

June Minutes

June 4, 2006

Worship 11:50 am

Attendance

24 in attendance: Beth Bates, Lynnora Bierce (Recording Clerk), Alice Brown, Jim Cavener, Karen Cernek, David Clements, Becca Dion, Barbara Esther, Ellen Frerotte, George Gjelfriend, Kristi Gjelfriend, Joy Gossett, Martha Huggins, Willy Kaylor, Katherine Kowal, Steve Livingston (clerk), Philip Neal, Margaret Normile, Ellen Oldham, Kitti Reynolds, Evan Richardson, Sam Rizzo, Alan Robinson, Adrienne Weir

Opening Reading:

What is the most important work that we do as members of a Quaker community?

Looking back at the work that has been accomplished in the past couple of years in our Meeting, it's easy to come away with the impression that the responsibilities of the Meeting are being carried by just a few Friends. We know too that some of the work of the Meeting falls by the wayside when there are no Friends to pick up the load and carry it. Turning our attention to the agenda for our work today, we see that our labors have brought us to a watershed moment in our Meeting's history.

I acknowledge that this is all important work, and I am grateful to those Friends who are doing it. But I want to convey to you, dear Friends, that it is not the most important work of the Meeting. I want to say to you today that the most important work of the Meeting is work that every member of this community is charged with doing. It is a task that may be performed on any day, at any time, to the benefit of each individual Friend and to the community as a whole. It is the work that we are all given to do when we come together in this meeting for worship every month, to conduct the business of our community. This work must be faithfully performed by everyone, or else all of the other work we do is less worthwhile.

This work I speak of is the task of holding one another in the Light. When we hold one another in the Light, we are sharing that measure of Divine Energy that we have each been given, accumulating a store of Spirit to inform and invigorate our journey as a community of spiritual seekers. When we hold one another in the Light, all of the other tasks that we undertake are less heavy. When we hold one another in the Light, our differences of opinion fall away more easily, to reveal the Way for our community to proceed. When we hold one another in the Light, we move together as one, for this we know: there is only one Light, the same Light we seek, the same Light we share, the same Light we answer to in one another.

Hold fast to that Light, dear Friends. Hold one another in it.

—Steve Livingston

News of Ourselves

Fairman Jayne is recovering from major heart surgery, and doing well.

Review of Agenda

Friends approved the agenda as written

Request for Committee Clerks Meeting and responses to State of Meeting Queries

Clerk asked if we could settle on a meeting date, offering June 25 as a possibility, asking if that gives all committees the needed time to consider and respond to the queries offered in advance of the meeting. Friends who agreed to 7/9 at the rise of meeting for worship as Meeting for Business is not typically held in 7th month. Clerk reminded the Committee Clerks to look over the queries with their committees and respond in plenty of time before the meeting date so that their discernments could be taken into account in the draft State of the Meeting Report.

Finance Committee

Report of AFM Finance Committee, 6/04/06, draft 1

1. The Finance Committee has been discussing the structure of our committee and the duties of the Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer. We have forwarded our recommendations to the Nominating Committee for their review and will include them in our financial policies.
 - a. Two of our recommendations require approval by the Meeting:
 - i. That we have a permanent Assistant Treasurer as well as a Treasurer. Currently we have the position of Treasurer (not yet filled) and a temporary Assistant Treasurer.
 - ii. We also recommend that the bylaws of the AFM Corporation specify that the Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer will serve *ex officio* on the Board of Directors as the Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer of the Corporation. We have come upon several situations that would be facilitated by having a majority of the Directors on the Finance Committee, so that the Board can easily act on routine matters in association with meetings of the Finance Committee.
 - b. We recommend the following minutes:
 - i. **The Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer of Asheville Friends Meeting will each be appointed for two-year terms that will end on the same day in alternate years. The Nominating Committee is asked to specify the exact ending date of the terms. (Terms to be staggered.)**
 - ii. **Meeting directs the Board of Directors of the Asheville Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends to amend the bylaws to provide that the Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer will serve *ex officio* as Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer of the Board of Directors and of the Corporation.**

Friends approved these minutes as presented.

2. The Finance Committee has been taking steps to simplify our financial situation. Meeting has previously decided to sell all the stocks and stock funds that we own except for one of the two Pax World Fund Accounts, which contains about \$11,000 assigned to the College-Age Friends Support Fund. Because of the complexity of dealing with Pax World Fund, and because of a desire to simplify our accounts, we recommend that the Meeting sell this second Pax Fund as well. We have had some appreciation in the account. We recommend the following minute:
 - a. **Meeting directs the Finance Committee to sell the Pax World Fund account designated as the College-Age Friends Support Fund.**

In response to an inquiry, clerk of Finance explanation the reason for for changing funds from Pax World Fun was said that administering the Pax World Fund was cumbersome and complicated.

Friends approved this minute as presented.

3. The next meeting of the Finance Committee will be on Sunday July 9, 8:30 am at the Meeting House. Friends are welcome to attend our meetings or to examine our minutes, including the decisions referred to above.

Respectfully Submitted, David Clements, Acting Clerk

The report was accepted

Nominating Committee

The Committee brought two nominations to the Meeting.

Friends approved Palin Spruance as treasurer and George Gjelfriend as assistant treasurer, with terms of service in accordance with the policy approved from the preceding Finance Committee report.

Review of Minutes—Fifth Month 2006

Minutes of 5th month 2006 were approved as written.

A Friend suggested including contact information in the minutes when a person is identified as a contact. Clerk offered that any friend could contact the Clerk for contact information.

A Friend asked to have paper copies of the minutes. Clerk reminded that we had set up a buddy system for printing minutes, and two Friends said that they would take care of this immediate need, to given to those who need them and provide some copies in the foyer. A Friend suggested we make one copy available in the foyer and people may make a copy in the office as needed. Barbara said she would shepherd this solution.

Ad Hoc Committee to Implement First Day Structure Change

The Ad-Hoc Committee to Implement a Change in Our FD Structure met on Tuesday 5/30/06. Attending were Barbara Esther, Stephanie Gossett, Joy Gossett, Katherine Kowal, Laura Maynard and Evan Richardson. Absent was David Clements.

We reviewed the minutes from the November 2005 Meeting for Business that included the presentation of a concrete proposal from the original Ad-Hoc Committee on our FD Structure and the minute regarding the charge of our committee. We reviewed the reasons offered for considering a change and discerned that they are still relevant for our meeting. These reasons include creating a structure that allows adults teaching FDS to be present with the entire community for worship on a regular basis; allows our children and youth opportunities to experience and grow in Quaker worship; allows there to be a regular time for Adult Religious Education; and encourages more intergenerational fellowship. While we did recognize that changing our FD structure would not be the only solution to achieving these above stated ends, we did feel that there is much to be gained from the change that was originally proposed and realized that we do look forward to helping to implement a change on behalf of the Meeting.

We reflected on the work that has already gone into this topic, including the discernment of the previous Ad-Hoc Committee as well as the three Threshing Sessions held by the Meeting last summer. We feel that the idea of separating our Meeting for Worship hour and our FDS/Adult RE hour is a concept that has been well seasoned by the previous Ad-Hoc Committee and the Community. We are proposing the following minute:

Asheville Friends Meeting approves altering our FD structure so that we separate our Meeting for Worship hour from our FDS/Adult RE hour. We empower the Ad-Hoc Implementation Committee to creatively attend to the details involved in making this change and return to the Meeting with a concrete proposal once the way is clear. The Ad-Hoc Implementation Committee, as originally defined by the Meeting in 11/2005, will include a member of Spiritual Enrichment, Religious Education, Ministry and Counsel, Junior Meeting and anyone else who wants to serve.—

The next meeting of the Ad-Hoc Implementation Committee will be held on Monday June 19, at 4:30 PM. Please plan to attend if you would like to be involved in this work. You may also send any comments or concerns you may have directly to one of the above named members.

Friends accepted the committee's report.

A Friend said from review of past Minutes there was not a clearly expressed intention to make a change in First Day Structure. Clerk reminded that the new Ad Hoc Committee was formed with the intention of shepherding this process, and has brought the report above with its recommendation to make the changes outlined.

A Friend said he would not stand in the way but it was his opinion that what was given in first paragraph of the report did not accurately reflect what had been discerned by the original Ad Hoc Committee. He expressed a concern that another Friend might be unduly influencing the Meeting into acting prematurely. This other Friend felt that his assessment was unfair. She expressed that she was in no way trying to force the hand of Meeting or make a decision for the meeting, but she does hope to begin attending worship more regularly, and intends to give up teaching first day if necessary. These two Friends left the meeting to discuss their difference of perception in the foyer. Clerk asked that we hold these two absent Friends in the light. They returned after a few minutes.

Recording Clerk reread the Minute.

A Friend said that the make-up of the committee is designed to be representative of many of AFM voices, especially the younger members. Also there is a feeling that our current structure takes away from our teachers the opportunity for spiritual nourishment through worship, while the proposed structure will more ably feed these members of our community.

A Friend said that we should not fear the chaos.

A Friend said that there was worry that we were going backward regarding this issue and that consensus again and again has pointed toward Meetings desire to move toward restructuring of First Day, and yet we have been slowed down or hung up on the details. Many Friends concurred.

Clerk brought the meeting into silence. Out of the silence, he asked if anyone felt a reason to stand in the way of this minute. After a few minutes of silence, clerk called for approval of the minute and was answered by many favorable voices.

Friends approved the minute as presented.

A Friend noted that it is all of our responsibility to know what is written in the Minutes, and that we had better try not to let this responsibility slide.

Ellen Oldham said that she would stand aside, but that she did not agree with restructuring of first day. A Friend said that he supported her and the way that she feels, was feeling rather dubious about it himself, but that this needs to be tried.

Ministry and Counsel

Ministry and Counsel Committee Meeting 5-15-2006

We met at Alice Brown's home. Members present were Alice, Gjeorge and Kristi Gjelfriend, Katherine Kowal, Martha Huggins and Steve Livingston, clerk of AFM.

Following a period of silence we began the meeting at 5:25.

Alice Brown will draft a letter from AFM to be read at the memorial service Agnita DuPree's family will hold on

June 3rd in Ithaca, NY.

We discussed “The letter of the law vs. the leading of the Spirit”. What we mean by this is that several members of the meeting have had leadings that they brought before us and other members were concerned that Quaker process wasn’t followed to the “t”. This may have diminished a true leading.

We are concerned that this may be a pattern that is developing in our meeting, especially in the meeting for business. Friends are reminded that we are a religious society, a loving community, where we hope all sincere members may speak and share their leadings with support and encouragement. Let us listen to Friends and the reports brought to us by committees in a way that seeks to honor that of God within each of us. When we are holding each other in this Light our corrections may be viewed as helpful rather than hurtful, constructive rather than critical.

Our discussion on the quality of vocal ministry brought out several concerns about those who may share what is not truly a message from Spirit, but perhaps something prepared in advance of the meeting for worship. We were reminded that what speaks to one Friend’s heart may not necessarily speak to each of us. When we listen to vocal ministry in a centered state, we may be able to “hear” what will speak to our condition and not let other messages disturb us if we feel they are not truly Spirit inspired.

Friends are reminded that all of us who use the meetinghouse at any time need to take responsibility for cleaning up after ourselves. The meetinghouse is our spiritual home. Friends of all ages are encouraged to be mindful of the appearance of our home, for ourselves, and when we welcome guests.

We held the meeting in the Light, and especially sent Light to Friends we shared concerns about during our meeting because of health issues or other difficulties.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:15pm.

Respectfully Submitted, Martha O. Huggins

A Friend asked for examples of M&C clerk of when a Friend was not following Quaker Process, after the conclusion of this meeting.

A Friend said that she welcomed eldering from M&C, and said that Spiritual Enrichment will also provide opportunities for strengthening skills in meeting for business and meeting for worship. Clerk said that he looks forward to these opportunities to get to know each other and ourselves through the use of good Quaker process.

A Friend said that we needed to hold this report and the issues in it in our hearts, but that the details may need to be put aside and handled differently.

Report was accepted.

Letter of Condolence to family of Agnita Dupree

To Lisa Eisenberg: If possible, the Meeting would appreciate having our letter read at Agnita's memorial service. We wish we could be there in attendance but will be with you in spirit.

Members of the Asheville Friends Meeting join with you, the family and friends of Agnita Dupree, to express our deep sense of loss as well as our sincere appreciation for the many ways in which she touched our individual lives as well as the life of the Meeting. Agnita's concern for issues relative to peace, social justice and the environment were kept before us with a challenge for action. She and Al set an example for all of us as they attended Meeting for Worship regularly, and their presence is and will continue to be missed. They were truly ageless in their approach to life, youthful and positive in spirit in spite of the problems of aging - an example to be cherished and for all to follow in the future. Truly, our Meeting has been sustained and blessed by Agnita's

presence. These words from William Penn speak for those of us who knew and loved her - "Death is but crossing the world as friends do the seas, they live in one another still . . . 'Tis the comfort of friends, that though they may be said to die yet their friendship and society are, in the best sense, ever present because immortal."

Sincerely - Asheville Friends

Update on Memorial for Agnita Dupree

(Report pending) Saturday July 8th, 2 PM for the Memorial Meeting date and time so that Agnita's son and daughter-in-law may attend. (Evan read the Memorial Minute)

The Memorial Minute was approved with gratitude.

Report of ad hoc committee to examine marriage

Report of the Ad-Hoc Committee on Marriage under the Care of the Meeting

"Gary Briggs, David Clements, Rain Newcomb, Evan Richardson, Alan Robinson and Bob Smith have been serving on this committee. We were established under the care of Ministry and Counsel in early Fall 2005. We have been meeting regularly since then. We have drawn our charge from a minute approved by the meeting in January 2004. It was in the context of a request brought to Meeting by the then Ad Hoc Committee on Same Gender Marriage.

"We are not in unity regarding either the use of the term "marriage" or the role of "membership" in defining who can apply for marriage under the care of the Meeting. We do unite in the belief that we are all equal in the eyes of the divine. We hold sacred the commitments made by couples who share a deep love with each other, regardless of whether the partners in such couples are of the same or opposite gender. We ask that Ministry and Counsel lead the Meeting in working out and seasoning the details of a procedure for marriage using these expressed beliefs and values as their guide.

"From this minute and the context from which it developed, we understood our charge to be helping the meeting explore where its unity lies in considering same gender marriage and drafting a marriage procedure for the meeting.

"We want to acknowledge all of the work that has been done on these issues by so many different individuals and the Meeting as a whole. Our work could not have been accomplished if it were not for the work that preceded our formation.

"Our process was one of worshipful discernment. We met together sometimes in a closed format, sometimes in an open format. While not explicitly related to our work, we did benefit greatly from the focus of the Meeting on the minutes brought from FGC Central Committee and SAYMA on their "Experience of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Friends." We also benefited from the work done by the Meeting in considering queries exploring our feelings and opinions about homosexuality and gay marriage. This effort was led by Gary Briggs, a member of our committee.

"In drafting the proposal we drew from work done by many other Quaker communities. Specifically, we drew from the work of Durham Monthly Meeting, Chapel Hill Monthly Meeting, SAYMA, New York Yearly Meeting, Baltimore Yearly Meeting, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, New England Yearly Meeting and North Pacific Yearly Meeting. We used the specific marriage procedures available from these Friends as a guide to our work. Lastly individuals on our committee participated in one-on-one conversations with F/friends in our community in an effort to discern the true nature of concerns that were raised in our Meeting back in January 2004. This was not a process of laboring as much as of listening.

"It is our sense that our meeting is ready to consider a minute recommending we extend to gay, lesbian, bisexual,

transgender and queer Friends full fellowship in our community, including marriage under the care of our Meeting. We are bringing such a minute to you for consideration:

“There is that of God in every person.”

“This simple, powerful testimony lead us, the Asheville Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, to declare to the world that all people, regardless of sexual orientation, gender presentation or gender identity, are welcome within our meeting, to enjoy our fellowship and share in our spiritual life. We are mindful of the Light within, a universal element of the sacred and divine nature of every person. We recognize the ability of all to exhibit and magnify that nature in all its divinely appointed variety and inclusiveness. We affirm that all those within our fellowship may participate fully on an equal basis in all aspects of our Meeting and worship, including without limitation the blessings of marriage under the care of our Meeting and marriage after the manner of Friends.

“This minute explicitly names marriage under the care of the Meeting as part of full participation in our Meeting in order to prevent any potential misunderstanding that full participation does indeed mean marriage under our care. Having to clear up such a misunderstanding in the context of an actual couple’s request can lead to unnecessary harm to the couple. We want to prevent this.

“In addition, we are ready to bring to meeting a draft procedure for marriage. What we have accomplished is the results of months of seasoning and yet it is not yet finished. We feel very secure about our work in many parts of the documents. In others, we bring to you a basic level of unity with understanding that these areas cannot be fully seasoned or fleshed out without input from the Meeting. We look forward to the work that the Meeting can do to help to season this draft even further. We are prepared to help shepherd this process as Meeting sees fit.”

A Friend stated that he united with the sentiments of the report but he wanted to be sure that there was an understanding that marriage under the care of the meeting was only offered to Friends who were also recorded members of the meeting.

A Friend asked what the difference was from “Under the Care of Meeting” and held in Loving Support. This will be discussed among Friends after the rise of this meeting.

A Friend thanked the committee for their work and particularly how this Minute is written and the procedure we are taking regarding this issue, and she also unites with the Minute.

Clerk Steve Livingston asked to be temporarily released from the clerk’s table as he felt burdened by his own concerns about the intention of the Minute. Friend Evan Richardson agreed to sit in as clerk pro tem. In response to his concerns, a member of the committee said that the minute was not intended to engender the literal action of “declaring to the world” described in the first sentence. A member of the committee explained that the minute was intended to express a welcoming of persons of all gender identities and presentations on an equal basis, without exception or reservation as full participants in our beloved community, whether in worship, committee work or marriage under the care of the Meeting. The clerk pro tem tested the sense of the Meeting, and found that Friends were united in support of this broader expression of welcoming. Friends also agreed that the minute would better express the intention of the committee and the Meeting if the phrase “to the world” were eliminated.

Another Friend expressed concern that the phrase “to dwell amongst us” created an unwanted distinction between LGBTQ Friends and heterosexual Friends. After some consideration, Friends united around the alternative phrase “within our meeting”.

The clerk pro tem re-read the Minute with changes. A Friend was uneasy with the second paragraph because it did not specifically address recorded membership as a prerequisite to marriage under the care of the Meeting. Clerk pro tem suggested that the minute stipulate that it was not intended to address this issue, and reassured the Friend that membership requirements would ultimately be considered as we undertook the writing of the marriage procedure itself. The Friend said that his concern had been sufficiently addressed, and Friends united with the suggested addendum.

A Friend noted that we could heed M&C's eldering about "the letter killeth but the Spirit giveth life", and that we should rejoice in the Spirit, which has led us to this joyous place. Friends expressed that this Friend spoke their mind.

Friends approved the following Minute:

"There is that of God in every person." This simple, powerful testimony lead us, the Asheville Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, to declare that all people, regardless of sexual orientation, gender presentation or gender identity, are welcome to dwell amongst us, enjoy our fellowship and share in our spiritual life. We are mindful of the Light within, a universal element of the sacred and divine nature of every person. We recognize the ability of all to exhibit and magnify that nature in all its divinely appointed variety and inclusiveness. We affirm that all those within our fellowship may participate fully on an equal basis in all aspects of our Meeting and worship, including without limitation the blessings of marriage under the care of our Meeting and marriage after the manner of Friends.

We as a meeting are not intending this minute to address the role membership plays in our marriage procedure.

Clerk Steve Livingston returned to the table and thanked Evan for temporarily clerking the meeting.

Procedures for Marriage Itself

Clerk suggested using a different venue to look at these queries. A Friend from the Ad Hoc Committee said they would be willing to continue this work. Another Friend from the committee said that Threshing sessions may be more appropriate. Clerk said that Threshing may not be appropriate because Threshing is usually saved for issues that have gravely stood in the way of unity in a meeting. A Friend from the committee said that we may indeed move toward Threshing because some grave differences do indeed exist. Clerk proposed that we use 2nd hour to address this concern and invite the community. A Friend said that we must be sure that the community well knows of the meeting and it is advertised well. Friends felt that Worship Sharing would be more productive if the most people from the community could input on this issue.

Friends accepted the report of the ad hoc Committee to Examine Marriage

Clerk reported to the Meeting that Eda and Gerry Smith had been contacted by mail to inform them about the proposed minute coming before the Meeting. They were invited to attend, or alternatively to convey their wish to stand in the way, stand aside, or unite with the minute. They did not respond to the letter. Members of the committee said that they had also been in touch with Eda and Gerry Smith and had expressed similar invitations. Clerk expressed his appreciation to the committee.

Right Sharing of World Resources Annual Meeting

Request of our meeting to host this annual meeting.—held over until August.

Personal Concerns

A Friend rose to admonish Friends about seeing to the opening of the meetinghouse, reporting that this morning is was poorly organized, and therefore the singing portion of meeting started late.

David Clements pointed out that no committee had taken the responsibility for our advertisement in *Friends Journal*. He asked if Meeting would empower him to write a new advertisement in consultation with the Clerk, and allow it to be submitted without further review by the Meeting, because the deadline for the September issue was

imminent. **Friends approved.**

Asheville Friends Meeting One Day retreat will be held at Common Light Meeting House in Black Mountain on September 23rd, 2006. The playground at the Montessori school across the road will be available for our children. There is also a creek running through the property, which children enjoy. Please hold this date for the retreat, and more information will be forthcoming.

The Recording Clerk reminded Meeting of Ursula Scott's advice to "Keep it simple".

Closing Worship
3:00pm