

Meeting for Worship for the Conduct of Business
Asheville Friends Meeting
3/13/2005

Meeting began at 11:50 a.m. Thirteen Friends were in attendance: Alice Brown, David Clements, Barbara Esther, George Gjelfriend, Kristi Gjelfriend, Steve Houseworth, Steve Livingston (recording clerk), Satchel Loftis, Phil Neal, Ellen Oldham, Rain Newcomb, Jennifer Walker (clerk), and Robin Wells.

News of Ourselves:

David Clements shared that Lila Richardson is not comfortable with her long, curly hair and has requested that her parents have it cut. He asked that Friends hold her family in the Light as they wrestle with this difficult decision.

Jennifer Walker is looking forward to attending her first meeting of Right Sharing of World Resources (RSWR) since being named to the Board. She hopes to share some of her experiences with Friends when she returns.

Agenda:

Friends approved the agenda as presented by the clerk.

Approval of Minutes:

A Friend pointed out that the 2nd Month minutes were not clear on who would be clerking upcoming meetings for business and asked that the minutes reflect that Jennifer Walker would be clerking this month.

Friends approved the minutes of 2nd month 2005 with the notation that Jennifer Walker would clerk the 3rd month Meeting for Business.

House and Grounds:

Satchel Loftis read a written report:

“Friends present: Kristi Gjelfriend, Jennifer Walker, and John Wykle.

“The committee came to consensus on postponing any large expenditures or improvements to the house for a period of two years. We feel that we are empowered as a committee to make decisions relating to the maintenance and general betterment of the Meeting House and Grounds, but do not feel that we can move ahead with large changes that would significantly alter either the structure of the meetinghouse or its property value without gaining consensus from the Meeting.

“During the two year period, we will be presenting forums and threshing sessions regarding three main issues – Environmental Health, Building Codes and Regulations, and Financial Considerations. Other committees have expressed interest in one or more of these concerns, and will be joining us in bringing these issues to the Meeting community.

“Activities that will continue throughout the two year period are those that are required for normal Meeting function. These include, but are not limited to: stabilizing the back deck and stairs, laying plastic in the basement, painting the meeting room, foyer, kitchen, and other areas as needed, maintaining the heating systems, monitoring the mold and humidity, and cleaning the carpets on a regular basis.

“The second item addressed was a concern about the return of the mold with the onset of spring. We plan to monitor the issue closely – mainly by the purchase of small humidistats to record the relative humidity of several key areas in the meetinghouse. In addition to basement improvements, we will ozonate the house to destroy any mold, mildew, or bacteria currently present.

“The last item addressed concerns the April workday, to be held on Saturday, April 2nd. We are asking Friends to participate by arriving at 9 a.m. During this workday we will be undertaking the task of cleaning the basement and laying plastic on the dirt floor. We also will clean out the upstairs rooms –

Friends who may not be able to participate in basement activities are encouraged to undertake this task. Friends are reminded that members of House and Grounds serve the community by their committee work, but it takes the strength of the entire community to keep the building in working order.”

Friends accepted the report of House and Grounds.

Ministry and Counsel:

George Gjelfriend read a written report:

“Ministry and Counsel met on February 15, 2005. Margaret Farmer, Rusty Maynard, George Gjelfriend and Evan Richardson were present.

“As a committee, we feel led to regularly hold the meeting in the light. We also regularly hold a space for our meeting for worship and our meeting for worship with attention to business. We encourage and welcome any friends who may be led to join us in this “work of the meeting” to do so.

“We considered a request that has come from the Earlham School of Religion to share with them our address list. They are in the process of developing education opportunities for the wider Quaker community and want to build their contact base among friends. We are supportive of this work, but feel it is in the best interest of the community to not respond with sharing our address list with Earlham. We feel that doing so would violate an inherent trust that has been given to us as Friends share with us their personal contact information. Instead, we would like Friends to be aware of the opportunity to share their own contact information with Earlham and thus, become part of a community of Friends who will receive notices of upcoming offering. These Friends are encouraged to also share such notices with the meeting as additional support of the work Earlham is taking on in support of the wider Quaker community. In consideration of the general topic of whether Friends may be empowered by the community to share with outside organizations, Quaker and non-quaker, our AFM mailing list, we offer the following minute for approval:

“Asheville Friends Meeting honors the trust individuals have given our community as we build for ourselves our directory and mailing list(s). We ask that friends keep this information for private use and explicitly do not share it with any outside organizations.

“The committee clerk’s meeting that was postponed from January 29 due to inclement weather, has been rescheduled for Saturday, April 23 from 10 am - 2 pm at the meetinghouse. A new sign-up list will be placed in the foyer for friends to indicate their interest and availability for attending. Friends are asked to bring a brown bag lunch. Childcare will be provided. The meeting is open to any individual in the meeting. All committees are asked to send a representative, including their clerk, should s/he be available.

“Ministry and Counsel will host a forum for the purpose of exploring the meaning of membership among individuals in our community on Sunday, April 17. More information about the forum will be forthcoming.

“Ministry and Counsel has considered the request regarding photos taken by Rivka Maher on behalf of the meeting. We remind ourselves that these photos are part of an unfinished project initiated by the then, Ministry and Oversight. The original intent of the project was to capture as broad a selection of our community as possible and display the photos as a way for us to get to know each other. Given the fact that these photos represent just a small number in our present community, we feel it is best not to hang them up in the meetinghouse, but to offer them to the individuals pictured in them for their own personal use. We will actually dismantle the frames that were brought for the community-wide purpose and offer them to Habitat for Humanity as a contribution.

“Ministry and Counsel has asked Rusty Maynard and Steve Livingston to complete the annual SAYMA census questionnaire using information gathered as part of their respective work on the directory and newsletter.

“Ministry and Counsel has put in motion a process for exploring together the State of our Society. We expect that we will have a first reading of a draft at our meeting for business in April, with a second reading in May, in time for submission to SAYMA for our yearly meeting gathering in June.

“Ministry and Counsel has considered the gravity of Eli Kobbe’s food allergies and the difficulty we face as a community in ensuring Eli’s safety during our times of shared fellowship and community meals. Because of both the severity of the allergies and the fact that Eli is only 3 years old, we ask that friends refrain from bringing any food for general consumption or sharing which contains peanuts, nuts or seeds of any form. While we recognize that this restriction may seem severe, we feel it is an important one to ensure the safety of Eli and the entire community. We also ask that adults in the community make themselves familiar with Eli and his mother, Lee so that we can help her ensure his safety.”

A Friend recalled that in the past, the Meeting sometimes accepted items from Quaker organizations and redistributed them through our mailing list. Friends noted that the suggested minute did not prohibit this practice.

Friends approved the minute regarding privacy of our Meeting's contact lists as written.

Friends were not easy with the severity of the restrictions on foods offerings advised by Ministry and Counsel. There was a sense that less sweeping prohibitions might prove more practicable once we know more about Eli's specific allergies, his reactions, and possible interventions. There was concern that as these restrictions would likely affect the quality of our shared meals, it was important to find a balance between the Meeting's responsibility for Eli's safety and that of the mother and child. In response to an inquiry, George Gjelfriend reported from his interview of Lee that she did not expect the Meeting to be responsible for constant supervision of her child.

It was clear to Friends that because of the immediate and fatal danger posed by peanut products, we would need to prohibit these items from the Meetinghouse. Friends expressed the importance of all in the community to recognize Eli on sight, and welcomed the opportunity to get to know Lee and her children more. Friends agreed that cooperative and intentional vigilance on Eli's behalf might better serve the community than prohibiting an overly wide range of food products. Part of this vigilance would be knowing how Eli is coping with his condition and how each of us can support him as he acquires skill. Another part would be in educating the whole community, especially Eli's peers, not to offer him food unless they knew it was a “safe” food for him.

George Gjelfriend agreed to investigate more specific information about what foods are “safe” and which are not. A Friend asked whether we might alter the lifestyle of our Meeting to accommodate any given handicap. And, how much should we change?

The clerk sensed that the Meeting was united, and a minute rose up.

Friends approved the following minute concerning safety of foods offered in our Meeting:

Guidelines to protect Friends with severe peanut and other food allergies:

- 1. No peanuts or peanut products may be offered at shared meals.**
- 2. Items containing other nuts or whole seeds will be offered separately from other foods.**
- 3. Friends are asked to label all food offerings as to their ingredients**
- 4. These rules will be announced prior to all shared meals and posted at each entry and in the kitchen.**

Friends accepted the report of Ministry and Counsel.

News of Ursula:

Barbara Esther came into the meeting and announced that Ellen Frerotte had gone to check on Ursula Scott, who was unexpectedly absent from Meeting. She found that Ursula had passed away sometime during the previous night. Grief overcame the Meeting for several minutes, as Friends spontaneously shared their reactions. Friends agreed that the Meeting's further business would be deferred until next month.

Phil Neal, David Clements and Jennifer Walker agreed to serve as a Memorial Committee, and seek another Friend to assist them if needed.

Personal Concerns:

Ellen Oldham described her skills and experience as an office assistant.

The clerk read a note from Evan Richardson concerning Martha Huggins:

“In February, the meeting expressed a desire to be available to Martha Huggins and her brother, Charlie, as they both undergo the process of Martha donating part of her liver to him as a liver transplant. Martha will be leaving the weekend of April 2 and 3 for the surgery, which is scheduled for April 5. She asks that the meeting hold her and her brother in the light all during the day on April 5. Her surgery is scheduled for the morning and his is scheduled for the afternoon.

Martha will remain in Massachusetts for a month following the surgery, as part of a recovery process. She asks that we hold her in the light every day at 12 noon, as we are doing so for Christy Bischoff. In addition, she will be communicating news of her and Charlie's progress to her father, George Oldham. She gives permission to the meeting to send out broadcast email messages regarding their progress and asks that the meeting make arrangements for this to happen in a way that only requires George to send out one email.”

Close of Meeting:

Meeting ended sometime around 1 p.m.