

meeting for worship with attention to business
11th day third month 2007
clerk: Lynnora Bierce
recording clerk: Steve Livingston

Meeting began at 9:40 a.m.

reading

Clerk offered the testimony of Helen Keller:

I am only one, but I am still one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something. And because I cannot do everything I will not refuse to do the something that I can do.

worship

attendance:

Friends in attendance were Lynnora Bierce (clerk), Barbara Esther, Ellen Frerotte, Steve Livingston (recording clerk), Laura Maynard, Phil Neal, Susan Oehler, Sarah Jane Thomas, and Betsey-Rose Weiss.

review and approval of agenda:

Barbara E asked that a report from Ministry and Counsel be added to the agenda. Friends approved the agenda with this addition.

Review and Approval of previous minutes:

Approval of 1st Month 2007 minutes was deferred until after the Ministry and Counsel report was heard.

request from WNC Peace Coalition

Representing the WNC Peace Coalition, Susan Oehler asked to borrow up to six of the Meeting's folding tables for the peace rally planned for 3/24. Friend warned Susan that some of our tables are a little unsteady and care must be taken to avoid unexpected collapse.

Friends approved loaning up to six folding tables for the Peace Rally on 3/24.

Request for Clearness for Membership:

The clerk read a letter from Bryan Freeborn and Bridget O'Hara:

"Dear clerk:

After sometime of attending the Asheville Friends Meeting Bridget and I have put a great deal of thought in to this decision. It is not an easy one to make for either one of us, but one we seem compelled to make. We look at the future of our country and world and see various outcomes. Having two young children, that for me, were the driving force behind seeking a religious and spiritual environment to be a part of, has made us re-evaluate our commitment to why we seek the Quaker faith and meeting. In the two years or so that we have attended on and off I have found deep wealth in the light that has filled my soul and guided me through tough times. After something that Phil Neal said two weeks ago during meeting, I feel compelled to rise to the occasion and except the commitment that comes with being a member of the meeting. Please advise me of what steps I should take to follow this path."

Friends were glad to receive the request but were not clear as to whether the request was for Bryan only or for both Bryan and Bridget. A Friend suggested that as a married couple, the request might be interpreted as a request of the couple. Another Friend suggested that initially a clearness committee meet with the couple to help them and us determine the best way to proceed. Ministry and Counsel clerk Barbara E offered that M&C would take this up at their meeting on 3/15. A Friend asked that we let the couple know we are not delaying their request by taking a

preliminary action to seek the right course. The clerk thanked Friends for their received wisdom and tender concern, and reassured the Meeting that the couple would receive this care with appreciation.

Meeting adjourned at 10:20 a.m. for an hour of silent worship. Meeting resumed at 12:10 p.m.

reading: Clerk offered a reading from Siddhartha by Hermann Hesse:

Siddhartha bent down, picked up a stone, and weighed it in his hand.

“This here,” he said playfully, “is a stone, and perhaps at a certain time it will be soil and will, from soil, become plant, or an animal or a human being. Now earlier I would have said: ‘This stone is merely a stone, it is worthless, it belongs to the world of maya. But since in the cycle of transmutations it can also become a man and mind, I grant worth to this stone too.’ That was what I might have thought earlier. But today I think: ‘This stone is a stone, it is also an animal, it is also God, it is also the Buddha, I love and honor it not because it could become this or that someday, but because it is everything long since and always—and it is precisely because of this, because it is a stone, because it appears to me now and today as a stone, it is precisely because of this that I love it and see worth and meaning in each of its veins and pits in the yellow, in the gray, in the hardness, in the sound it emits when I tap it, in the dryness or dampness of its surface. There are stones that feel like oil or like soap, and other like leaves, still others like sand, and each is special and prays the om in its own way, each is Brahma; but at the same time and just as much it is a stone, is oily or soapy, and that is precisely what I like and what seems wonderful to me and worthy of worship.

“But I will say no more about it. Words are not good for the secret meaning, everything instantly becomes a bit different when we utter it, a bit adulterated, a bit foolish—yes, and that too is very good and appeals to me, I also very much agree that one man’s treasure and wisdom always sound like foolishness to another.”

worship

attendance:

Friends attending the second part of the meeting were Lynnora Bierce (clerk), Alice Brown, Jim Cavener, Barbara Esther, Bryan Freeborn, Ellen Frerotte, George Gjelfriend, Kristi Gjelfriend, Joy Gossett, Katherine Kowal, Phil Neal, Bridget O’Hara, Sam Rizzo, and Alan Robinson.

introductions:

Bryan F and Bridget O were acknowledged and the clerk re-read their letter requesting clearness for membership. The recording clerk read the minutes from the first part of the meeting, pertaining to their request. At clerk’s invitation, Bridget related her leading to join the Meeting and the Society of Friends. She stated that she had found Quakerism resonates with her and that she feels a sense of comfort and belonging among Asheville Friends. She expressed her respect for the Friends’ manner of decision-making.

A Friend asked if we could now move forward since the request had been clarified. The clerk of Ministry and Counsel invited the couple to name any Friends they wished to serve on their committee. Another Friend expressed that each of the couple should have individual time with a committee to seek their personal clearness independent of the other. Friends recognized that there is no set procedure or requirement for a couple as opposed to an individual Friend. Bryan and Bridget requested that one clearness committee be named to meet with them, but did not specify any particular Friends to serve.

The matter was referred to Ministry and Counsel.

Request from George Gjelfriend

George related what he viewed as the three principle duties of Treasurer: to supervise the bookkeeper; to produce regular status reports for MFB; and to be able to fill in for the bookkeeper in emergencies. He related that when he volunteered to assume the position of Treasurer, he had not taken into account that his computer could not operate the Quickbooks software currently being used by the bookkeeper. He subsequently found that he was also neither able to access the information stored remotely nor interpret reports sent to him by the bookkeeper that were

generated using the software. Since he felt unable to perform his duties as a result of these deficiencies, George asked to be released from the role of Treasurer.

A Friend was troubled by the idea that a prerequisite for the position of Treasurer would be compatibility with a specific computer program. A Friend offered an older computer on permanent loan to the Meeting that might be compatible with the Quickbooks software. Clerk asked whether George would be willing to remain as Treasurer if this loaned computer worked out. George offered that he would resume the position if he had ready access to a compatible computer.

Friends approved the release of George Gjelfriend from the position of Treasurer.

tobacco policy:

George G expressed a need to clarify the Meeting's policy on tobacco use, as he and Gary B are revising the Meetinghouse Rental Agreement. Although there are very few tobacco users among Friends, he explained that some of the groups that might want to rent the Meetinghouse could have a higher population of users, and a clear policy is needed.

A Friend suggested that we emulate the practice of hospitals and other public buildings by designating a smoking area and providing an ashtray or bucket. Another Friend suggested that we follow the example of public schools by making the entire property "smoke free". A Friend expressed that our policy should describe the reason for such a policy is our concern for the health and well-being of all persons while they are on our property. Those who are addicted to nicotine could stave their cravings while on our property by using substitutes that do not intrude on others present.

A Friend cautioned us not to formulate a policy that seemed hard-hearted, making those who are addicted feel excluded due to their addiction.

The recording clerk expressed the policy previously adopted by the Meeting: tobacco use is prohibited anywhere inside the building or on the porch, and permitted in the yard or parking lot provided that the user pack out all residuals.

A Friend made an analogy to our policy of peanut prohibition. Why would we want to subject our children to the dangers of second-hand smoke? Are we being too kind by allowing a designated smoking area that is accessible to children? Another Friend offered that tobacco use is "not that far down the road" from use of alcohol or illegal drugs on the premises. Our policy sets an example that reflects upon our community's standards.

The clerk discerned that the Meeting was not united on a policy prohibiting tobacco use on the premises. George tested this sense of the Meeting by asking that we adopt a policy stating "no alcohol, tobacco, or illegal drugs are permitted on our property".

A Friend expressed that he had never seen anyone smoking on the premises nor had ever sensed that it was a problem for himself or for his children. He stated that a prohibition policy would not stop a person from smoking altogether; it would only serve to make that person feel unwelcome. This Friend felt that a prohibition seemed like dogma more than loving concern.

Friends agreed to leave our Meeting policy on tobacco use as it stands: tobacco use is prohibited anywhere inside the building or on the porch, and no residuals are to be left anywhere on the property.

ministry and counsel:

Barbara Esther read the report.

"The Ministry and Counsel Committee wants to report to the meeting that it has recently been our practice to meet for clearness with transfer applicants especially when they are recent attenders and unknown to many of us. It is our

intention to continue this procedure because it allows us to explore with the applicant for transfer whether or not s/he is clear about the request to join our meeting and because it is a practice suggested in the *Guide to our Faith and Practice* of SAYMA (Southern Appalachian Yearly Meeting and Association).

“Regarding the three paragraphs in the minutes from First Month 2007 which Ministry and Counsel was asked to review, the committee found that while they contained strong language, they did reflect what transpired in both tone and content. We therefore recommend they be approved as written.

“Our yearly meeting is compiling an updated directory of active members and attenders for use in communication among Friends, especially yearly meeting committee clerks and officers. Our committee has reviewed our current information, sent between two and three dozen letters to members we have not seen or heard from in some time, in hopes that they will renew their active status with our meeting. We anticipate some responses although many of these Friends have been distant from us for years. Our new SAYMA administrative assistant, Liz Perch, has requested that we send her updated material for the directory by March 6, but granted this meeting an extension until March 16th to give us time to seek the meeting’s approval to share our directory information with SAYMA. It is my understanding that this list would be for use solely within the yearly meeting, not for sale or shared in any other way.”

A Friend related the experience of another Friend who was welcomed into the Meeting without a clearness committee, suggesting that we should “err on the side of love rather than hoops.” A Friend suggested the need to avoid the sense of a “final examination”. Another Friend expressed that we should accept an applicant for transfer on the basis of the clearness of the originating meeting. A Friend advised that our policy needs to be consistent. The clerk reminded Friends that “one size does not necessarily fit all.” Another Friend reminded the Meeting that the purpose of a clearness committee is not to subject the applicant to a test of competency, but to help the applicant determine if s/he is clear.

A Friend asked if there was any truth to the rumor that a previous applicant had said he felt like he was being “put through an inquisition”. If this was true, the Friend felt something had gone terribly wrong. The clerk asked that we not engage in rumor mongering. Another Friend asked if we were trying to formulate a policy, or just reviewing the minutes of the first month business meeting.

Friends settled.

Friends approved the minutes of first month 2007 business meeting as published.

Friends approved releasing contact information for the Yearly Meeting directory of members and attenders.

Friends accepted the report of Ministry and Counsel.

Clerk thanked the committee for their work.

1:35 p.m. other concerns

A Friend expressed concern for those who have no computer access: how can they be kept abreast of the Meeting’s work and activities? The recording clerk recalled that Meeting had adopted a “buddy system” to address this problem, with a volunteer taking responsibility for each non-computer Friend. The recording clerk related that he had buddied up with Eda and Gerry S. A Friend related that Martha H was paired up with Ellen O. Barbara E offered to fulfill this need for Don and Frances M.

A Friend expressed concern that we “wear people out” who serve as clerk. She offered the model of a “clerking committee” such as SAYF has, providing for a broader distribution of the work.

A Friend shared her inspiration derived from seeing Quakers involved in the abolition of slavery, and recommended the movie “Amazing Grace”.

A Friend pointed out that this was the 200th anniversary of the birth of Quaker poet and abolitionist John Greenleaf Whittier.

The clerk re-read the Helen Keller quotation offered at the beginning of the meeting.

closing worship:

Meeting ended at 1:50 p.m. with a few moments of worship.