

Minutes
Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business
Eleventh Day, Ninth Month, 2005

Worship—Meeting for worship with attention to business was called at 11:45 AM.

In attendance: (First time attenders to Business Meeting are noted with a (1).)
Ellen Frerotte, Evan Richardson, Joy Gossett, Phil Neal, Alice Brown, Jim Cavener, Alan Robinson, David Clements, Adrienne Weir (1), Paola Villatoro-Weir (1), George Gjelfriend, Steve Houseworth, Margaret Normile, Kristi Gjelfriend, Rusty Maynard, Barbara Esther, Steve Livingston/Clerk, Lynnora Bierce/Recording Clerk.

The clerk began the meeting by reading the following prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi:

Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace;
where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
and where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master,
grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;
to be understood, as to understand;
to be loved, as to love;
for it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Introductions—the clerk gave instruction for Business Meeting, and introduced his two-year term of Clerk.

Agenda was approved.

News of Ourselves—no news came forward.

Approval of June Minutes—6th month, two reports are missing—nominating committee report, and SAYMA epistle—**approved waiting until the reports are submitted.**

Approval of August Minutes—8th month, Evan R. mentioned the appreciation of the literal use of “G*D” in the minutes.

A Friend had a concern that the Bookkeepers report was not included in the minutes and asked for them to be added.

LGBTQ—Omission of Alice Brown, and omission of letter and concern in the minutes from Personal Concerns.

The Clerk suggested reading the letter, and did so:

Dear Asheville Friends,

[We were] moved and inspired to read of the experience of Friends General Conference Central Committee, which recently approved the following minute:

Minute on Our Experience of and with
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Friends

Approved by the Central Committee of Friends General Conference
Tenth Month 22, 2004

Our experience has been that spiritual gifts are not distributed with regard to sexual orientation or gender identity. Our experience has been that our Gatherings and Central Committee work have been immeasurably enriched over the years by the full participation and Spirit-guided leadership of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and queer Friends. We will never go back to silencing those voices or suppressing those gifts. Our experience confirms that we are all equal before God, as God made us, and we feel blessed to be engaged in the work of FGC together.

Similarly, SAYMA in its recent Yearly Meeting considered and approved a similar minute:

SAYMA's experience has been that spiritual gifts are not distributed with regard to sexual orientation or gender identity. Our experience has been that our work with SAYMA has been immeasurably enriched over the years by the full participation and Spirit-guided leadership of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and queer Friends. We will never go back to silencing those voices or suppressing those gifts. Our experience confirms that we are all equal before God, as God made us, and we feel blessed to be engaged in the work of SAYMA together.

We call on ourselves as individuals and in our monthly meetings to take this minute in our hearts and take action as we are led.

[We] encourage Asheville Friends to prayerfully consider these statements, and to minute in Meeting for Business our unity with each of these.

In Friendship,
David [and Alice]

—**Approved the addition the report.**
—**Amend report, Approved**
—**8th month M4B Minutes—Approved**

Minute Book

A Friend commented that no paper copies of minutes exist, all electronic... does this serve our community?

A Friend offered that an addition of Bookkeeper's report be included for the membership via email.

A Friend added that we need to follow old ways of keeping track of minutes on paper in a book to keep our business meeting in order.

Clearness Committee Reports for Membership
Associate Membership for Stephanie Gosset

—**Approved**

Margaret Normile—read by Evan Richardson

Margaret Normile, Alice Brown, Nancy Kuykendall, Susan Mitchell and Evan Richardson met on May 31st at Alice's home to consider Margaret's request for membership in Asheville Friends Meeting and the Religious Society of Friends. It was an honor to be present to hear Margaret share her spiritual journey and how she has been led to Friends. Our committee found no barriers to membership for Margaret. Instead, we found in Margaret a Friend desiring to deepen her connection and commitment to her own spiritual life as well as to our meeting community and the Society of Friends. We welcome her with open arms and recommend her for membership.

—**Approved**

Sandwich Sunday—Welcome for Ellen Frerotte and Margaret Normile —**Approved**

Clerk suggested that other folks had expressed interest in membership.

David asked if these names could be announced. It was suggested to send this request to Ministry and Council.

Ad Hoc Committee for First Day Structure report—Barbara Ester

First Day Structure Committee

September 11, 2005

The committee met on September 7, 2005, to reflect on the experience of the three worship sharing opportunities held this summer. We sense that Asheville Friends Meeting wants to set a time to meet for worship as a whole community and set a separate time for religious education of various ages to encourage spiritual awareness and growth as a community of Friends. We feel that this would help to establish right relationship with those who work with the children of the meeting and allow the children and youth opportunities to participate in meeting for worship as they are able or interested in Quaker worship. We looked at one alternative to our present schedule as follows:

Non-Business Meeting

9:40 Singing

10 Community RE classes/speaker

10:45 Break

11 Worship (Childcare provided)

12 Sharing/Announcements

(Sandwiches on 4th Sunday)

Business Meeting

9:40 Singing

10 Meeting for Worship for Business

10:45 Break

11 Worship (Childcare provided)

12 Brief sharing

Sandwiches

1 Meeting for Worship for Business

(Childcare provided)

This change would disrupt our present practice very little in terms of total time at meeting and arrival time for the first day activity. It retains singing but leaves a quiet room to settle into silent worship after the 10:45 break. It leaves the meeting community free to socialize, chat, get acquainted after worship without the rush to reconvene for a forum.

If we change our schedule

We don't know how many children will need child care during worship and therefore how many caregivers will need to be hired, or volunteers will be needed.

We wonder whether some families care enough about religious education to bring their families for

both hours.

We wonder whether families that drop out of RE classes will begin to miss it and/or what to participate in the adult RE opportunities.

We don't know whether it would be a mistake to change our schedule, be if we do not try a change, we won't know what effect it may have.

We wonder whether a trial of less than a year would be sufficient to really adjust and discover the differences.

We ask Friends to sit with this information prayerfully and be prepared to discuss and make a decision at a later date. The committee intends to meet about on September 23rd. We welcome thoughtful comments and ideas that we can consider at that time.

—Report was accepted

A Friend said we may be expanding out of this room and be creative about using our meetinghouse space.

A Friend suggested that Hard copies be made available, (as per the committee's intention.)

A Friend suggested that the report will be made available in (these) minutes electronically, and in the announcements/separate email, as well as being listed in e-calendar.

A Friend asked for us to consider the singing component of the schedule more flexibility... and other considerations about the shifts of time, and hopes that the schedule will not be written in stone.

Clerk—encouraged Friends to consider this report and to address the committee directly about their person concerns.

A Friend thanked the Ad Hoc committee for their work.

Friends accepted the Ad Hoc Committee report with gratitude, and offered this minute: Friends expressed gratitude for the diligent work of the Ad Hoc Committee to examine First Day Structure in that they included the collective voice of the community.

—Approved

LGBTQ Minute of Acceptance and Appreciation—Ellen Froette

Report from the Ad Hoc committee to consider communications from FGC and SAYMA regarding “Our Experience of and with Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Friends.”

On 8/31/05, the ad hoc committee met to consider the letter sent to our meeting by the Central Committee of Friends General Conference and the minute approved recently by SAYMA. Evan Richardson, Ellen Frerotte, and David Clements were present. George Gjelfriend, Willie Kaylor, and Peter Buck contributed in conversations but were unable to be present.

The minute approved by the FGC Central Committee on tenth month 22, 2004 reads as follows:

Our experience has been that spiritual gifts are not distributed with regard to sexual orientation or gender identity. Our experience has been that our Gatherings and Central Committee work have been immeasurably enriched over the years by the full participation and Spirit-guided leadership of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and queer Friends. We will never go back to silencing those voices or suppressing those gifts. Our experience confirms that we are all equal before God, as God made us, and we feel blessed to be engaged in the work of FGC together.

The minute approved by SAYMA at the 2005 Yearly Meeting reads as follows:

SAYMA's experience has been that spiritual gifts are not distributed with regard to sexual orientation

or gender identity. Our experience has been that our work with SAYMA has been immeasurably enriched over the years by the full participation and Spirit-guided leadership of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and queer Friends. We will never go back to silencing those voices or suppressing those gifts. Our experience confirms that we are all equal before God, as God made us, and we feel blessed to be engaged in the work of SAYMA together. We call on ourselves as individuals and in our monthly meetings to take this minute in our hearts and take action as we are led.

We recommend that Asheville Friends Meeting unite with the minutes approved by the FGC Central Committee and SAYMA. To unite with the minutes means that we see that of God in what was said and that it speaks to our condition.

Furthermore, we have been invited by the FGC Central Committee to consider and share back with them our own experience. We are invited to “dwell deep, to 'know one another in that which is eternal,' and to be open to the presence and guidance of the same spirit that led FGC to this blessed experience.” SAYMA has called on us to take their “minute into our hearts and to take action as we are led.”

We recommend that Asheville Friends Meeting spend some time in worship sharing considering these minutes and our own experience with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer friends. We ask that Friends' thoughts be recorded and that Meeting be open to the spirit that rises out of this worship.

For the ad-hoc committee, Ellen Frerotte

A Friend expressed the opportunity to worship sharing and share the experiences which are painful to guide into better understanding.

Ellen F. reread the definition of “unite”

A Friend asked how we are not already united with FGC and SAYMA in that we are members of those bodies and pay dues to these groups?

A Friend the previous statements and asked for Friends to consider delving deeper and form our own experience.

A Friend expressed that she "united" with the sense of the minutes, but did not feel that simply modifying the definition of the word "unite" could adequately address her concern for setting a precedent of "uniting" with a minute that was worded to express the sense of a community outside of our own.

A Friend asked the gathered community to “remember the Earth Charter”... adding voice and flame. For Friends to consider communicating to the Yearly meetings about our unity.

Ellen F.—read the last sentence of the minute(s).

Clerk suggests an hour of worship sharing so more members can be present in this process.

A Friend spoke about not affirming the minutes without having the acceptance behind these minutes. The pain comes from the words not matching the experience.

One Friend shared that sexuality is part of the web of God and that we are fractured and in need of healing in this area as in others. The minutes we heard from FGC and SAYMA speak of our calling to heal one another and be healed. We hunger for that to happen.

The clerk noted that we spent a period of prayer on this issue, but that that is not enough and that we will need to do further work to accomplish the job set before us. He called upon us to test the minutes' meaning in our lives and continue to seek, as a community to find our own words and take our own

action experiencing for ourselves the way we can be truly loving to all members of our community. We will set a time to begin the work of going deeper as a community at a specific time, the next available second hour, not delaying our worship sharing until a committee such as Ministry and Counsel can decide on a course of action. We will set the Ad Hoc Committee's recommendations aside, affirming the sense of what the minutes contain, and acknowledging the work we have to do.

A Friend suggested we convert the minutes into queries that will deepen our understanding and may direct our action. Further, we are asked to hold the committee that has been appointed to consider same-gender marriage in the Light.

Sense of the meeting was to ask Spiritual Enrichment for time for worship at retreat, and to set aside a time in a forum for 3rd Sunday of October, led by Evan R—**Approved**

Ad Hoc committee will not be laid down and recharged with the task of generating queries from the FGC and SAYMA minutes.

—**Approved**

A Friend asked that we hold our children in the light as they discover themselves and their sexuality and the place that society sets aside or doesn't set aside for them. Hold parents in the light as well as they support their children's discoveries.

Personal Concerns:

AGNITA DUPREE'S last first day with Asheville Friends Meeting:

A Friend offered that we bring covered dish next week in honor of Agnita DuPree and someone bring her a gift and card. A Friend suggested that we not give her materialistic gifts but notes and photos gathered from the community.

Margaret N. would be willing to steward this project and requested a list of members and attenders. Photo album or compilation—Adrienne W.

Steve H. asked that we send out a query, and would like to help with e-calendar/e-announcement.

Evan R and Margaret N will compile.

Evan R will print up e-responses. Steve L. will get the card.

David C. announced that The Board of Directors will meet for October's meeting for business to decide on members for the board of directors.

Jim C.—Peace and Earth Request

Just Relationships group will bring a scholar/speaker Marvin Ellison, (dates for events and etc. see email.) Mel and Beth Kiser, Peoples for Faith for Just Relationship Committee, ask for Peace and Earth for co-sponsorship and bring a report/recommendation to next M4B.

Joy G.—SAYF is still looking for a volunteer/representative to drive AFM SAYF members to the retreat in September.

Worship