisch, a travelling minister from Friends FGC. Deborah will help facilitate the adult portions of the weekend.

“We’re about to begin registration, so you will be hearing and seeing announcements at the close of meeting beginning 8/15 as well as on the website, and in the newsletter.

“It looks like \$150/person will cover the cost of food and lodging. We will be registering children for free. Folks that can afford more will be asked to contribute so we can offer to offset the cost for those that can afford the full price. Folks that can't pay the full price will be asked to contribute what they can and the rest will be covered by the scholarship fund or other funds.

“Any comments or questions, see Carrie Coward or Lynnora Bierce.”

The Retreat Committee report was accepted with thanks for the work of the committee.

In response to an inquiry about scholarship money, Lynnora informed the Meeting that the Committee was expecting some moneys from the Meeting Scholarship fund and would see how much money came in with registrations in order to determine whether more fund were needed to ensure that all Friends could participate in the retreat.

A Friend noted that our facilitator, Deborah Fisch, was present at worship in Des Moines, Iowa where he attended three weeks ago.

The gathering enthusiastically accepted the suggested theme “Finding the Hidden Clerk Within Us”. Lynnora offered that we are all clerks, and we all benefit from the skills and experience that each of us acquires.

The meeting ended at 1:15 p.m. after a few moments of silence.