

Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business
Asheville Friends Meeting
11th Month 10, 2013

Clerk: Laura Maynard Lane

Recording Clerk: Steve Livingston

Attendance: Doug Lane, Jen Rhode-Ward, Kitti Reynolds, Rylin Hansen, Kristi Gjelfriend, Katherine Kowal, Jim and Gail Hipkins, Ruth Stewart, Jim Cavener, George Gjelfriend, David Clements, Margaret Normile, Patti Hughes, Edwin Brown, Pat Johnson, Bobby Carter, Joy Gossett, Nancy Kuykendall, Barbara Esther, Alan Robinson, Jim Barham, Adrienne Weir

Meeting began at 11:50 a.m. with a moment of silence

Clerk's reading:

Some questions you might ask

By Mary Oliver

Is the soul solid, like iron?
Or is it tender and breakable, like
the wings of a moth in the beak of the owl?
Who has it, and who doesn't?
I keep looking around me.
The face of the moose is as sad
as the face of Jesus.
The swan opens her white wings slowly.
In the fall, the black bear carries leaves into the darkness.
One question leads to another.
Does it have a shape? Like an iceberg?
Like the eye of a hummingbird?
Does it have one lung, like the snake and the scallop?
Why should I have it, and not the anteater
who loves her children?
Why should I have it, and not the camel?
Come to think of it, what about the maple trees?
What about the blue iris?
What about all the little stones, sitting alone in the moonlight?
What about roses, and lemons, and their shining leaves?
What about the grass?

Minutes of 10th month meeting approved as posted.

Ministry and Counsel

Ministry and Council has been grappling with a sensitive issue for many months. We have reached a point where we feel that we need input from the larger Meeting

Community to move forward.

Our Friend F has been without a place to live for some time. At some point in the past, it was suggested to F by a Friend that he could put a few of his belongings that he was keeping in his car under the porch at the meetinghouse. F began storing his belongings at the Meetinghouse. It started with just a few items, and then grew to include a large quantity of things stored in various locations around the meetinghouse and the grounds. The storage has become an issue for many reasons, including storage of unsafe and unhealthy items and threatening our good relationships with our neighbors.

Ministry and Council has been working with F for several months to get his items removed from the Meetinghouse. We have offered our help and assistance in accessing community resources for the homeless. We have also offered that we could help connect F with resources to find permanent housing. He has not taken us up on any of those offers.

F has met with Ministry and Council three times in the last three months. Individual Ministry and Council members, plus Adrienne, have also talked individually with F, either in person or by phone. In each of those meetings, he agreed to move all of his belongings from the Meetinghouse and insisted that he was not using the Meetinghouse and grounds as living quarters. At each meeting, we set a deadline agreed upon by the committee and F. Each time, F has not met the deadline to remove his belongings, and in fact has appeared to add more items. When we set the last deadline, we made it clear that if his things were not gone by the last date (October 28th) we would take measures to remove them. We offered to have a company come and haul away the things to the dump, or to hire a moving company and rent a storage space for one month. F did not like either option and assured us that his things would be gone by October 28th.

We are now at November 10th. Ministry and Council does not have the money in our current budget to carry out either of the clean-up options we proposed. Several of our members plus Adrienne met 3 times in the last two weeks to begin clearing out and recycling some of the empty boxes and belongings from under the porch and out in the "campsite" area. F was not pleased with his approach either.

This process is upsetting to all involved. Ministry and Council has reached the end of what we feel we can do without getting more input from the meeting as a whole. Here are some different proposals:

- *Approve the money from a different part of our budget to pay for a junk removal service to come remove the remaining belongings from the ground*
- *Set a workday in the near future for Friends to come help F move his remaining belongings to the barn where he is now storing them.*
- *Have Friends each take a box of belongings home to store for F until he is able to get them again (Gjeorge has offered to help coordinate this option if we wish)*
- *Work out a way so that his car and truck are permanently banned from being stored in our parking lot.*
- *Offer to set up a Clearness committee to meet with Frank to help him determine his next steps.*

We wish for the Meeting to remember that this is a tender situation. We feel great compassion for our Friend F, but also need to be clear about upholding our boundaries as a Meeting.

Clerk explained that though this is an action item, Ministry & Counsel will take suggestions and comments from Friends into consideration even if Meeting does not reach unity.

A Friend spoke of his perception of a divergence between the account presented by Ministry & Counsel and state of affairs as it stands. He expressed his belief that all items would be removed no later than tomorrow.

A member of Ministry & Counsel expressed compassion for F's condition, but underscored the need for us to maintain our boundaries. The Friend recalled that there have been previous instances where all of the items would be removed "tomorrow" but "tomorrow" has never come. The Friend spoke in favor of involving law enforcement if "tomorrow" does not occur on 11/11.

A Friend expressed concern that F has been living in his car on the Meeting property, without having Meeting approval, and despite having stated to the contrary. This has engendered a sense of betrayal and disrespect for the Meeting.

Another Friend spoke as one who has not been involved with this, but from experience in other communities. The Friend expressed that acts of kindness can sometimes backfire and be unhelpful. There may not be any one good answer that would be satisfactory to all. The best we can do is take the steps that we must to protect our community and our health, and endeavor to be mindful of that of G*D in F and speak to that.

A Friend spoke as one who is a newcomer to the Meeting, but one who knows F through having worked with him on various projects, and found him to be an able and willing worker. The Friend supports the idea of getting all of F's items off of the Meeting grounds and into a rental locker, and pay the rent for one month. After that, it would be up to F to pay the rent or his items would be disposed of by the rental agency. The Friend offered to help move F's belongings.

Clerk recounted that Ministry & Counsel has researched having F's belongings moved to a storage locker and ran into a problem hiring a moving company to do the labor. They were unwilling to move a "hoarder" due to safety issues.

A Friend expressed issues concerning F's interactions with the Meeting, e.g. attending only for meals, taking food out of our refrigerator. The Friend recalled an occasion some years ago when F brought his mother to Meeting for Worship. She seemed to be very comfortable, but F forced her to leave apparently against her will. The Friend spoke of F's reputation among people who have known him for many years, that he is known to have significant psychiatric issues. The Friend expressed compassion for his condition, acknowledging the support we have given him and might give him in the future but also the need to maintain our boundaries. This Friend supported the idea of putting his belongings in storage for a month. The time has come to take matters into our own hands.

A Friend asked if we knew whether his truck is locked, if we would have to break in. Clerk explained that we are talking about items that are stored under the front porch. The Friend asked what was our legal recourse. Ministry & Counsel indicated that they had not considered legal action.

A Friend expressed concern that if we put his items in storage, it becomes our responsibility. Clerk explained that at the end of the month, the storage company would take possession and dispose of it as they see fit. Another Friend expressed concerned that this might affect our credit or good name.

A Friend acknowledged sense of violation from previous agreements not kept.

A Friend spoke as one who is new to the situation, inquiring as to what, exactly, are the concerns around storage of items under the porch. Clerk explained that items often appear in the yard, and in the Meetinghouse. Also some of the items are unsafe: leaking car batteries, flammable items, cleaning solvents, rusted items. Clerk shared concerns that our relationship with our neighbors is threatened.

A Ministry & Counsel member reminded us that “you can lead a horse to water”, recounting that Ministry & Counsel had proposed many solutions, received many promises, but to no avail, and shared the opinion that F is “not in his right mind”. This Friend has had many interactions with F and found him to not be well connected to reality. This Friend expressed that we are caught in the middle, and need to take action to protect ourselves and our neighbors. The Friend expressed support for moving F's belongings to a storage locker, and warned that we might have to obtain a warrant to have his vehicles removed.

A Friend offered to help move belongings if we rent a space to put it in. Several other Friends offered to help. A Friend expressed that it was unQuakerly to dispose of his items by putting them in a storage locker and letting them deal with it after a month. Advised that F was likely to stand in the way of our taking any action against his will. Another Friend suggested we talk to law enforcement first. Another Friend united with this.

A Friend expressed discomfort with taking action at this moment. Clerk expressed discomfort with not taking action due to the long time that this has been going on. Clerk suggested that we contact an attorney for legal advice.

Clerk offered to speak with a person who works professionally in housing for homeless. A Friend observed that it would be difficult to find housing for F due to all the stuff he has. Clerk observed that he has moved a significant amount of stuff away, but there is still an awful lot left here. A Friend advocated that F has been whittling away at this, that this is not the time to take a drastic action when he is making his best effort.

Friends approved Ministry & Counsel seeking advice from an attorney regarding our legal options. Friends approved \$1000 for M&C to use judiciously in resolving the

situation with F's belongings.

Kristi announced that no one has expressed desire to hold Orphans' Thanksgiving, and therefore we would not be having that event this year. Speak to Kristi immediately if you feel otherwise. She also reminded Friends to think about a Winter Holiday celebration. Clerk asked for ad hoc committee. Alan R offered to serve. Also expressed that anyone can attend Orphans' Thanksgiving even if they are not simply one individual without a family to share the holiday.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Pat Johnson reported that we are at about 60% of our budgeted contributions, and have spent about \$11K more than we have taken in.

Ministry & Counsel's Needs Fund is nearly out of money. Treasurer suggested that we hold off for a month, and if a need arises, she can disburse the money from the general fund. A Friend asked for clarification that money would be available if a Meeting member was in immediate need. Treasurer indicated that she would try to keep the fund balance near \$1000.

A Friend observed that there was plenty of money in House and Grounds Funds, from which we can draw the money approved for M&C to deal with F's belongings.

Friends accepted the Treasurer's Report. Treasurer then moved on to consideration of 2014 budget. Clerk of House & Grounds explained that they ended up under budget largely because a tree removal project did not take place, but would likely be done in the coming year, supported leaving the House & Grounds budget as it is.

Treasurer noted that insurance has gone up because we were not aware of the actual rate from Church Mutual before the fact. Treasurer reviewed the budget requests (or lack thereof) from various committees. Ministry & Counsel asked for \$500 to help support members who are going to Pendle Hill for Clerking Workshops.

A Friend inquired whether we are still providing child care during Meeting for Business. Treasurer replied that we are.

A Friend inquired whether it was too late for a committee to change their budget request. Treasurer assured that it was not.

Peace and Earth

Peace and Earth Committee asks that Friends examine a letter from numerous ecumenical and environmental organizations working to persuade Duke Energy to abandon coal as its means of generating electricity. 50 cities have retired coal use, partly due to pressure from

faith communities. Friends will be asked to approve Meeting's endorsement of this letter at the next Business Meeting.

The text of the letter may be found here:

[Asheville Beyond Coal Letter](#)

Sale of Palestinian Products

Steve Livingston is following a leading to obtain and sell Palestinian olive oil and soaps, and a few other craft-type products, through the Meeting. These products are marketed by Sindyanna, a cooperative based in Israel and managed by Israeli and Palestinian women, through the non-profit umbrella organization SERRV.

Sale of these products would serve three valuable purposes:

1. Support of a women's micro-enterprise
2. Support of cooperation between Israelis and Palestinians
3. Financial support of Palestinian entrepreneurs in the West Bank

Additionally, of course, it would answer the call offered by our friends “up the Valley” in their Minute on Palestine.

Steve is not asking for any funds from the Meeting. He will provide and manage all funds for the project, unless and until the Meeting might be led to take it over. He is requesting that Meeting allow its name to be attached to the project so that he can obtain wholesale pricing for the products. This would allow him to sell the products at a reduced rate to those who are less able to afford them, and/or to realize a small profit from the sales, which could then be donated to organizations working for peace and reconciliation in Palestine, such as AFSC or B'tselem.

Steve suggests that over time others in Meeting might be led to participate so that these products could be offered to the wider community at public events, providing an opportunity to advocate for reconciliation in Palestine and for the rights of Palestinian people. At this point Peace and Earth Committee has endorsed the project, and Steve is asking only that Meeting allow him to purchase the products under the Meeting's name in order to obtain wholesale pricing.

A Friend described the “Girl Scout Cookie” exception – if you are selling items that can be described as “food”, they are exempted from sales tax.

Friends approved Steve Livingston using the Meeting's name to obtain Palestinian products from Sindyanna Cooperative. Friends requested that Steve take care of paying required sales taxes.

Vusumnotfo Reading Project

Joy Gossett reported on Stephanie Gossett's work in Swaziland, and asked that Meeting consider donating to her current reading project with Vusumnotfo.

Vusumnotfo's program is 20+ years stable and dedicated together with local leaders to restarting and remaking the community's economy in the rural mountain HhoHho region of Swaziland. During and after her first two years' work in Youth Development in Swaziland through the Peace Corps, Stephanie has thoroughly scrutinized and assessed the work, management and outcomes of various non-governmental organizations involved with children. She was recruited by and pointedly chose Vusumnotfo's program, due to its community involvement, excellent management and effective outcomes, as the place to expand her work on behalf of children/youth for a third year in Swaziland.

Last year Stephanie taught, wrote curriculum, and trained teachers in one preschool in Swaziland. This year she is teaching, writing curriculum and training teachers in 50-60 Swazi HhoHho preschools, modeling and establishing the love of learning, reading and education in this larger area. Together with local leaders, the staff and volunteers at Vusumnotfo are collaborating to grow educated life-long learners and community decision-makers. It all starts with the children.

Preschool books have been generously donated, but funds are needed to house/make operational the lending library for this core of the work with teachers and children.

Your consideration and support are deeply appreciated.

Board of Directors

David C reported that the Board of Directors typically meets once a year, but has not met this year. Board consists of David, Pat J, Adrienne, Bob S, and the clerk. David will seek to organize a meeting before the end of the year.

Barbara E reported on Virginia Redfield's memorial that it went very smoothly and was a lovely event. It remains for us to write a Minute addressing her Quaker life to Friends Journal. Alan, Barbara, and Jim will serve on ad hoc committee to address this.

Closing worship

There being no further business, meeting adjourned with silence at 12:50 p.m.