

Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business
Asheville Friends Meeting
9th Month 8, 2013

Clerk: Laura Maynard Lane

Recording Clerk: Steve Livingston

Attendance: Rylin Hansen, Edwin Brown, Jim Barham, Leslee Johnson, Kristi Gjelfriend, George Gjelfriend, Edie Patrick, Jim Cavener, Pat Johnson, Jen Rhode-Ward, Katherine Kowal, Margaret Normile, Sarah Jane Thomas, Gita Larson, Joy Gossett, Barbara Esther, Alan Robinson, Patti Hughes, Adrienne Weir

Meeting began at 12 noon with a moment of silence. The Clerk read from the SAYMA Faith and Practice the section on Peace

Agenda was accepted as written.

Minutes of 8th month were approved as posted on the Meeting website.

Treasurer's Report

Pat Johnson presented the Treasurer's Report. She apologized for having brought only one printed copy of the 8th month report, but copies had been sent electronically, and there were no questions or concerns offered for 8th month report. Friends accepted the report as posted.

Pat distributed paper copies of the 9th month report and gave a synopsis. She clarified that budget for utilities will decrease due to no longer having a landline phone. She clarified that Quickbooks keeps inserting old checks from many years ago into the budget, and advised that Friends ignore those entries as they are not relevant.

In response to an inquiry, Gjeorge explained that we have to pay \$150 annual charge on our account at Wells Fargo because it is a "brokerage" account and we have been unable to change it. Treasurer expressed her intention to move this account to Self Help Credit Union as soon as feasible.

Pat informed us that Peace and Earth donated \$50 to Medea Benjamin to offset some of her expenses for her recent appearances in Asheville which were sponsored by the Meeting. Ms. Benjamin's presentations were very well attended.

Friends accepted the Treasurer's report.

Peace and Earth

Katherine Kowal rose to help facilitate discussion of the Swannanoa Valley Minute on Palestine. Laura read the Minute, which can be found in last month's Minutes, as well as being linked to our home page.

A Friend recounted that he sent an email outlining several objections to the Minute. Firstly, he said the Israeli claim to the land predates the Palestinian claim by 3000 years. Second, he noted that the Palestinian government has pledged the destruction of Israel and that they periodically launch rockets at Israel. Further, he is uncomfortable with the idea of taking sides in any conflict. Finally, the boycott being called for in the Swannanoa Minute involves products that he's never heard of. He felt that the boycott was therefore merely a symbolic act, and felt that this was not enough to warrant a Minute. He suggested we do something more active, such as dig a well or plant an orchard. Right now, he felt it made sense for Peace and Earth to take \$1000 from our Building Fund to help Syrian refugees.

A Friend rose in support of the spirit of the minute, and acknowledging the first Friend's concern about not having enough information to make an informed decision, expressed gratitude that we are not taking action today. He encouraged Friends to read the book "The General's Son", by Miko Peled, an Israeli military officer who came to sympathize with the Palestinians' situation after his military service. Mr. Peled came to Asheville recently and spoke at our Meeting. The gist of the book is that Israel is a racist state, and treats the Palestinians much as we once treated African slaves. Mr. Peled calls for one-state solution with full rights of return for Palestinians. The Friend suggested that we boycott all Israeli products and fully disinvest as was done with regard to apartheid in South Africa. Some Friends expressed support.

A Friend noted that the Minute has two parts: one is of our faith journey around truth and reconciliation, while the second part is more political. Her preference is to focus on the first part, and avoid getting sidetracked in political action. She felt sure that many of us can and will do that individually. Let us instead find the seed, she advised, that is the seed for all conflict, whether international, national, or local. What is the gift that we bring to bind up the wounds and bring people together? Some Friends expressed support.

A Friend described the minute as an attempt, in part, to enlighten readers concerning the inequalities inherent in the conflict, and noted that several key players in the region who have worked for reconciliation have been assassinated, either literally or figuratively. The crux of the problem, this Friend felt, is the failure of the two principal players – the U.S. and Israel – to address the issue. Our nation's policies have been shaped by oil and religion rather than justice and humanity, he suggested. He expressed that the proposed boycott is a puny attempt to address the failure, that a better approach would be to minute a query that explores the failure and proposes larger, more positive steps to address it.

Another Friend spoke to this, stating that Israel's strength is derived solely from U.S. support, and that during the Bush Presidency, numerous religious figures encouraged

support for Israel in order to hasten the Second Coming. Israel has not shown true interest in the resolving the issues with Palestine, she pointed out. Israel has repeatedly violated cease fires, and their unspoken intention, she believes, is to eliminate all Arabic peoples from the area known as Palestine. Israel is guilty of more atrocities than can be recounted, she argued, including the ongoing deadly blockade of Gaza. Israel would have a great deal more incentive to promote peace if the U.S. would stop supporting them until they do, she stated.

Another Friend concurred with this assessment, adding that Israel enjoys total impunity for their actions. Given the magnitude of the atrocities committed against Palestinian civilians, he said that as Quakers, we do not dare to be ignorant of what is going on there. He mentioned Jewish Voice for Peace, an advocacy group in the U.S., and their younger affiliate “Young, Jewish, and Proud”.

The clerk returned to the point about two parts, expressing the sense that there is a lot of support for the first part, but uncertainty about the second part – what action(s) we should take.

Peace and Earth Committee offered to help the Meeting find our way forward in response to the Minute. The clerk of Spiritual Enrichment Committee offered that the Committee could work with P&E to help us become better informed. A Friend asked that we not lose sight of what we can do, actively, with money, to relieve suffering, expressing concern that in our zeal to be well informed, we get distracted from what we can actually do. Statements of our positions may be meaningful or influential, or they may not. We may be poking at something we can't penetrate, she advised.

The clerk thanked Friends for their thoughts.

Letter writing on Fifth First Day

Katherine returned to the question of letter writing on fifth Sundays. Participation has been minimal. Peace and Earth is asking for feedback: should we continue with the same format, or try something different? She informed us that Peace and Earth has gotten a lot of feedback about the distractions inherent in the setting.

One Friend pointed out that she has difficulty writing by hand and so is unable to participate. She suggested that Meeting provide a small printer to allow Friends to write on their laptops and print out on the spot. Another Friend pointed out that there is already a printer available. This Friend also suggested we have a warm-up dialog to help get us started in the process.

A Friend supported having postcards rather than letter writing, as the details of the letters we write are not significant to the Representative, only the position we are expressing. Postcards are also much easier for the Congressional office to handle, and much more

readable, as another Friend observed. It was also suggested that our postcard statements take form of queries.

Another Friend suggested using a format of letters pre-written and sent via email, so that Friends could simply print, sign, and mail. A Friend observed that Meeting seemed focused on coming up with a process that works rather than abandoning the process altogether.

A Friend asked if Peace and Earth could find out what format of letter writing has been found to be statistically most effective.

Friends thanked Katherine for bringing the concern to the Meeting.

Nominating Committee

Friends approved Pat Johnson to serve as the Meeting's official representative to Green Congregations, a group of spiritual communities that focus of making their own facilities more energy efficient.

Communications Committee

Steve L. reminded Friends that Meeting has a new phone number: 828-423-0714 and asked that everyone make a note of it.

He reported that our AT&T service has been discontinued, meaning at this point there is no equipment provided by the Meeting allowing a person to dial out of the Meetinghouse. He reminded Friends that we agreed last month to provide two cellphones with wall chargers for this purpose. He asked that anyone has a cellphone that is no longer in use to please donate it to the Meeting.

Memorial Committee

The Memorial Meeting for Virginia Redfield will take place on Nov 2 at the Meetinghouse. Afterwards we will have refreshments and fellowship at Virginia's condo at Piney Woods, in accordance with her wishes.

Fall pot luck

Our co-clerks suggest that we have a pot luck with Swannanoa Friends sometime in the Fall to welcome new attenders and get us all together for fellowship and singing – and pumpkins. Suggested location is at our Meetinghouse. And ad hoc committee was formed to arrange the event consisting of Steve L., Jen R-W and Laura M-L. Friends agreed with the idea, and suggested that we also invite Celo and Brevard Friends.

Other

Joy informed Meeting of the successful effort of several Asheville and Swannanoa Valley Friends to provide visitation for Phil Neal while his daughter Edna was off hiking on the Appalachian Trail. She reports that he really felt loved, and encouraged the Meeting not to abandon this effort. A former Asheville Friend with close ties to Phil organized a singing event using the songbook that he and his wife Peg put together many years ago, and Phil was delighted. Joy indicated that this event will be repeated, and interested Friends should contact her for details.

Minutes of gratitude for service

Friends approved the following Minute of Gratitude for Kitti Reynolds' service as clerk:

Asheville Meeting acknowledges with appreciation Kitti Reynolds' service to the Meeting as our clerk for the past two years. She has cared for the Meeting in a very personal way, she has nurtured us with her ministry, guided us with her facilitating skills, and brightened our business meetings with her wonderful sense of humor. Our Meeting is blessed by Kitti's presence in our midst and doubly blessed to have had her as our clerk.

Friends approved the following Minute of Gratitude for Jen Rhode-Ward's service as recording clerk:

Asheville Meeting acknowledges with appreciation Jen Rhode Ward's five years of service as our Recording Clerk. Throughout this time, Jen has served faithfully and diligently, recording with great clarity the sense of the Meeting as well as the discernment process leading up to it. Every month near the beginning of our Meeting for Business, we review the previous month's minutes and make necessary revisions or additions as needed prior to approving them. Our experience has been that there is rarely any need to change or add to Jen's recording. We are grateful for her gifts and her willingness to share them for such a prolonged period of service.

Closing worship

There being no further business, meeting adjourned with a moment of silent worship at 1:20 p.m.