

Meeting for Worship for the Conduct of Business
Asheville Friends Meeting
4/10/2005

18 Friends were in attendance: Alice Brown, Jim Cavener, Karen Cernek, Val Collins, Barbara Esther (recording clerk), Ellen Frerotte, George Gjelfriend, Kristi Gjelfriend, Nancy Kuykendall, Steve Livingston (clerk), Satchel Loftis, Rusty Maynard, Gary Byrne, Philip Neal, Ellen Oldham, Alan Robinson, Eda Smith, and Jennifer Walker.

After a time of silent worship, the clerk, Steve Livingston, welcomed Friends and reviewed the agenda. He then read from the Tao Te Ching chapter 59:

In caring for others and serving heaven,
There is nothing like using restraint.
Restraint begins with giving up one's own ideas.
This depends on virtue gathered in the past.
If there is a good store of virtue, then nothing is impossible.

News of Ourselves:

Friend Martha Huggins is doing well recovering from liver surgery.

Cathy Hewitt will be cared for in a nursing home after a fall and broken bone.

Sarah Jane Thomas is waiting for a seizure-sensing dog to help her avoid falls by predicting seizures.

Letters of support for Sarah Jane's need for the dog can be sent mentioning that she lives alone, has been hurt, is a long time member of our community, along with offers to be personally supportive of Sarah. Sarah is very grateful for our help in this matter. Fund raising may be called for later in the process. (There are still three Cornish hens needing homes from her flock.)

Each noon Friends are reminded to hold Martha and Charlie, Sarah, Christy Bischoff and others of our community in the Light.

Friend Jennifer Walker will be in Athens, Georgia as of August to attend a masters program in Landscape Architecture at the University of Georgia.

Agnita DuPree has been experiencing some pain lately. She and other elder members such as the McLeans are in need of our caring thoughts.

We wish George Gjelfriend a happy birthday!

Approval of Minutes:

Minutes from Third Month meeting for business: in Ministry and Counsel's report Kube is the correct spelling of Wyatt's last name. **With that change the minutes were accepted as printed.**

Meeting Day Structure:

Lindsay Bridges presented the following report:

"Listening Project Proposal"

"The Ad-Hoc Committee on Meeting Day Structure Discernment has reached the conclusion that the issue before the meeting is much larger than one just involving our children and worship. In bringing up the question of the how does or does not our current structure work well for us in supporting/nurturing our lives as Friends, it has come clear to us that there are deep issues present which we feel it would benefit our Meeting to consider. In this light, we believe that there are rich possibilities for growth through a deep inquiry/listening project. Yet, in our committee, we also feel that to truly undertake and carry out a deep inquiry/listening project involving us all would be not only a large task for our committee, but a large undertaking for our whole community.

“Therefore the question arose for our own selves - do we feel committed to a process of deep inquiry/listening within our community? To that, we all agreed that we do wish to see this process go forward if several conditions are in place. One, as a committee, we felt that a key to this work must be to undertake it without preconceived notions of where this process might lead us, without preplanned ideas of what we would like to see happen out of it - other than the strengthening of our Asheville Friends’ community.

“We also felt it vital that the Asheville Friends Meeting does indeed support and wish to undertake this work. To that end, we all agreed that before proceeding further, it was important at this point to bring back to Meeting our vision for a deep inquiry/listening project. And, if support is given to go ahead with this work, then we believe that our committee needs to be enlarged in order to do the work well without making the work so burdensome to a few that there is danger of it being laid down without being seen through.

“Finally we also saw the potential inherent in this kind of undertaking for bringing to light areas that are sensitive, tender, or maybe even painful for our community to work with. Therefore the question arose - why do this? Why would we propose to do this work for ourselves and our community?

“For one committee meeting we sat with just this question. Before proposing to the Meeting any further action, it felt fundamental to us to be clear that such deep questioning was indeed called for. As to why do it, we came to the following:

“Because questioning is part of what we are called to do. We are always called to go deeper. We are always called to look anew at our routines, our patterns, our habits and ask - which are “ways of doing” that are informed by Spirit, and which are habits, either inherited or of convenience, that need shaking up. Through questioning, we open the potential for new ways to live into a deeper sense of life nourished by the Light.

“We are not the same community we were ten years ago. It makes good sense to take some time to learn who we are now and ask what ways our meeting can more deeply nourish our individual lives, our lives shared in communion together and our lives shared in communion with the larger world around us.

“There is no question that we are a community that hungers for something more. That sense arises every time we do question deeply together. Consider our retreats. Some of us hunger for a more integrated worship for all of our multi-generations. Some of us hunger for greater community fellowship. Some of us hunger for the meeting to be a greater base of support for activism in this world, and some of us hunger for the meeting to be a greater base of support for deeper spiritual searchings.

“Yet even with the level of hunger, the idea of change, of questioning, of questing, can be hard - even scary. It takes patience, time and energy to question deeply. In the midst of stressful lives lived out in a stressful world, finding that patience, time and energy to do deep questioning is not always easy.

“And yet, if we are to find a way to feed that hunger for something more, then these are questions we believe crucial for us as a community to ask of ourselves, and then to listen together to our responses. The Quaker tradition is to open to a deep inward communion of Spirit that naturally gives rise to an outward expression in this world. To honor our tradition means taking the time to care for our foundational time together. Perhaps, if we can provide ourselves enough spaciousness to sit deeply with the questions, we may even find that *the process itself is profoundly mutually transformative for all of us involved in this questing together.*

“To that end, we propose using the model called the Listening Project in order to consider deeply what nourishes our lives together in our Friends community, what aspects of our current structure support that nourishing and what aspects do not. We also wish to consider possibilities for change. This model was originally developed by the Asheville Friends Meeting and is now used extensively in other communities.

“The project would involve developing a questionnaire, training a group of interviewers, carrying out the interviews within our community, carefully considering the collected information, and then seeing what direction it takes us. We anticipate needing to collect at least 60 interviews and needing approximately 12-15 interviewers to do so. Interviewers would agree to participate in a 1-2 day training. We also see the need for a larger core committee to guide the process. For this, we would like a committee of six, thereby adding 2 additional people to our group of 4. We anticipate this whole process taking a minimum of 6 months - but more likely taking up to a year.

“We realize that this is extensive time involved in just questioning, listening before moving to any fixes. We suggest that intentionally. We feel that in the past we have at times tried to move straight into fixing problems without allowing proper seasoning of possibilities. We believe that opening a spaciousness around a deep consideration of the issues has the possibility for moving us in directions unforeseen.

“We also are aware that to some, this may feel like we are suggesting something too much akin to plain-old 'navel-gazing'. If the process does not move us forward - this would be a justified complaint. We are much aware of a need to find a balance between 'quick fixing' and 'navel-gazing' - a listening that moves us forward in our journey together.

“At this time, we would like to propose a threshing session on May 29th at the rise of Meeting in order to allow our full community time and opportunity to consider the possible undertaking of such a Listening Project. Our committee members are Lindsay Bridges, George Gjelfriend, Evan Richardson and Jennifer Walker. All of us would appreciate and are open for any thoughts or questions you have about this proposal between now and that time.”

Ad Hoc Committee on Meeting Day Structure proposed a deep inquiry listening project, but wants to have a threshing session on May 29th before proceeding. Friends agreed to have this threshing.

Those interested in the positions mentioned in the report may speak directly to Lindsay Bridges. Friends accepted the report with thanks for the thoughtful and considered work of the ad hoc committee.

Finance:

Val Collins and Satchel Loftis reported for the Finance Committee.

“The Finance Committee is prepared to present the 2005 budget. A reserves line has been added to the Meeting’s Assets page. Satchel Loftis will lead discussion of the proposed budget.

“Recommendations regarding the 2005 budget to the Meeting include: 1) putting someone in charge of literature for visitors 2) identifying someone to be in charge of the yard sale, and 3) identifying a Retreat committee to oversee the Retreat line.

“In November of last year, the Finance Committee held a forum to discuss five queries that were generated by the Meeting. Friends who attended the Meeting suggested that the Finance Committee write a letter to Friends asking them to consider their financial commitment for the year. This will allow the Finance Committee to better predict income for the year’s general operating budget. Val Collins, Evan Richardson, and Ursula Scott wrote the letter. Ursula Scott submitted her commitment before her death last month. The Finance Committee is prepared to send the mailing, and seeks Meeting’s approval to proceed.

“David Clements has drafted a policy to guide the Meeting’s payments to individuals and will present this policy.

They presented the proposed budget for 2005, reporting that the meeting income is primarily Friends’ contributions. This year’s budget seeks to raise about 25 % more in contributions than last year. Satchel

intends to keep us abreast of our level of contributions on a quarterly basis so that we can meet the budget. The report for this quarter will be included in the minutes although it was not ready for us to see during the meeting today. Friends are invited to review their personal contributions as a response to the quarterly reports.

The Christmas party amount was reduced from \$200 to \$50 for the December 2005 gathering. Two other items, the Youth Internship and the Scholarship Fund Transfer, will be withdrawn from the budget until such time as a person comes forward to administer the programs. The cost of a hired book-keeper is reflected in this year's budget (\$1,200).

Friends approved the budget with those changes.

Valerie Collins reminds us that budget items such as the yard sale and the purchase of literature for visitors need stewardship. A letter to individual Friends inviting commitment in the area of finances, will be sent out from the finance committee.

One Friend recalled an accounting of the levels of contribution within our meeting. This might be a useful way of our understanding the contributions made to the meeting in a future letter or as part of the quarterly reports this year. Friends approved.

Guidelines for reimbursement for meeting expenses will be published in the e-news for further consideration in Fifth Month.

Friends accepted the report of Finance Committee.

Memorial for Ursula Scott:

Jennifer Walker reported for the memorial committee for Ursula Scott that a memorial will be held on May 8th at the Unitarian Church in accordance with and planned by her family. We are thankful for the worship held on the first First Day following her death here in our meetinghouse and will join the family-planned memorial on May 8th but will not hold an additional memorial. Friends approved.

Nominating:

Karen Cernek, reporting for the Nominating Committee, requested that the Naming Committee meet to find one or two additional members for the Nominating Committee.

[committee report not yet available will be inserted asap – ed.]

The nominations for Pastoral Care Committee were approved as read. Katherine Caldwell was approved to serve on the Peace and Earth Committee.

[Ellen Frerotte, Karen Cernek, Marcia Master, and John Wykle were the Friends nominated for Pastoral Care – ed.]

Music Committee will be laid down as a stand alone committee. Spiritual Enrichment Committee will continue the work of music as part of our spiritual life. Friends approved.

The Nominating Committee suggested that terms be ended in May or August rather than all in May to begin service in June. Friends approved.

Friends approved the formation of an ad hoc committee to research the idea of our having a paid administrative assistant who would provide consistency among committees.

Cost, tasks and service to various committees will be part of their task. If nothing else, we might be reminded by this process of the tasks which we share. Can we take on the tasks ourselves or do we need to pay for help? This request may reflect changes in our society as well as it may mesh with some of the concerns facing the meeting. Jennifer Walker reported that, as an example, the work of scheduling the use of the meetinghouse is not being adequately handled because no one came forward to take on the work which she offered to do for only one month. Double-booking, lack of good billing

practice and the loss of some groups is a result of there not being anyone in the position of overseeing the calendar.

Friends approved the release of Jennifer Walker from the responsibility of seeing to the scheduling of the meetinghouse use. Satchel Loftis will from now until three months hence, receive calls regarding scheduling as well as handle the billing. At a later date, the job of scheduling can be passed to Ellen Frerotte while he continues the bookkeeping aspect of meetinghouse use.

Friends accepted the report of the Nominating Committee.

SAYMA Representative Meeting:

Barbara Esther reported on the Representative Meeting of SAYMA (Southern Appalachian Yearly Meeting and Association held on April 2, 2005 at West Knoxville Meetinghouse.

“Due to the change in site for this year’s yearly meeting Bob Welsh has stepped in to work with the Warren Wilson staff to make the on-site arrangements. Bob cannot be present for the yearly meeting, however, and doesn’t want to continue in the job next year. He would like to have an Asheville Friend work with him in the next two months, as training, serve during the yearly meeting this June, and do the entire job next year. Bob has done the job for a number of years, so he knows it well. He says that the staff at the college is very good to work with and know the needs of the yearly meeting well, making the arrangements much easier. The job would need to begin right away. Throughout the coming year, the arrangements person would serve on the planning committee and may want to attend representative meetings for that purpose, as the planning committee meets concurrently.

“The SAYMA treasurer, David Cisel, reported that funds are short at the moment since some meetings have not paid final assessments due. As a result, the yearly meeting has not been able to pay the budgeted contributions to wider Quaker organizations. If we have not yet made our assessment payment, it would be appreciated. In addition, the yearly meeting is changing its fiscal year to October through September from June to May. This means that we have a longer year than usual for which to budget. The treasurer also reported that the office expenses for duplication were quite high. It will help if we all follow some guidelines to save on copying expenses. Two suggestions were made to help in this respect: to send any reports that will be made as attachments (in rich text format) rather in the body of an e-mail, and to save working copies of documents that will be part of the business meeting, such as the Faith and Practice proposed revisions, and take them along to yearly meeting for use during the sessions. Any reports should be sent to the clerk, recording clerk and the administrative assistant ahead of time. The state of the meeting report can be sent in this way, with only three hard copies taken to the yearly meeting sessions if an e-mail is not sent. Additionally, if there are two representatives to a wider Quaker organization, only one report needs to be submitted.”

“The clerk of Finance Committee, Chris Berg, reported that a decision was made to ask for pre-clearness of costs that our representatives know about. At this time the cost of sending our wider Quaker organization representatives is not being covered by submissions of assessments. Costs for SAYF have also been higher than budgeted. He also noted that the committee will operate by not increasing cost in one area of the budget without reducing it in another in order to keep the assessment level at its current \$55. He suggested that meetings explore the possibility of having a monthly bank draft that would be sent to the treasurer automatically. This would keep the yearly meeting solvent throughout the year. Chris explained the interesting process of getting liability insurance in Virginia when we have no meetings in that state. Our Administrative Assistant lives in Abingdon, Virginia. As the yearly meeting explores obtaining 501c3 (nonprofit) status Chris would like to have advice from anyone who has had experience in this process.

“The clerk, Kristi Estes, of Memphis Meeting, needs to have any agenda items in this quarter that should be on the June business agenda. Spontaneous or on-the-spot items may not be accommodated.

“Friends are invited to join in a threshing session to discuss the idea of a name change for the yearly meeting. It will be held on Saturday evening, not Friday, as printed.

“Some discussion took place regarding the distribution of minutes from the yearly meeting sessions. Some Friends thought that any attender might want a copy. At present, two copies per meeting are sent out. A Friend said that it would be most important to have the librarian of each meeting receive a copy of minutes so that they would be available for all. A set of minutes runs 112 sides, and costs \$8.00. Some Friends thought that attenders could be informed of the cost involved with the option to receive the minutes and the opportunity to pay the cost. It was decided that the clerk would have a sign-up sheet and a flyer for the registration table to inform Friends of how to get minutes and the cost, if paper copy. E-copies may be missing items that were not sent electronically as attachments.

“Turtle McDermot reported for the Ministry and Nurture Committee that Cleveland Worship Group is no longer a Quaker group, having affiliated with a local protestant church. She also reported that the committee wants to continue formulating the queries for yearly meeting worship-sharing groups, but would like to have the planning committee resume the coordination of the leaders for the groups. This year Kim Carlyle will coordinate the worship-sharing groups. The Gwinnett Worship Group under the care of Atlanta MM is seeking preparative meeting status under SAYMA’s guidance.

“Marmon Thompson of Celo Meeting brought a request that SAYMA reinstate the contribution to RSVP (Rural Southern Voice for Peace) at a level of \$200. The main work of RSVP is peace building through listening projects. Marmon is willing to be the contact person for SAYMA, keeping us informed as to their activities. We will invite Herb Walters to share news of the current projects of RSVP for about ten minutes at yearly meeting.

“Sharon Annis reported for the Ad Hoc Committee on the relationship between worship groups and monthly meetings that they will endeavor to draft guidelines instead of bouncing the ideas from one committee to another. One Friend felt that the committee should take all the time necessary to do so. If it needs more time, the Faith and Practice Revision Committee will go on with its work, allowing for a later insert regarding the formation of worship groups. Listening and face-to-face visitation were recommended.

“Sharon Annis, clerk of the Nominating Committee, reported that the following positions are open for Friends to fill: Assistant Clerk, Personnel Clerk (these two can be the same person or two different people), members of the Peace and Social Concerns Network, Local Arrangements person for SAYMA, and Faith and Practice Revisions Committee (two). Sharon explained the mission of the nominating committee’s work as developing leadership and discerning gifts. She hopes that meeting nominating committees will alert the yearly meeting committee of Friends who might serve there.

“Kathleen Malvournin reported for the SAYF Steering Committee that an adult process monitor will be present at future SAYF business meetings. She also reported that after one teen had a baby the community had to decide on guidelines for participation with young children. It was decided that any children present at retreats will be under the care of the parent(s) and will not be allowed to attend once they are ambulatory up to the time they are old enough to join SAYF. Those attending with children will follow the arrangements made by local planning committees regarding sleeping place. Kathleen reminded us that the Steering Committee for SAYF really needs a representative from each meeting that sends teens. In addition, Friendly Adult Presences and Drivers are always needed (FAPs and FADs). She asked that Friends hold Jeremiah Gold-Hopton in the Light as he recovers from a recent hospitalization.

“Ron MacDonald, coordinator for Junior Yearly Meeting, encouraged us to send families with children under 12 to participate in the JYM program and to consider volunteering during yearly meeting.

“Gary Briggs reported for FLGBTQC (Friends for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Concerns). He attended the annual meeting held at Ghost Ranch in New Mexico. He reported that one

concern brought up was that FGC's gathering is being held in Virginia, a state that has passed anti-gay legislation. The couples attending the gathering are advised to take necessary paperwork with them regarding custodial care and so on. Next year's meeting is scheduled to be in Michigan.

"Friends will meet again at Warren Wilson College this June and again in 2006. For the future we are looking at Berea and Hiwassee Colleges.

"Friends accepted the report of the SAYMA Representative Meeting.

Mailings:

Phil Neal requested that mail be accepted at the Friends Meetinghouse for the Friends Committee on Outworld Relations. Phil feels it would be preferable to having this mail go to his residence at Highland Farms. **Friends approved with the understanding that mail received here for other groups will be considered at another time. Generally, we only wish to receive mail regarding Friends' activities.**

Individual Concerns:

Ellen Frerotte will consider filling the need for a person to order literature for visitors and give thought to the manner of its distribution.

Changes and additions to materials or furnishings in the foyer should be done with care. Alice Brown has done substantial work to keep the foyer looking neat and welcoming. We hope Friends will consult her before making changes, empower her to continue her good work and hope that she will call upon us for help when needed.

We are reminded that recycling is on the back porch off the kitchen.

A Friend expressed concern that so few of us are present to consider important matters to the community. Only thirteen Friends remained at the conclusion of our meeting.

Close of Meeting:

The meeting ended at 2:10 p.m. with a period of silent worship in gratitude for our time together to do some of the work of our community.