

Meeting for Worship With Attention to Business  
Asheville Friends Meeting  
First Month Fourteenth Day 2007

Friends began to settle at 9:30 a.m.

Attendance: Present were visitors Gene and Carol Bronson, David Clements, Becca Dion, Joy Gossett, Steve Livingston (clerk), Phil Neal, Ellen Oldham, Joyce Rawlings Davies, Kitti Reynolds, Evan Richardson, Eda Smith, Gerry Smith, Sarah Jane Thomas, and Betsey Rose Weiss.

Reading The clerk offered a reading from “Holding One Another In the Light” by Marcelle Martin (Pendle Hill Pamphlet 382) pp.19-21

As we grow in the spiritual life, we are called to deepen in our life of ongoing conversation and communion with the Divine. Prayer is one of the important ways we help the Divine seed within ourselves, others, our culture, and the world to flourish and overcome the forces that oppress it. Some Friends have a growing awareness of being called to pray both for individuals and for the meeting community as a whole, often while also being called upon to help others grow in understanding of the ways of the Spirit. Early Friends sometimes referred to people with such gifts as “nursing” mothers or fathers. Later they were given the less evocative term “elder”. Today it is becoming more common to call such Friends “spiritual nurturers”. By whatever name, people who exercise such gifts on the behalf of our meetings and Quaker community are much needed for the health of our spiritual fellowship.

It is valuable to have Friends in every meeting who pray for the weekly meeting for worship . . . On First Days, it is helpful for some Friends to pray for the meeting as a whole and to offer themselves to help the Spirit be present as fully as possible to all the members of the meeting. Such people may find themselves drawn to begin meeting for worship before the posted starting time, so that when the whole community gathers, there is already a deepening of the Spirit. This can help gather the meeting as a whole more quickly into awareness of the Divine Presence.

Such prayer is needed during the meeting for business as well. When my meeting was struggling with some rancorous interactions, I noticed that one Friend began more deliberately to pray throughout. When I saw him with his eyes closed, I felt his prayer helping me become more quiet and centered. I was reminded of the importance of being present in a more prayerful way myself, attending more closely to the motions of the Spirit within. Over time, the quality of our business meetings has changed significantly. Many factors were involved, but an important part of the process was the quiet prayer of that particular Friend holding the business meeting in the Light.

Friends joined together in a few minutes of silence. Guests Gene and Carol Bronson were introduced, longtime Friends and friends of the Hearne family.

Agenda: The agenda was approved as presented.

#### Report of Clearness Committee for David Brooks Arnold

The clerk read the report of the clearness committee:

“The clearness committee to consider Washington DC Friend David Brooks Arnold's request for membership transfer to Asheville Friends Meeting met on 12/15/2006. We enjoyed a long evening learning of David's remarkable background, a lifetime of witness to Quaker testimonies of integrity, peacemaking, and service to humanity. We learned that many of the decisions that have shaped David's life were made impulsively. We heard that David has faced and has overcome momentous adversity and accomplished great things in his life as a direct result of his decisions. We were satisfied that despite his lack of familiarity with our Meeting and the suddenness of his decision to join, David had the capacity to rise to whatever challenges might result, to meet them with optimism and courage, and to join with his fellow travelers in addressing them in a Quakerly way.

“Our conversation had a different effect on David, however. He found as a result of our time together that his impulse was misplaced, that the sheen of certainty he had felt initially had dissipated under the glare of pointed questioning, that it was not in his best interest to commit his spiritual journey to a community with which he was not yet familiar nor comfortable.

“We accept David's decision with a mixture of joy and regret: having come to know him as a person, we regret that his journey may lead him away from our community; yet, we report with joy that the work of the clearness committee has been accomplished and its purpose fulfilled, in facilitating our Friend's journey by helping him see the Way he is led to go. We wish David the best of good fortune as he travels his road.”

A Friend questioned why a clearness committee was called for David Brooks Arnold, and suggested that we ought to follow the procedure given in the SAYMA Faith and Practice until we have a procedure of our own. This Friend stated that since no clearness committee had been called for the recent transfer of membership for Palin Spruance, that none should have been required for David Brooks Arnold. The Friend offered as truth that the clearness committee had failed in its charge, and as a result, a potential community member had been hurt and alienated, and that the matter ought not to be swept under the rug.

Another Friend offered that we don't really know what happened since we had not heard from others involved in the process. A Friend who had served on the committee expressed shock and dismay that David Brooks Arnold had expressed that he was “traumatized” by the clearness process, and related that she had no clue that he had suffered in any way in the course of the evening together. She described the meeting as having been cordial, full of energy, interesting, and leaving her eager to welcome David into our community.

A Friend expressed concern that our clearness committees are too mean-spirited, and suggested that we might benefit from some training in clearness process. Another Friend shared the experience of having been taken aback by a list of questions given to her in advance of her clearness committee for membership, so much so that she declined to meet with them and did not request another clearness committee for membership until three years later.

**Friends agreed to honor David Brooks Arnold's request to withdraw his membership transfer to Asheville Friend Meeting.**

**Friends were not united in accepting the report of the Clearness Committee, in that there was some doubt that the committee had fulfilled its purpose faithfully.**

After a period of silence, the Meeting was adjourned at 10:25 for an hour of expectant worship.

Meeting for Worship for the Conduct of Business reconvened at 12:10 p.m.

Attendance: Present were Jim Cavener, David Clements, Becca Dion, Barbara Esther (recording clerk), George Gjelfriend, Kristi Gjelfriend, Joy Gossett, Steve Livingston (clerk), Phil Neal, Ellen Oldham, Kitti Reynolds, Evan Richardson, Sam Rizzo, Eda Smith, and Gerry Smith.

The agenda was revised, putting the review of previous months' minutes ahead of the Peace and Earth report.

**Friends approved the minutes as published for Eleventh Month 2006.**

**In the Twelfth Month minutes, a correction was made to the name of RSWR to read "Right Sharing of World Resources", and two changes were made in wording to reflect intent in the report of SAYMA Representative Meeting on 12-3-06: in the seventh paragraph the sentence reading "Auburn worship group is not presently meeting" was changed to read "not meeting at present"; and in the ninth paragraph, the sentence reading "Financial help is always available when that would keep Friends from attending" was changed to read "when need would keep Friends from attending". Friends approved the Twelfth Month minutes with these changes.**

Tenth Month minutes will be reviewed in Second Month meeting for business.

Peace and Earth Committee Report: Kitti Reynolds gave the report.

"Peace and Earth has placed the following ad in the MLK Jr prayer breakfast Souvenir Journal. The prayer breakfast was held Jan 13, 2007. Sarah Jane Thomas attended as a representative of our committee.

"Asheville Friends Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)  
227 Edgewood Road, off Merrimon Avenue  
Sunday 9:30 A.M. Religious Education, 10:30 a.m. Meeting for worship  
258-0974

"We utterly deny all outward wars and strife,  
and fighting with outward weapons" George Fox 1661  
visitors welcome"

"We have been in contact with the Cooper Boulevard Community Support network. There is much that could be done to help families who will be forced to move once the mobile home park in West Asheville is sold, such as

helping people move with trucks, helping to find low cost housing, contributing money towards the cost of moving a family's mobile home, etc. We would like to get a sense of the Meeting about our willingness to contribute.

"Peace and Earth may be having a letter writing campaign on fourth first Day in support of a new Department of Peace and other matters relating to the war in Iraq. These letters would be delivered to our Senators and Representative in early February.

Kitti reported that Sarah Jane Thomas attended the Martin Luther King, Jr. prayer breakfast as the committee's representative.

Kitti explained that the Cooper Boulevard Community Support network seeks both monetary and other kinds of help. We might join with another faith community to assist one family to move. Peace and Earth Committee has already committed \$50.00 from its budget to help. Friends asked for a specific recommendation to move forward. Although a will to help is evident in our meeting community, Friends do not wish to make a commitment that is beyond our means to fulfill. One Friend asked that we consider setting up a fund to accept donations for this purpose. If the network is a 501c3 approved agency we can create such a pass-through fund. Otherwise, it is not our practice to do so. Possible involvement will be further explored by the Peace and Earth Committee.

Regarding the letter writing campaign, Kitti explained that letters would be hand-delivered to our Representative and Senators. Details would be posted for Friends to review and those who can were encouraged to learn about the proposed Department of Peace on the web. Kitti is in touch with Roy Taylor of SAYMA's Environmental Concerns Network (ECN) regarding Peace and Earth items.

#### **Friends accepted the report of the Peace and Earth Committee.**

Nominating Committee: Jim Cavener reported that the committee is working on a number of fronts. The committee nominated Adrienne Weir to Religious Education Committee, pointing out that she has been serving the committee for sometime. Similarly, Friends were asked to approve George Gjelfriend to House and Grounds. He is currently serving as convener of that committee. Nominating Committee asked that George Gjelfriend be approved as Treasurer to relieve Palin Spruance of the dual role of Treasurer and bookkeeper, the latter position having been taken up to fulfill the request of Satchel Loftis to be released. We would then need an assistant treasurer as George will no longer be in that position. George will support as needed. Finally, Gary Briggs agreed to assume the responsibility of Meetinghouse Coordinator, which position George Gjelfriend had accepted in 11<sup>th</sup> month 2006 to relieve Satchel Loftis. George was more than willing to relinquish the position to Gary. The work of the Meetinghouse Coordinator is under the care of the House and Grounds Committee.

The following Friends asked for release from their committee roles: Evan Richardson from Spiritual Enrichment; Satchel Loftis from Spiritual Enrichment, Finance, and House and Grounds Committees.

**Friends approved Adrienne Weir's appointment to the Religious Education Committee. George Gjelfriend was approved as a member of the House and Grounds Committee.**

**George Gjelfriend was approved as Treasurer, replacing Palin Spruance. Gary Briggs was approved as our Meetinghouse Coordinator, replacing George Gjelfriend.**

**Friends approved the release of Evan Richardson from Spiritual Enrichment Committee, and Satchel Loftis from Spiritual Enrichment, Finance, and House and Grounds.**

Finance Committee, House and Grounds Committee and Ministry and Counsel Committee all seek more members. Friends are reminded that only recorded members may serve on Ministry and Counsel Committee. Anyone who has interest in being involved in any of these committees, please see a member of Nominating Committee — Jim Cavener, Robin Wells, Laura Maynard, or Sarah Jane Thomas.

A Friend expressed that she participates in the work of House and Grounds, but has not been able to attend committee meetings due to lack of transportation and communications.

**Friends expressed thanks for the persistent and caring work of the Nominating Committee.**

Finance Committee: David Clements, acting Clerk, brought a report of our finances from 2006 on behalf of bookkeeper Palin Spruance, who was unable to attend.

He reported that our General Fund receipts for 2006 totaled approximately \$27,000, and our expenses totaled approximately \$21,000. No money has yet been spent on Quaker or General Outreach. Friends will recall that Meeting had deferred full funding of these items until the end of the year results were available.

Finance Committee made the following recommendations:

House and Grounds expenses were approximately \$4,050, and were budgeted at \$5,000. During 2006 Exterior painting, which will cost \$5,000 to \$10,000, was planned but deferred to 2007. Given that we will probably have this and possibly other large expenses in 2007, we recommend saving any remainder of the \$5,000 budgeted but not spent. We propose transferring this money, approximately \$950, into the Meeting House Improvements Fund. The Meeting House Improvements Fund currently contains approximately \$17,000.

The Finance Committee recommends spending \$5,000 for 2006 on General and Quaker Outreach. The Peace and Earth Committee has been entrusted with making decisions regarding the individual donations and then reporting to Meeting. We would recommend that Peace and Earth decide about these donations as soon as possible.

We expect that after the above expenses there will likely be a small surplus for 2007.

The Finance Committee will plan to present a first draft of the 2007 budget to February's Business Meeting. We remind Friends that meeting has decided to continue with the 2006 figures for the budget for the moment until the 2007 budget is adopted.

**Friends approved that \$950.00 remaining unspent from the House and Grounds Committee 2006 budget be applied to the Meetinghouse Improvements Fund. Friends approved that \$5000.00 be distributed for outreach, now that we have a year end report.**

Three thousand dollars were allocated to each portion of our outreach, wider Quaker organizations and local entities, in the 2005 budget. A Friend cautioned us to do adequate and honest long-range planning for maintenance of our building in the form of a reserves study. Outreach in the form of monetary contributions could be curbed in lieu of in-kind contributions if we need to be better stewards of this property or consider our need to look at other options.

Scholarship Committee: We heard that a report from the Scholarship Committee for consideration in the future will be circulated for comment. Friends are asked to read the recommendations over the weeks between this meeting and that of Second Month.

David Clements will see to it that a check which was approved in Tenth Month is sent to Earlham College.

Individual Concerns: Phil Neal asked how the role of Greeter had been changed due to the change in our First Day structure. The matter was referred to the Nuts and Bolts Committee.

Regarding the recent purchase of software, David Clements reported that Palin Spruance consulted with him, but that David could not approve the purchase of software because the purchase was in excess of the committee's budget. Through a misunderstanding, Palin undertook the purchase of the software. David reported that he and Palin had reviewed the minutes of 12<sup>th</sup> month regarding this incident and found them to be in good order. The clerk apologized to Palin for any hurt feelings that may have resulted from this misunderstanding.

Ministry and Counsel Committee was asked to consider the proper use of email, a possible contributor to misunderstandings, especially when discernment is attempted by email.

A Friend repeated her regret that David Brooks Arnold is not going to transfer his membership to our meeting. She hopes we can at least hear from him as to what has made him change his decision to join Asheville Friends Meeting. The clerk reported that this has already occurred. Again the question of what was done or not done that made him decide against joining the meeting, was raised. Evan Richardson offered to provide Ministry and Counsel Committee with a draft of procedures regarding clearness for membership and transfer. The meeting is very grateful for this offer of time and care.

Close of Meeting: The clerk thanked those Friends who had given their time and attention to the conduct of our Meeting's business. The meeting adjourned at 1:42 p.m.