

MINUTES FOR FIRST MONTH OF WORSHIP WITH ATTENTION TO BUSINESS

Asheville Friends Meeting

January 13, 2008

Attendance: Katherine Kowal, Kitti Reynolds, Steve Livingston, George Gjelfriend, Kristi Gjelfriend, Jim Cavener, David Clements, Pat Johnson, Joy Gossett, Gary Briggs, Rusty Maynard, Evan Richardson

Clerk: Barbara Esther

Recording Clerk: Julie Moser

12:18 p.m. We began with a period of worship.

Reading:

*“The historic understanding of the Quaker business method is that it is first of all a religious undertaking, even though the results involve practical matters. Friends have always insisted that there should not be a wall of separation between our relationship with God and our relationship with everyday life . . . the task of the clerk is to gather the ‘sense of the meeting’ (rather than consensus) – what the members of the meeting discern to be the inward leading of the Spirit . . . What should happen in reaching a sense of the meeting is that if one or two, or even a few, persons do not feel in unity with the discernment of the majority, they may ‘stand aside,’ after making it clear to the group that although they do not agree with the decision, they are willing to trust the corporate judgment of the meeting. Then their consciences are free without having to hold up the decision-making process. On the other hand, meetings and especially clerks, need to deal carefully and tenderly with minority views and leadings. Sometimes with the passage of time and changed circumstances minorities have been found to be right after all. As Friends seek the Light of Christ together in this manner, they will be brought into a common sense of the truth and the will of God regarding particular business matters and decisions.”*

*A Living Faith An Historical Study of Quaker Beliefs  
by Wilmer A Cooper*

**The Meeting reviewed and approved the Minutes for the Tenth Month Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business as posted.**

**The Meeting reviewed and approved the Minutes for the Twelfth Month Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business. A report from House and Grounds will be sought. The clerks requested that committee reports be sent to Julie Moser at [juliemoser@yahoo.com](mailto:juliemoser@yahoo.com). The report, if found, will be attached to the minutes for Twelfth Month 2007.**

### Memorial Committee for Jim Laird

Barbara Esther reported that Marcia Laird may need for Friends to provide finger foods, coffee and tea for the memorial for Jim Laird on January 26, 2009, unless the arrangements are being made through Jubilee Community. She hopes the obituary will be in the newspaper in a timely fashion and would like for Friends to save copies for her. She has asked us to provide transportation for 4 friends from Brooks-Howell and 7 or 8 friends from Berry Temple. She would like to be sure that music will be part of the program, as well. Jim's is endeavoring to take care of the memorial service, but may need some assistance.

Jim's son, James, is working to ensure that an obituary is written. The location of Jubilee, especially during a winter month, was agreed to be a positive space to hold the memorial. Parking, however, may be an issue and it was recommended that Friends arrive early.

Another Friend expressed that the best role the Friends community can play would be to consider ourselves on standby and to pitch in as needed. A number of Friends expressed that they would be willing to be on hold for food and refreshments if needed.

**Friends approved an Ad Hoc Memorial Committee for Jim Laird consisting of Gary Briggs, Jim Cavener, Joy Gossett, and Phil Neal (supported by Evan Richardson and Raelin Hansen) with openness for additional support.**

Ad Hoc Committee on Marriage Report The following report was presented by Evan Richardson:

#### **Report to Asheville Friends Meeting Ad Hoc Committee on Marriage Under the Care of the Meeting**

On December 19, Gary Briggs, Barbara Esther, Alan Robinson and Evan Richardson met to work on the final section of the draft Procedure for Marriage Under the Care of the Meeting. We are prepared to bring this work to the Meeting at the January Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business for consideration.

Please know that once again the Ad Hoc Committee is in the position of hearing a variety of opinions and concerns regarding the importance and role of the Meeting in registering marriages with the State of NC. We have done our work of trying to discern the sense of the Meeting while holding all of these voices in our hearts and minds. We want to remind individual Friends that it is our work as a community to find common ground. This means that each of us may need to be willing to give up some of our strongly held opinions and feelings in order to build a stronger community together. We ask that each of us consider what love asks of us in coming together on the issues at hand and that we each be willing to be transformed by love in this process of discerning together.

We have among us Friends who feel that legal registration for any marriage is an important protection for families with children as well as an important witness of commitment. We have among us Friends who feel it is important to let the couple determine the role of legal registration in their lives, noting that some Friends may have a witness against legal registration while other couples may actually experience real negative consequences of legal registration. We have among us Friends who feel it is important that we not develop a "two-tier" system, which appears to give status to those couples seeking legal registration over those couples who are not seeking legal registration. Finally, we considered the many voices who seek to find a way that we can witness as a meeting the role the State of NC is currently playing in discriminating against same sex marriages. It is in holding all of this in our hearts and minds that we offer the following:

### **The Role of the Wedding Committee**

The members of the Wedding Committee will assist the couple in making arrangements for the Meeting for Worship for the Purpose of Marriage (see the attached check list). The Wedding Committee may play as active a role as the couple desires in the planning and execution of the ceremony. At a minimum, the Wedding Committee should review with the couple their plans and offer guidance regarding traditional aspects of a ceremony held in the manner of Friends. Such guidance may focus on the format for the meeting for worship; the inclusion of a wedding certificate; the tradition of not recording or photographing the meeting for worship; and the ways in which Quaker testimonies can help shape the ceremony planning.

The Wedding Committee may want to review with the couple what legal arrangements, if any, they plan to make for their marriage and offer support and assistance in this process. Honoring that of God in each of us, the Meeting will leave it up to the couple to request assistance from the Meeting to legally register their marriage with the State of North Carolina. The Meeting recognizes the value of legal registration for many couples, while accepting that this step may not be in the best interest of some couples and may even meet resistance from the State of NC for some others; nonetheless, the committee will assist the couple and garner the support of the Meeting in carrying out their desires in this matter. Consistent with a long held testimony of Friends, Asheville Friends Meeting recognizes that the power to marry “is the work of the Lord only.”

### **The Role of the Meeting**

The Meeting will endeavor to provide ongoing support for both partners and for their marriage relationship as needed, but especially in times of challenges or major life changes. We encourage the couple to avail themselves of the resources that are available to them in our Meeting – reconvening their clearness committee for marriage, seeking listening and counsel by members of the Ministry and Counsel committee or others in the meeting in whom the couple places trust, requesting practical assistance from the Pastoral Care Committee, requesting a new clearness committee be appointed by the Ministry and Counsel committee, and participating in Friends' activities or workshops that encourage good communication and trust building, such as Couple Enrichment.

### **Resources on Marriage**

Several books, pamphlets and programs offer guidance for couples intending marriage in Quaker Meetings, for the Clearness Committees and for ongoing work of maintaining a marriage. The following (among others) are recommended:

- Elizabeth Watson, *Clearness for Marriage*. Family Relations Committee, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, 1980, 17 pp.
- “*In the presence of God and these our Friends...*” *A Quaker Marriage*. Family Relations Committee, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, 1988, 26 pp.
- *A Resource Guide to be used by a Same Sex Couple and by Their Monthly Meeting’s Committee on Clearness in the Event of Their Request for A Celebration of Commitment or Marriage*. Family Relations Committee, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, 1988, 13 pp.
- Quaker Marriage by Edward Milligan. Available from FGC Quakerbooks.
- Marriage From the Heart: Eight Commitments of a Spiritually Fulfilling Life Together by Lois Kellerman and Nelly Bly. Available from FGC Quakerbooks.
- *Marriage and Commitment* by Southeastern Yearly Meeting. Available from FGC Quakerbooks.
- Couples Enrichment for Friends Program sponsored by the Traveling Ministries Committee of Friends General Conference. You can find more information on the FGC website at <http://www.fgcquaker.org/traveling/couples/index.html>.

### **Check List for Arrangements for Meeting for Worship for the Purpose of Marriage**

- Clarify which arrangements will be made by members of the Wedding Committee and the Meeting and which by the couple and their friends and/or family.
- If the couple desires to register their marriage with the State of North Carolina, secure a marriage license. The Meeting (either members of the Wedding Committee or the Clerk) will be responsible for signing it for submission to the State following the ceremony.
- Secure a date and location for the ceremony and any reception to follow. As desired arrange for a caterer and musicians.
- Arrange for a Wedding Certificate to be prepared. Will the couple use traditional Quaker vows or prepare their own?
- Create invitations and consider including information about a Quaker Wedding ceremony. The pamphlet “*In the presence of God and these our Friends...*”, noted in the resources section, may be helpful.
- Create a Wedding Program for the ceremony as needed, perhaps including information about a Quaker Wedding ceremony.
- Decide the details of the ceremony:
  - Should someone stand at the beginning to explain what to expect from this Wedding ceremony, especially the traditional Quaker aspects?
  - Will rings be exchanged, and will someone be needed as a ring custodian until the appropriate moment?
  - Shall the couple sign the Wedding Certificate following the sharing of vows, the exchanging of rings, or later? When shall the members of the Wedding

Committee, family members and friends be invited to sign the certificate?

- Does the couple desire music or any reading preceding, during or at the close of the ceremony? Who will do this?
- Who will close the Meeting for Worship, and how?
- Who will be responsible for helping guests sign the Wedding Certificate and keeping it safe?
- How will the room be set up for the wedding ceremony? Where will the couple sit, and where will the family and close friends, the Wedding Committee, and the other guests sit? Where will the certificate be?
- What assistance is needed from the Wedding Committee, Meeting members, or family and friends for set up, transition to a reception, food and service at the reception, any other reception activities, and clean-up?

Please know that it is our intention to bring the final document back to the entire Meeting for one last review as the final step. We will do this once the Meeting has addressed the section above.

One Friend asked how the Meeting will work with (or against) the legal aspects of marriage, feeling that the last sentence in the section Role of the Wedding Committee may be a contradiction. This Friend also stated a desire to ensure that the Meeting afford the same support and assistance to same-gender couples regarding children that it does for heterosexual couples.

Some Friends envisioned a third option: that a Meeting might attempt to file a legal recognition for marriages despite the illegality of such a union. This could have ramifications, such as fines for an individual solemnizing the marriage.

One Friend sought clarity about the role of membership in a marriage, and said they would feel more secure if they knew all the laborious preparation that was going into this document was intended for instances where at least one of the individuals in question is a member.

We were reminded that this was indeed the case, and had been stated in an earlier section of the document under review.

A Friend stated that a clear distinction should be made between the roles of the Wedding Committee and of the Clearness Committee.

A Friend was unsure as to whether the meeting was in unity regarding same-gender marriage. The Friend asked whether the Meeting would, upon a same-sex couple's request to register their marriage decide to act upon the couple's intent by sending Meeting representatives to the courthouse. The Friend commented that the wording encourages the Meeting to act and that if there is a problem the course of action will depend on the couple's desires and the strengths of the Meeting at the time. This Friend also expressed concern that the document include a sense that the Meeting acknowledges that the process is something a future community will have to decide, and cautioned the Meeting about focusing on marriage as a political act lest we diminish our ability to tend to the spiritual.

In answer to the question about how the meeting viewed same-gender marriage, a Friend reminded those present of a Minute from two years ago showing support for same-gender marriage.

Friends were encouraged to review the previous work that had been done and to take it upon themselves to refer to the documents the Ad Hoc Committee on Marriage has already brought for approval.

One Friend sought clarity about the statement “garner the support of the meeting...” wondering whether it would require that Friends go to the courthouse whenever it was requested.

Another Friend wished to echo that the language be explicit that we are charging the Wedding Committee to assist the couple in carrying out the wishes of the couple.

A Friend commented that the term “garner” does not mean anyone is forced to act but instead that the Meeting is willing to seek someone to go to court on behalf of the couple when it is so led.

Another Friend stated that while we understand that our community supports couples who wish to be committed to one another regardless of gender, that it’s impossible to predict what problems may arise and should let Spirit guide us in our decision making.

One Friend added that the document was a statement of openness, but that any action the meeting takes should also be the desire of the couple.

A Friend expressed a desire that the document state that the matter is larger than just the committee or the couple, and that it is up to the Wedding Committee to gather the entire meeting community to see whether it is strong enough to take political action and to explore how strongly the action stems from a spiritual source. This Friend also commented that the document may allude to a road map that leads to a place to which the Meeting is not capable of going, and was skeptical of the ability of this document to navigate the unfolding. The Friend also expressed a desire that the Wedding Committee be informed of the potential hard work it may have to endure.

One Friend commented that the phrase “Garner the support of the Meeting” implies that this would be part of the due diligence of Friends.

Another Friend expressed gratitude for the economy of language used in the document to convey the challenge to and commitment required of the Meeting, and felt the document – given that we don’t live in a perfect world and are spiritual beings in a human form – presented an excellent version of the best available to us in our limited human condition.

**Friends reviewed and approved The Role of the Wedding Committee to read as follows:**

### **The Role of the Wedding Committee**

The members of the Wedding Committee will assist the couple in making arrangements for the Meeting for Worship for the Purpose of Marriage (see the attached check list). The Wedding Committee may play as active a role as the couple desires in the planning and execution of the ceremony. At a minimum, the Wedding Committee should review with the couple their plans and offer guidance regarding traditional aspects of a ceremony held in the manner of Friends. Such guidance may focus on the format for the meeting for worship; the inclusion of a wedding certificate; the tradition of not recording or photographing the meeting for worship; and the ways in which Quaker testimonies can help shape the ceremony planning.

The Wedding Committee may want to review with the couple what legal arrangements, if any, they plan to make for their marriage and offer support and assistance in this process. Honoring that of God in each of us, the Meeting will leave it up to the couple to request assistance from the Meeting to legally register their marriage with the State of North Carolina. The Meeting recognizes the value of legal registration for many couples, while accepting that this step may not be in the best interest of some couples and may even meet resistance from the State of NC for some others; nonetheless, the committee will assist the couple in carrying out their desires in this matter, and garner the support of the Meeting. While we acknowledge the long held testimony of Friends that the power to marry "is the work of the Lord only"; Asheville Friends Meeting also recognizes the power of the State of NC to determine which couples shall be able to benefit from legal registration of their marriage. Moreover, we feel that legal registration for any marriage is an important protection for families with children. We ask the Wedding Committee to explore fully and assist couples who don't choose or are not eligible for legal registration other legal steps they can take to protect their family.

### **Friends reviewed and approved The Role of the Meeting to read as follows:**

#### **The Role of the Meeting**

The Meeting will endeavor to provide ongoing support for both partners and for their marriage relationship as needed, but especially in times of challenges or major life changes. We encourage the couple to avail themselves of the resources that are available to them in our Meeting – reconvening their clearness committee for marriage, seeking listening and counsel by members of the Ministry and Counsel committee or others in the meeting in whom the couple places trust, requesting practical assistance from the Pastoral Care Committee, requesting a new clearness committee be appointed by the Ministry and Counsel committee, and participating in Friends' activities or workshops that encourage good communication and trust building, such as Couple Enrichment.

The Meeting agreed to review the Resources and Checklist section, as well as the full document, at the Second Month Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business.

#### Ad Hoc Revision Committee of the yearly meeting Guide to Our Faith and Practice

Friends reviewed the following two items forwarded by the yearly meeting committee:

**The current version** of the Guide to Our Faith and Practice has Section Four in the following order:

**Testifying to the Life of the Spirit**

The Meeting Community  
Peace  
Simplicity  
Equality  
Education  
Government  
Sexuality  
Nurture of Children

**The committee proposes** that the following format and order be used in future printings of the Guide:

***Testifying to the Life of the Spirit***

***Introduction***

***Testimonies***

*Integrity*

*Peace*

*Simplicity*

*Equality*

*Community*

***Areas of Witness***

*Government*

*Children*

*Education*

*Sexuality*

**Friends reviewed and approved the proposed change to the Table of Contents for Section IV of the SAYMA Guide to Our Faith and Practice.**

We also reviewed **Proceeding in the Life of the Spirit, Section III: Marriage: Planning for the wedding** (Approved by SAYMA Faith and Practice Revision Committee, 10/27/07)

**Current Version:**

The oversight committee, together with the couple, arranges to meet legal requirements and to accomplish the marriage with simplicity and reverence. The reception, if any, is also part of their responsibility.

The oversight committee must know the legal requirements where the marriage will occur. It is the couple's responsibility to secure the marriage license or other legal form to be filed, by the committee, with the county clerk or similar officer after the marriage has taken place. Some localities have a special form for the Religious Society of Friends, but if not the committee can usually change the standard wording to comply with Friends' procedures. An approved meeting member must sign to represent the meeting, and others to fill the required number of witnesses.

***Proposed Revision:***

*The oversight committee works with the couple to accomplish the Meeting for Worship for Marriage with simplicity and reverence. The reception, if any, is also part of their responsibility.*

*Regarding legal aspects of marriages under their care, meetings within SAYMA differ. Underlying these differences is the fact that SAYMA Friends live in states that deny the*

*institution of marriage to same-gender couples. Some Meetings assist heterosexual couples to complete state-approved forms that give legal status to marriage. Other meetings offer to heterosexual couples only what may be legally offered to their same gender counter parts: a Quaker marriage. In these cases and in states where Quaker marriages are no longer legally recognized, heterosexual couples desiring a signed state- recognized marriage license must go before a state-approved official to obtain it.*

*The oversight committee should know the current legal requirements of the state where the marriage will occur, as Quaker Marriage Laws have been repealed in some states. When a marriage license or other legal form is used, it is the couple's responsibility to secure it. In that case, the oversight committee will arrange to have it signed and the couple will file it.*

**Friends approved the following suggestions to the Faith and Practice Revision Committee regarding the proposed revision of Planning the Wedding:**

- Paragraph 1: Since Friends have largely discontinued use of the term “oversight” we suggest “wedding committee” in its place.

That clarity be sought about the second sentence: does “their” refer to the committee, the couple or both?

In that same sentence Friends ask that clarification be included to say that the committee is responsible for supporting the process, but is not necessarily responsible for all aspects of the reception.

- In paragraph 2: Friends support the addition of a third option: that a Meeting might support a couple's attempt to file a legal recognition for same-sex marriage despite the legal status of such a union.

Finance Committee Report/Treasurer's Report

Asheville Friends Meeting Finance Committee report, 1/16/08

1. Palin Spruance has resigned as bookkeeper effective in December. Adrienne Weir has volunteered to take over the bookkeeping for Meeting for the time being. This is in addition to her role as Treasurer. The Finance Committee has requested that the Nominating Committee review our Committee's composition. It has seemed best in the recent past to separate the functions of Bookkeeper and Treasurer. For us to continue to do this, we will need at least one more member on the Finance Committee.

A Friend expressed that it may be helpful to note that in the past the bookkeeper was not a member of the Finance Committee.

2. We present an amended budget for 2008. We have removed the bookkeeping line. The miscellaneous line of \$2,000 could be used to fund a paid bookkeeper position if necessary. We have adjusted the expected income to approximate the actual income for 2007. We have increased the Outreach line to \$5,000, which seems to be an amount sustainable year-to-year.

3. The House and Grounds Committee proposed in December that the remaining amount of the House and Grounds budget line, approximately \$4,140, be transferred to the Meeting House Improvement Fund. The Finance Committee is in agreement. We ask approval of Meeting for this.

House and Grounds in the past have asked that this be a matter of policy.

**Friends reviewed and approved a request by the Finance Committee to transfer the remaining amount of the 2007 House and Grounds budget to the Meeting House Improvements Fund, and approved this action as a matter of policy annually.**

4. [We have a preliminary report for 2007](#). There may be a minor amount of interest income, which is not yet reflected in the report. A final report will be presented in February.

Adrienne and David recommend that the total amount reserved for Outreach for 2007 be \$5,000. We ask Meeting's approval.

**Friends reviewed and approved the Finance Committee's request to transfer surplus funds to the Outreach budget line for 2007 to bring the total amount to \$5,000.**

Within this Outreach the meeting anticipates that we will make contributions to wider Quaker organizations, activities, and initiatives. In the past, the dollar amount was split, half to Quaker organizations and half to others.

A Friend asked for clarity about the intention and use of the outreach monies, and expressed a desire to restrict these funds to local organizations in which Friends have a presence.

One Friend expressed that the Meeting should continue to trust the Peace and Earth Committee, which has been charged with allocating outreach money, to use the guidelines already in place to make these decisions.

Another Friend echoed the sentiment that we continue to trust the Peace and Earth Committee, and looks forward to a report on how the Outreach budget is utilized.

**Friends reviewed and approved the Finance Committee's request for an Outreach budget line for 2008 in the amount of \$5,000.**

The preliminary report does not include \$10,150 in expenses for painting the Meeting House. This was paid from the Meeting House Improvement fund, our major reserve fund. We will discuss including this expense in the final General Fund report.

The House and Grounds Committee in December proposed changes to our Reserve Funds. The Finance Committee will be reviewing the situation and making a recommendation.

Ministry and Oversight will be recommending to the Finance Committee that we change the process for developing a budget. We will review the recommendations of Ministry and Oversight

and report back to Meeting.

A Friend expressed relief and gratitude that the balance is much more promising and hopeful than was anticipated.

Another Friend asked: Is this not a call for us to be faithful and trust? We were challenged to think of all the energy that gets wasted on fear and worry.

It was noted that contributions in December 2007 were four times what they are typically in other months.

The Meeting reviewed [the proposed 2008 budget](#). David Clements provided an overview of the budget, and showed the comparison between 2007 actual revenues with the proposed revenues for 2008.

A Friend cautioned that rental income might be less for 2008 because a weekly group cancelled their rental in lieu of a free location.

One Friend expressed gratitude for the rental income since it provides both income and outreach opportunities.

Another Friend expressed joy at the current budget, and celebrated the sound financial position the Asheville Friends Meeting is in currently.

**Friends reviewed and approved the Asheville Friends Meeting 2008 budget.**

#### Nominating Committee Report

Jim Cavener presented a brief report, offering a single individual for approval, and noted that the Finance Committee still needs another member. Alice Powell has agreed to be on the Hospitality Committee along with Bob Smith and Phil Neal. The committee needs a minimum of six members, thus three more members are still being sought.

**Friends approved the addition of Alice Powell to the Hospitality Committee for service through June 2010.**

#### Ministry and Counsel Committee Report/Ad Hoc Retreat Committee

Katherine Kowal offered a report from Ministry and Counsel to be attached to the minutes, and was pleased to report that the Ad Hoc Retreat Committee found a location in which to hold a residential meeting Retreat at the Montreat Conference Center September 26-28, 2008. The Ad Hoc Committee was authorized by the meeting last month to pay a deposit to reserve that weekend.

#### Scholarship Committee Report

The Scholarship Committee presented a request from Stephanie Gossett in the amount of \$3,050, and Friends reviewed the request.

The matter was brought before Meeting because it exceeds the amount typically set aside for such scholarships. If approved, it would draw down all funds for 2008. The committee requests an additional \$500 for the College Age Friends Support Fund.

Friends generally expressed support for granting the request.

One Friend said that while the request is for more than the interest on the principle in the fund, the request does not exceed the interest earned from the general fund; but that the interest from the general fund is not usually used to replace the amount awarded from the scholarship fund.

A Friend stated they would like to see the Meeting support Stephanie and her family, as well as recognize the many families who have children who will be of college age in the future. The Friend asked who would do the work of protecting the principle, since awarding this amount would set precedence for the Meeting. How would the Meeting recognize the needs of other families?

One Friend expressed a desire to support the request and keep the fund healthy and growing.  
**Friends reviewed and approved a request from the Scholarship Committee in the amount of \$3,050 for Stephanie Gossett to attend Earlham College and to travel to May term study in Ghana. Furthermore we ask that research be conducted by the Finance Committee to find ways to keep the College Age Friends Support Fund healthy and to replenish funds that are disbursed.**

**Friends reviewed and approved a request from the Scholarship Committee for an additional \$500 in case there are additional requests in 2008.**

**3:03 p.m.:** The Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business concluded with a short period of worship.