

Meeting for Worship for the Conduct of Business
Asheville Friends Meeting
12/12/2004

Meeting gathered at 11:30 a.m. Thirty-one Friends were in attendance: Lynnora Bierce, Alice Brown, Gary Byrne, Jim Cavener, Karen Cernek, David Clements, Wesley Clements, Valerie Collins, Agnita Dupree, Al Dupree, Barbara Esther, Margaret Farmer, George Gjelfriend, Kristi Gjelfriend, Joy Gossett, Martha Huggins, Toby Ives, Nicholas Kmecza, Nancy Kuykendall, Steve Livingston (recording clerk), Satchel Loftis, Marcia Master, Rusty Maynard, Phil Neal, Rain Newcomb (clerk), George Oldham, Evan Richardson, Suzanna Roettger, Ursula Scott, Sarah Jane Thomas, and Jennifer Walker.

Clerk Rain Newcomb opened the Meeting with ten minutes of worship, followed by a prayer asking for Divine guidance in discerning our business.

Friends reviewed the agenda and made a couple of minor changes to the order of reports. Friends agreed to wait until the meeting was over to share a meal, in hopes of expediting our work.

News of Ourselves:

Karen Cernek announced that she and Chris Carter have become engaged to be married. They have not set a date yet, tentatively Spring of 2006.

Wesley Clements, son of David Clements and Evan Richardson, was attending Meeting for Business for the first time.

Jennifer Walker announced that she has been nominated and has agreed to serve on the Board of Directors of Right Sharing of World Resources, a Quaker Non-Governmental Organization supported by our Meeting.

Library:

Marcia Master read a brief report from the committee:

“The Library and House and Grounds Committees are giving the Library a new look. A new desk will be added following the paint job and cleaning. The plan is to streamline the library furniture so the room will be easier to navigate for people with walking aids, and the traffic flow will be smoother. It will also be available for committee meetings. House and Grounds is planning to install a dehumidifier in the basement to prevent further moisture damage.

“Thanks to all the Friends who helped pack the books so efficiently. The plan is to return on Dec. 19 at 9 a.m. to clean and return the books to the shelves. Any interested Friends are invited to join the fun.

“A number of books have been donated to the Library recently. Friends may be particularly interested in Clare Hanrahan’s new book, Conscience and Consequence, her prison memoir. Friends who have book recommendations are invited to tell any Library Committee member. Members include Alice Brown, Ursula Scott, George Oldham, Barry and Marcia Master, Ellen Oldham, Cathy Hewitt, and Mary Brown.”

The report was accepted.

Marcia welcomed a Friend’s offer to donate several books by Jimmy Carter and Clarence Jordan to our collection. Friends were reminded that help would be needed on 12/18 throughout the day, as it will certainly take longer to reshelve the books than was required to take them down.

Finance:

Committee Clerk Nancy Kuykendall reported for the committee. She first yielded the floor to Alice Brown, so the Meeting could hear a report from the *ad hoc* Quaker Outreach Support Fund Examining Committee. The *ad hoc* committee was charged with reviewing our contributions to the various wider Quaker organizations that we support, and recommend any changes that seemed prudent. Alice reported that we support ten such organizations, and that the committee proposed two changes: curtailing our support of the William Penn House and commencing support of the *Friends Journal* in the amount of \$100 annually. She explained that the *Friends Journal* is experiencing financial hardship, and that it has more subscribers among programmed Friends than among FCG Friends, even though it is largely a publication of unprogrammed Friends.

The committee felt that this level of support was the least we could do to support this important venue for thought and practice among FGC Friends.

Friends approved eliminating our annual contribution to William Penn House and commencing support for the *Friends Journal* in the amount of \$100 annually.

Nancy distributed copies of the 2004 income and expenditure balance sheet, and stated that a copy would be posted on our meeting website for further study. She reported that there was still time to make contributions to make up the \$5,000 shortfall in our 2004 budgeted income. She reported that the Finance Committee had decided to discontinue the practice of assigning a Friend to the position of Treasurer. Instead, Satchel Loftis has agreed to take on the responsibilities of bookkeeping and accounting, Valerie Collins will continue signing checks, and the committee will assume other responsibilities that would otherwise fall upon the individual identified as Treasurer.

In response to a Friend's inquiry, Nancy reported that the current members of Finance Committee are herself, Satchel Loftis, David Clements, Nick Kmecza, Kate Jayne, and Valerie Collins.

In response to a Friend's request that a tabulation of contributions from the community be presented in a future newsletter, Nancy advised Friends that Finance Committee is hosting a forum at rise of meeting next week to hear suggestions from the community pertaining to their process.

In response to a Friend's inquiry, Finance Committee members noted several sizable debits that have not yet been paid.

A Friend noted that some of us are lacking the visual acuity to read tiny print, and asked that a few copies of printed material be available in larger typeface.

Nominating:

Clerk Karen Cernek read a written report:

"The Nominating Committee did not meet this month due to the convening clerk being ill, however the entire committee has been in communication by phone and email.

"First we would like to thank those Friends among us who have served as Clerk of Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business. Your stewardship and commitment to our Meeting is greatly appreciated. However, our committee is deeply concerned about the impact on our Meeting of not having the continuity and stability of a permanent Clerk. There are additional unfilled roles and responsibilities which are also important to the life of the Meeting that are also of concern. Our heartfelt thanks to Friends who have come forward to serve in an interim capacity in these roles, but we need more permanent solutions.

"The Nominating Committee has spent many hours considering our work. We also sought counsel from several of our Meeting's elders and other seasoned Friends. Our discussions ultimately led to concerns about the condition of our Meeting. There was unity among us on the following:

- "1) We seem to lack cohesion outside of Meeting for Worship.
- "2) A good number of Friends are unknown to each other.
- "3) There is need to find ways to get to know each other. This will enable us to care and nurture each other.
- "4) There is room for improvement on the part of members and attenders for taking personal responsibility with regard to the care and nurture of our Meeting.
- "5) This Meeting is greatly blessed by a number of Friends who have and continue to faithfully serve and nurture our Meeting. Friends who teach by example. Concerns were raised that these Friends be held up, nurtured, and not be overburdened, which is a pattern we have seen emerge in the recent past. Serving the Meeting may be challenging but should be a joyful experience as well.

"The Nominating Committee will be presenting a forum on the fifth First Day of January. The subject will be the many different ways Friends can be good stewards of the Meeting. We will explore ideas beyond committee work, that will include young and old, as well as new and seasoned Friends. We welcome all Friends' suggestions and assistance with developing and presenting this forum."

The report was accepted.

After hearing the report, Friends settled into worship. Out of the silence, Friends expressed a sense of hope that our Meeting is working towards what we “hunger for”: a greater sense of community and mutual care.

Representative Meeting:

Barbara Esther presented a written report:

“Report of the Representative Meeting of SAYMA, December 4, 2004

“Recently the minutes of both yearly meeting and representative meeting have been delayed in being published. To try to assist the recording clerk in this task several ideas were suggested by an Ad Hoc Committee on Minutes. Copy is requested sent before the event itself to the clerk, the recording clerk, and the administrative assistant. A to-do list will be generated within the meeting to make sure that both those present and representatives not able to attend will be aware of anything they are asked to communicate to their meeting or worship group. People are asked to use Word or Word Perfect and the email documents as an attachment using Rich Text Format. Monthly meetings are asked to consider the task of distribution of the minutes to interested members and attenders. At present, there are two copies coming to our meeting: one to the representative and one to the clerk.

“The Treasurer reported that the yearly meeting is in adequate shape. The numbers look a little off due to the short budget to allow for an adjustment to an October to October fiscal year. One new item is that liability insurance for our participants and for the SAYF program was purchased through GuideOne. They seek to insure monthly meetings within the yearly meeting. The question of whether background checks will be required for those working with children was made, but at present, we do not know what the requirements are.

“Susan Carlyle reminded us that the question of endorsement of the Earth Charter was not revisited at our Yearly Meeting sessions in June 2004, due to lack of time. Although some meetings, including Asheville, endorsed it, the Yearly Meeting has not yet done so.

“An Ad Hoc Religious Education Committee reported that they will meet on either February 6 or March 19. All those interested should contact Sharon Annis.

“The Environmental Concerns Network will be working with Warren Wilson College so that we can use the most environmentally friendly buildings. Yes, Warren Wilson. We were asked not to hold our 2005 sessions at Shorter College because of the extensive construction they will be doing there this coming summer and, fortunately, Warren Wilson was still available.

“Ministry and Nurture Committee held a retreat in October. There will be a series of retreats prior to any continuation of outreach. Bob McGahey, who was interim clerk, has decided to remain in the clerk's position for that committee. More members to participate are wanted. No one from our meeting is serving on that committee at present.

“The Nominating Committee reported that there have been several resignations. Between now and April the committee will be trying to convince several people to start right away as interim workers, their names to be brought to April Representative Meeting. Our meeting's nominating committee is asked to forward any names to Sharon Annis, clerk of SAYMA nominating. The committee is seeking local Friends to serve as the arrangements people, needs a co-registrar, preferably with some experience.

“I brought back a SAYMA directory. It is updated annually and is available free to anyone who needs it to do SAYMA work. One copy should be available at the meetinghouse for everyone's use.

“The E Communications Committee had sent a questionnaire to various folks across our yearly meeting. Steve Livingston was one to receive it. Anyone wishing to respond is welcome to add their insight to the survey.

“We heard reports from our reps to FLGBTQC and FCNL and Quaker House Fayetteville. Perry Treadwell, who served as our rep to FGC for several years and continued on a co-opted basis, thanked the yearly meeting for having sent him in that capacity. He likened the Gathering of FGC to the growth of a dandelion: it shoots up and blossoms when Friends gather, and as they go home the seeds are dispersed and broadcast. He praised the effectiveness of the bookstore, as well. Sally Prugh reported as AFSC rep that a new publication is available for Friends use entitled Putting Dignity and Rights in the Global Economy. It was felt that monthly meetings might want to consider using it for adult religious education. We also heard a letter of appreciation from the Quaker Earthcare Witness for Kim Carlyle's contribution as clerk of that organization and of Susan's support of his service.

“The planning committee for yearly meeting reported that they plan more singing and that they welcome workshop proposals that should reach Beth Ensign by February 15th, 2005. The cost of yearly meeting was discussed, and the registration may go up to cover the scholarship and sponsoring of visitors, as well as those among us who spend the weekend working. We are reminded that the theme is going to be Challenge of Change -Finding Our Witness. Ron MacDonald reported that he is very excited to have the Ad Hoc RE Committee's input to the work he has coordinated with the Junior Yearly Meeting. He is seeking a paid assistant and various volunteers. He also asked monthly meetings to help spread the word about the opportunity for families to participate in the yearly meeting, with an exciting program available for the children.”

The report was accepted.

In response to a Friend's inquiry, Barbara indicated that the SAYMA Religious Education Committee serves both youth and adults. Another Friend asked about the qualifications needed for helping with registration. Barbara indicated that the need is more for Friends who have experience as registrars than for Friends with computer skills. A Friend spoke of the value derived by young people participating in the SAYMA experience, encouraging parents to bring their children.

House and Grounds:

Committee clerk Jennifer Walker reported for House and Grounds:

“Report from the House and Grounds Committee Asheville Friends Meeting
“Eleventh Month Committee Meeting, 2004 (11/23/04)

“Friends Present: David Clements, Miles Loftis, Satchel Loftis, and Jennifer Walker

“The concern of a more efficient system of house rental, as well as a better way to communicate with existing and potential renters, has led us to improve the Meeting House website. We have designed an additional link from the main page (ashevillefriends.org) that will be for rental inquires, complete with rental availability, rates, and rules. The additional pages on the website will be accessible shortly.”

“On the subject of Meetinghouse rental, it was brought to our attention that in the minutes of the February , 2001 Meeting for Business the current rental rates were approved, as was placing the House and Grounds Committee in the role of discerning which groups receive discounts. We corporately feel that our committee is not led to take on the task of deciding which, if any, groups are deserving of discounts. There is also a sense that our rates are currently so low, and the cost of the use of the building is such that discounts are not needed. However, we bring this issue of rental discounts to the attention of business meeting, with the suggestion that another committee, concurrent with their leadings, take on the task of the discernment and allotment of rental discounts. House and Grounds still oversees the rental and invoicing of renters.

“The interior painting of the downstairs space will begin on December 6, and continue for one week. One Friend suggested that the office should be painted concurrently with the library, and the other Friends present agreed. We will be clearing out the office and library on December 4th, and unpacking on December 18th. The office, library, back hallway and stairwell will be painted. In addition, the painting company (Bionic Man Painting Company) will replace the missing railing on the bottom portion of the stairwell. The total cost for this work is \$2950.

“Home Energy Partners in coming to do an evaluation in regard to the moldy basement, which has contributed to a mold problem throughout the house, especially in the library area. They will do a thorough evaluation after meeting with us (on December 2nd), and then review the results and make recommendations on December 14th. This service costs \$200, half of which is refundable in the form of a \$100 discount on future work performed by Home Energy Partners.

“Items that we wish to clear out from the Meetinghouse Library or office, and not return upon completion of the painting are the library desk, a few pieces of old equipment, and the copier. All of these items have been given away or donated. We would like to see a judicious unpacking on the 18th -uncluttered space is at a premium, and sometimes, we hold onto things long after their usefulness has past. In addition, we would like for Friends to consider who in our Meeting or larger community can use these items, and if it would not be a better use of resources to give things away that blight our meeting space with clutter and dust, trusting that if a need shall arise, the generosity will be returned.

“The concern was raised that with everything removed from the library and office, this would be a great chance to have the floors cleaned. The floors will be cleaned by Kris Volpe of Earth Care Carpet Cleaning during the week of December 12th. He will sweep, mop, spot clean, mist clean, scrub, buff, and semi polish with floor butter. This is a cleaning process, not a refinishing process, which will be needed in the near future. Earth Care Carpet Cleaning uses environmental safe, non-toxic cleaners, and cleaning these rooms will cost about \$90.

“Other concerns include the recurring noise problem in the Meeting Room while First Day School is going on, and looking at ways to have a more intelligent plan for maintaining a reserve fund for the Meeting House. For the former, we are looking into a type of insulation that would be installed in the Meeting Room ceiling, above the ceiling tiles, and for the latter, we are brainstorming ways to being laying out a reserve fund plan.

“Friends are encouraged to express ideas, concerns, and questions about the Meeting House and Grounds by either writing a note and placing it in the Meeting House folder in the foyer, or e-mailing jennifer@substratedesign.com. More importantly, the House and Grounds Committee seeks, in good old Quaker fashion, to discern the sense of the Meeting and the best course of action to maintain our worship, so participation in the committee meetings where that work is done is welcomed and encouraged. We meet at 7 p.m. on the fourth Tuesday of every month. We also have workdays beginning at 9 a.m. on the first Saturday of every month.”

Friends were informed that Jennifer is now the Meetinghouse Coordinator, responsible for scheduling the use of the Meetinghouse by Friends, committees, and outside groups. Friends were gratified to hear that Dudley Wilson, a former long-time member and tireless House and Grounds committee member, had provided consultation to the committee. A Friend expressed gratitude that the committee had procured a cleaning company that uses non-toxic cleaning chemicals. Another Friend offered to take the copy machine rather than having it donated or ending up in the landfill.

The report was accepted with thanks for the House and Ground Committee’s work.

Religious Education:

Clerk Barbara Esther reported for the committee. She reported that the committee is developing two documents to inform Friends about RE programs and policy. First is a trifold pamphlet that will provide information on the First Day School program and child care. Second is a description of the Meetings policies on appropriate methods of discipline.

Barbara reminded Friends of the “secret pals” activity we enjoyed last Winter, and invited Friends to join in again this year.

Participating adults are paired with a child and each pair gives inexpensive or no-cost tokens of affection to one another, such as drawings, poems, or craft items. Around the second week of February, the names of the “secret pals” are revealed.

Friends heard from the committee of a favorite story of our beloved Pat Lyon. Each year, her two sons would bake cookies to give away to elderly folks who might not be able to bake for themselves any more. To commemorate this practice, RE invites Friends to join in a “First Annual Pat Lyon Memorial Bake-Off” on 12/18, concurrent with the reshelving of the books in the Library. The cookies will be given to elderly members of our community.

As of the beginning of this month, our Meeting’s Youth Group is without a leader. Help is also needed in the Pre-K and Kindergarten areas. The RE Committee seeks Friends who are led to serve in these capacities.

Barbara reminded Friends that Carly Reese, our child care provider, is graduating from college and would be moving on after serving our community for two years, and asked whether Friends thought it appropriate to offer her a bonus as a parting gift, since we were already considering raising her salary. A Friend pointed out that there is a surplus of funds in the RE budget and asked whether such a bonus could simply be taken from their budget without further approval from the community. A member of Finance pointed out that the Child Care budget does not have a surplus, and Friends united with joy in supporting RE’s suggestion.

Friends approved a bonus for Carly Reese in the amount of \$100 and approved accepting donations to the Meeting earmarked for Carly.

Friends approved a minute of appreciation to Carly Reese for her service to our community as our child care person for the past two years.

The report of Religious Education Committee was accepted.

Traveling Minute for Jennifer Walker:

Friends learned that Jennifer Walker has been nominated by SAYMA to attend the 2005 World gathering of Young Friends at Lancaster University in England. Jennifer requested that Meeting provide her with a Traveling Minute. Friends spoke to their sense of Jennifer’s contributions to our community and of her good example as an upstanding member of the Meeting. Friends were reminded that Lauren Mitchell served on the Planning Committee for the Gathering, and the Meeting united in its support for Jennifer’s participation. A friend pointed out that this is the first World Gathering of Youth in fifty years or more.

After some discussion, Friends united on Evan Richardson and Jennifer Walker leaving the Business Meeting for a few minutes to fashion an appropriate Minute. Upon their return, the following Traveling Minute was approved:

Asheville Friends Meeting recommends Jennifer Walker as she travels to attend the 2005 World Gathering of Young Friends. She is an active and well respected member of our meeting. She has given much of herself to our community, offering a quiet yet steady presence and clear example of living out of a grounding in Spirit. We support her attendance and look forward to the many ways this opportunity will enrich both Jennifer and our Meeting.

Friends were also informed that Jennifer has been nominated to serve on the board of the Right Sharing of World Resources, a Quaker organization that our Meeting supports.

Clerk of 1st Month 2005 Business Meeting:

Barbara Esther offered that she would serve as clerk of First Month 2005 Business Meeting if no one else did, and weather permitting. A Friend asked if we would be comfortable waiting on Spirit to open a Way for another Friend. A Friend spoke of the tension between the security of knowing who would serve and the value of allowing a process of discernment. Friends were reminded of the sense of continuity and consistency derived from having a clerk serving the regular two-year term. Another Friend reminded us that Meeting had empowered Ministry and Counsel to select an interim clerk without further approval from the Meeting. A Friend pointed out the value of the next month’s clerk being present at the previous month’s business meeting.

A Friend asked if Rain would consider clerking again. Other Friends acknowledged that her clerking had been skillful and Spirit-led. Friends noted that those in attendance had supported Rain well by showing respect, maintaining decorum, and speaking out of leading rather than from a place of persuasion. Rain agreed to clerk again if her work schedule allowed it.

A Friend suggested that we had been muddling along well despite not having a clerk, and asked whether we should consider abolishing the position, just as we had abolished the position of Treasurer.

The clerk of Nominating Committee offered that Nominating could take on a discernment process to identify Friends to serve in the months subsequent to First Month 2005. Clerk of Nominating invited any interested Friends to attend the committee meeting and experience and contribute to their process.

Friends were not ready to unite on the choice for First Month, so the meeting entered a period of worship sharing. Out of this worship, Friends recognized that there are leaders in our community whose skills are not being fully realized, that our goal as a community is to be “bound in love and bound in knowing each other”, and that being a Meeting without a clerk is an opportunity as well as a challenge.

A Friend reminded us that reaching a sense of the Meeting is not the same as reaching consensus, it is possible to have a sense of the Meeting even though not everyone agrees.

Friends were reminded that we will hold a mini-retreat on 1/29/05 around the State of the Meeting and developing clerking and leadership skills. It was suggested that while this retreat is primarily for the benefit of committee clerks, it should be open to any and all Friends.

Friends approved Rain Newcomb to clerk the First Month 2005 Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business. Friends approved that Barbara Esther will clerk the First Month 2005 meeting if needed.

Individual Concerns:

Lynnora Bierce reminded the community that she was no longer able to produce the Meeting newsletter and asked to be released as Editor.

Phil Neal reminded Friends that our Meeting had minuted its opposition to consumption of any alcoholic beverages on the premises.

David Clements asked that minutes of previous business meetings be posted on the Meeting website as soon as possible and that links be sent to all Friends.

Evan Richardson reminded Friends to please reserve the handicap parking spaces for our handicapped attenders.

Friends united in a concern that our shared meal provider was not able to stay long enough to enjoy the sharing of the meal provided.

Close of Meeting:

Meeting ended at 2:15 p.m. with a brief period of worship followed by a shared meal and fellowship.