

Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business Asheville Friends Meeting

First Month 15, 2017 (Rescheduled due to weather and low attendance.)

Present: Rylin Hansen; Katherine Kowal; Margaret Normile; Alan Robinson; Steve Livingston; Sharon Smith; Paul Hibsichman; Pat Johnson; Kittie Reynolds; Rusty Maynard; George Gjelfriend; Patty Burgess; Tim Burgess; Bob Lackey; Bobby Carter; Christopher Foreman; Robin Wells; Adrienne Weir; Patti Hughes, Clerk; Barbara Esther, Recording Clerk.

Meeting began with a period of silent worship from which clerk, Patti Hughes, read the following:

I sometimes wonder whether we might not do much better as Friends, in our meetings for business, if we started out by asking, "What is all the truth that we can identify in this matter? How much truth can we get before the meeting before we even begin to look for a decision? We don't often do this. What often happens is that we too soon speak our opinions and hoped for conclusions, for what might arise from our deeper selves.

Experiencing God: Three Spiritual Practices by Arthur Larrabee

Friends accepted the agenda as prepared.

Announcements:

Angela Sullivan wrote to thank Friends for the care we provided while she was in Asheville. She is doing well in Georgia.

A lovely letter was read expressing thanks for the care and concern shown during Alan's death as well as before and during the memorial service, from the Guokas family.

Friends decided to exhibit a poster depicting a woman wearing a headscarf which reads "Everyone is Welcome."

The clerk reminded us that when a report is brought to the meeting the presenter speaks to the whole meeting, whereas discussion is directed to the clerk.

Minute 1: Friends approved Twelfth Month Minutes with several corrections, to be posted on the web in its edited form.

Treasurer's Report-Alan Robinson

We reviewed the final report for 2016. Our expenses were \$640.86 more than our income. However, there was a \$1000.00 contribution dated in December, leaving us

with a net gain over expenditures. The treasurer plans to format the budget to better meet the guidelines for non-profits. The line for expenditures for Racial Justice Committee was questioned because of the time that the budget was approved versus the date that the committee spent money to present a movie at Firestorm. It was recommended that perceived discrepancies in the recorded expenditures during 2016, be communicated to the treasurer for corrections or to find answers to questions, rather than handling those questions during our meeting for business. An adjusted profit and loss statement will be provided in our February meeting for business.

Budget for 2017

We are asked by the clerk to reflect on the question of how our budget reflects the climate of this current time?

The treasurer has been reading about generally accepted practices for non-profit organizations. We are not required to submit tax reports as a church. However, the meeting can formulate a statement so that our financial dealings are transparent and correctly recorded. Any unauthorized expenditures can be questioned and carry penalties. Inadvertent expenditures can be confusing, but could also cause problems with the tax-exempt status we enjoy.

Because our budget did not include all the committee requests last month, the sheet we are seeing today is different from the draft we reviewed in December 2016. An example of what we need to include is money to cover our estimated scholarship expenditures based on what we spent last year. Our policy for the Scholarship Committee has been to budget an amount at the beginning of each year. The committee has access to two sources: the College-Aged Fund which serves one age group as requests are submitted; and the general Scholarship Fund for other expenses such as attendance at yearly meeting. We were asked to view the budget as a general funds plan so that we don't approach the budget as a deficit or balanced budget. The restricted funds and unrestricted funds will be viewed as one pool of money. Can we spend our money in this way and still be operating in a legal manner? Finance Committee could provide some education on a regular basis for our better understanding of the process and the legal guidelines. Better communication between the Finance Committee and the treasurer could also be beneficial for us as a meeting. We will postpone the approval of the budget until these questions are handled.

Discussion and perusal of the budget through a special meeting could better prepare us for approval of each year's budget. Posting of the proposed budget on our website will provide us with information prior to our next discussion of it. The treasurer and the Finance Committee will work together to prepare for our next step. Friends are asked to look carefully at the Racial Justice Committee's report from their report in last month's minutes to know the categories for which the Committee wants to use the funds requested.

Committee Reports:

Peace and Earth Committee - Katherine Kowal

Katherine pointed out that the committee's work only happens because of the support of the meeting. They see the committee as a yeast or catalyst for this work.

1. We sponsored 2 spiritual enrichment programs on the work of the AFSC
Matt Riley on report on Friends World Committee on Consultation
2. Collected approximately 180 pounds of food for MANNA
3. Collected warm coats and blankets for homeless and disabled veterans
4. Provided 2 refugee kits and collected over \$400 for Syrian refugees.
5. Sponsored (with Veterans for Peace) a presentation of *War is a Racket* at the Meeting House.
6. Sponsored 3 postcard writings to elected representatives on HB 2, Water for Gaza, and one against privatization of Immigration Detention Centers
7. Invited Interfaith Power & Light to conduct an energy audit of the Meeting House
8. Participated in a summer feeding program for school children
9. Composed and presented to MFB a letter of welcome to the Muslim community.
10. Distributed \$3,000 in Quaker outreach and \$3,000 in general outreach.

Religious Education & Hospitality Committee - Patty Burgess & Robin Wells

The children of the meeting are a growing group and the time is exciting for those who work with the children. The fellowship time after meeting for worship is important to the children.

Minute 2: Friends approve the celebration of individual birthdays among our First Day Schoolers.

It is proposed that the birthdays of the children be celebrated either upstairs or downstairs according to the comfort of the child. Our ages range from 2 1/2 years to eighth grade. Coming up are two intergenerational events: the Secret Pals Party in February and a Quaker Games Day in March. The noise we hear on occasion from the active program on our second floor is welcome as part of our ministry while the children of the meeting learn about quakerism.

Racial Justice Committee - Steve Livingston

Meeting 12/30/16 Present: Sharon Smith, Margaret Farmer, Lynnora Bierce, Steve Livingston

Meeting began with a few moments of silence. We began meeting with our usual custom of sharing our "growing edge" as we observe and learn about our own racism and racism in our associations and communities.

We talked about films as a teaching tool and seeing films as a social as well as spiritual experience. We decided to start sponsoring a movie night one Friday a month. Either at the Meetinghouse or go to a film if it's something worth seeing now,

or worth seeing on the big screen, such as “Fences” or “13”. Other suggestions “Hidden Figures”, “Midnight”.

We discussed the best use of the funds remaining in the Racial Justice Committee budget from last year. The Meeting budgeted \$1700 total, of which \$1200 was earmarked for training of committee members, but we were unable to secure the professional trainers last year, so the money was not spent. In fact only \$400 of the Committee's funds were expended. We were united that Meeting should maintain its commitment to furthering the work of the Committee by putting the money to use now, and united in recommending to the Meeting that we use the money to support two local Black-led organizations working on anti-racism and uplifting and supporting people of color. Specifically, we recommend donating \$300 to Asheville Black Lives Matter and \$1000 to Positive Change Youth Ministries, whose mission is to energize and motivate young people of color to continue their education beyond high school. The Committee has ordered additional books for the Meeting, and a label has been designed to put in them, but we are reluctant to put the books in the Library due to unresolved mold issues. We feel comfortable storing children's books upstairs, but we request that House and Grounds look into methods of eliminating or significantly reducing mold spores in the library before any more books are stored there. Margaret Farmer will create a syllabus so Friends will know what we have and what Friends can draw from.

The Committee is prepared to offer workshops in whatever time slots the Meeting makes available. We have two second hour activities planned: two women activists with Asheville Showing Up for Racial Justice will give a workshop on white fragility, and the Committee will facilitate a workshop on implicit bias.

The Committee asks Friends to consider the queries “How do we support Friends of Color in our Monthly and Yearly Meeting?” and “How do we make our Meeting a safe and welcoming space for people of color?” We suggest these possible responses:

1. Support Sharon's work as co-clerk of SAYMA URJ Committee.
2. Allow newcomers to simply be present or to be more fully engaged as they choose. Be mindful of their need for space at the same time as their desire for interaction.
3. Give people of color more rather than less benefit of doubt – assume the best of intentions and nothing less, listen for their needs but accept if they do not share a need.
4. Consider any request for help as an opportunity for reparations rather than a threat of being taken advantage of.
5. Assume differences of appearance, action, and/or speech are cultural rather than personal, i.e. are less white not less Quaker.

Finally, the Committee continues to lift up and hold in the Light the actions of Asheville Friends that perpetuate inherent racism and White Supremacy in our midst. We particularly recommend that Ministry and Counsel Committee sit with Alan Robinson, acknowledging his mistreatment of and exertion of power over Sharon Smith and his falsely presenting himself as an authority on racism.

It is the clerk's understanding that money budgeted for one year is not held over to the following year. This would indicate that the money approved for training in 2016,

would not be available for the donations delineated in this report. It was suggested that funds remaining as the budget is finalized could be dedicated as a donation to the two organizations mentioned. Pat Johnson agreed to ensure that the Racial Justice Committee and the Finance Committee meet together to discuss this item. We were counseled to support our members/attenders as they contemplate these complex issues. Listening and surrounding members with love as they take up difficult items is important as we move forward. Members of the Racial Justice Committee feel attacked and in need of apology. How is it that a member of the meeting can be allowed to attack another member or attender?

We closed with a moment of silence to meet again as way opens on Second Month 12, 2017.