

Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business
Asheville Friends Meeting
Second Month 12, 2017

Present: Margaret Farmer; Kitti Reynolds; Nathan Phillips; Alan Robinson; Bob Smith; Steve Livingston; Paul Hibschan; Jim Barham; Satchel Loftis; Pat Johnson; Gita Larson; Bobby Carter; Nick Mimkin; Sarah Jane Thomas; Rusty Maynard; Christopher Foreman; 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 have learned a very significant lesson from the Jewish prophets.
... These prophets taught that God does not require us to achieve any of the good tasks that humanity must pursue.
What God requires of us is that we not stop trying.

Bayard Rustin, 1987
Practicing Peace , Catherine Whitmire

Friends accepted the agenda as prepared.

Announcements:

The clerk related that Paul's membership was to come to monthly meeting for business last month but was overlooked. The clerk read the meeting recommendation from his former meeting, Humboldt Meeting in Arcadia, California.

Minute 1: Friends approved the membership of Paul Hibschan as a transfer, although lapsed from his membership in the Religious Society of Friends, with the knowledge that his former meeting was in approval of his membership with Asheville Friends.

Elizabeth Eames Roebling has moved to Lantana, Florida near West Palm Beach and welcomes visitors and communication from Friends. Her contact information is: 6250 Guava Lane, Lantana Florida 33462, phone (561) 469-9422, or (754) 304-7594. Her email address is lizeames@yahoo.com.

Arthur Morgan School - Middle school from Celo requested overnight lodging as the students travel. A Friend reminded us that a local meeting representative needs to be present to assist the group overnight. We would like to offer the group the space without cost with the understanding that the guidelines for use of the meetinghouse will be followed.

50th Anniversary - An all-meeting celebration will be planned for the third First Day on April 16th. There was concern that the Religious Education Committee should be consulted since

that is Easter, and we usually have an egg dyeing and hiding activity with the children. Generally, Friends did not feel that the egg hunt would be incompatible with the celebration.

Minute 2: Friends approved having the celebration of our 50th anniversary as a monthly meeting on April 16, 2017. A committee to plan the party will consist of Alan Robinson, Patti Hughes and Barbara Esther. Others may want to join in the planning process.

Minute 3: Friends approved First Month Minutes with two corrections to the discussion of the budget report.

Treasurer's Report - Alan Robinson

The treasurer has presented a new format so that our understanding of the finances of the meeting is clearer to those reviewing it. He reviewed the column headings and what each denotes. He asks Friends to take the printed sheet home to look over, and to ask him questions as they arise. He noted that unexpected expenditures such as the \$1,850 for tree felling, will sometimes come up after the budget has been approved. We may want to schedule a presentation of the way our scholarship committee functions. A review of the expenditures without naming recipients in all cases could be very illuminating to the meeting.

Budget for 2017 - Alan Robinson

Finance Committee and the treasurer met to plan the report. As the budget is prepared, the income and expenses of the previous year's budget is reviewed, and the total of expenditures is compared to the amount of money held in reserve, which should be at least as large as the budget for this year, with the hope that we can balance the budget. If we continue to spend more than we take in, we will spend down the reserves. We have a total of \$94,593.71 in funds at present (\$66,750.05 in the general fund, \$27, 843.66 in other funds).

The scholarship committee may want to meet to decide on what would be advisable to include in the budget and how.

Friends with further concerns need to communicate with the Finance Committee for our consideration of the budget next month.

Committee Reports:

Ministry and Counsel - State of the Meeting Report - Patti Hughes

The clerk explained the process she followed to write the report: meeting with clerks or other representatives from each committee to address the queries that SAYMA's Ministry and Nurture Committee asked meetings to use. The resultant report was read. Suggestions as to format and questions as to accuracy in reporting what happened in 2016. *As we sit in silent worship* was substituted for *sit in gathered silence* in in the sentence *The joy and bustle we hear from upstairs as we sit in silent worship...* We will revisit the report in March after Friends have had a chance to look at the report in depth.

The question of a whole meeting retreat was briefly discussed. We are not clear as to how long a retreat to hold, our purpose in having a retreat, and how we want to use that time set aside. Perhaps a retreat would allow us to have a chance to look closely, look for a vision of our path forward. There is general approval of the concept of having a retreat. An Ad Hoc committee will plan details.

Peace and Earth - Pat Johnson

Our Green Team, a sub-group of Peace and Earth, would like the Meeting to primarily switch over from using paper napkins and bathroom towels to cloth ones that can be reused. I have volunteered to be responsible for laundering the cloth napkins & towels each week so each one will only be used once before it is cleaned. Also there will be rags for cleaning spills and wiping up the floor. These will be kept separate from hand towels and napkins for laundering. Patti will take care of laundering these.

Minute 4: Friends approved the use of cloth napkins and wash cloths for hand drying in our meetinghouse.

Racial Justice Committee - Steve Livingston

Present: Sharon Smith, Margaret Farmer, Patti Hughes (guest), Steve Livingston, Adrienne Weir, Gita Larson (by phone)

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 shared concerns about Avis Wanda McClinton and the treatment she has received from her home Meeting at Upper Dublin PA, where she was the only African American member. Avis was read out of the Meeting by the white membership due to their resistance to her calling to identify, preserve, and commemorate grave sites of African slaves on Meetinghouse grounds, including those of her own Meeting. Sharon and Gita informed us of their intention to visit her in PA next weekend.

We discussed our 2017 budget request with Meeting clerk Patti Hughes. We expressed concern over the appearance that our committee's budget request was being treated differently than other committees' requests have been in the past and are in the present. Patti expressed that Ministry and Counsel discussed and united with our recommendation that Meeting donate \$3000 annually to black led racial justice organizations, to be disbursed according to the discernment of our committee.

Patti informed us that Ministry and Counsel had suggested an ad hoc committee to figure out where the funds would come from to fulfill the remainder of our budget request. We rejected this narrative and recommended instead that any such ad hoc committee determine where the funds will come from for the Meeting budget as a whole rather than singling out this particular portion of our committee's budget. We reminded the clerk that our Meeting has in the recent past allocated large sums of money for other projects we supported, or needs that we sought to address, with faith that we would be able to raise the needed funds, or that we had sufficient resources to compensate for any shortfall.

We reviewed the recent controversy over providing emergency funds for Friends in financial crisis. We questioned why Ministry and Counsel was looking for ways to avoid supporting a Friend in need rather than looking for Way to open. We reminded the clerk that in the past emergency funds have been approved by the clerk, disbursed by the treasurer at the clerk's request, with minimal involvement from committees, and with the haste that is appropriate in an emergency situation. *(The clerk did not unite with this stated procedure for use of the emergency fund.)

We call upon Ministry and Counsel Committee to examine this controversy in the context of the final query sent to us by our Yearly Meeting to aid in writing our State of the Meeting report: "How do we respond when the 'empire' requires us to do something in conflict with our faith and our practice?" We remind Ministry and Counsel that "empire" refers to the white colonial settler state in which we live, the racist paradigm in which we are immersed, and the laws by which actions to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable are controlled, impeded, and curtailed.

We call upon Ministry and Counsel to recommend that AFM endorse Friend Sharon Smith's ministry on racism in the Society of Friends. Endorsement of a Friend's ministry is not an uncommon practice and we are concerned that there is reluctance in this case because her ministry calls upon us Quakers to examine our own shortcomings and how our institutions, processes, and actions are harmful to Friends of Color among us. We remind the Meeting that racism will not go away by denying that it is present. We urge the Meeting to proceed in earnest to address our institutional and personal racism, and to embrace the Friend who has brought us this ministry not an adversary but as a helper and mentor.

We thanked clerk Patti Hughes for attending our committee meeting and for listening patiently and carefully to our concerns and recommendations.

We will be offering a full day workshop on Saturday, March 25, with trained racism facilitators Holly Roach and Vahesha Steadman, to examine attitudes and practices of institutional racism. We encourage all Meeting members and attenders to participate. This workshop is a vital tool in addressing racism within our own Meeting and working toward our goal of being a safe and welcoming worship community for people of color.

Our committee invites Friends to join us for our monthly movie night. This month's film is "I Am Not Your Negro", a documentary film featuring the writings of James Baldwin set against a contemporary context. We will be attending the 7 p.m. showing on Friday Feb 17. We bring to the Meeting a concern that was raised at the SAYMA Representative Meeting last Fall with the request that monthly meetings season a proposed Minute on addressing racism in the Society. This handout includes three sections. First is the concern that was brought to the Rep Meeting.

"We the undersigned are pained at the lack of cross-racial community at The Gathering and in The Religious Society of Friends. We strive to build a beloved multi-racial, multi-cultural, inclusive community, and are called to move beyond ideals and dreams into action. We have witnessed People of Color name our white supremacist culture of Friends General Conference. They remind us that at The Gathering they experience microaggressions, exclusion, and erasure. We acknowledge the historical and contemporary absence of People of Color at multiple levels of decision making. The current structures create barriers to full

participation. Our good intentions never outweigh harmful impact. We are *unsettled* that FGC centers the perceived needs of the white majority and the comfort of white Friends at The Gathering while ignoring the safety needs of Friends of Color. We cannot wait for a crisis point--we must take action now. We unite with Friends of Color in their call for a majority representation on FGC's site selection committee as an immediate first step. We call on FGC to undergo an institutional audit. Our aim is not just to add People of Color to decision making structures but to understand and change the structure so that they better serve People of Color, which in truth serves all of us. In humility and faithfulness, let us be bold!"

Next is a minute proposed by Columbia Meeting for seasoning by the monthly meetings. "Representative meeting supports the ongoing laboring of FGC and Friends of Color around issues of safety and inclusion of Friends of Color at FGC Gathering. We commend Friends of color for raising their voices around these issues. We realize that this work is not done and that we need to come together so that we are brought together in one spirit and heard as one spirit. Representative Meeting supports the efforts of FGC to listen to issues raised by Friends of Color and do the difficult work of addressing those concerns. We are excited to stand with FGC and Friends of Color as they discern how to use an institutional racism audit, and institute having more than 50% representation be persons of color on the site selection committee."

Lastly we offer this Minute for seasoning and possible submission to Rep Meeting next month.

Asheville Monthly Meeting supports the ongoing laboring of Friends of Color and other FGC Friends around issues of safety and inclusion of Friends of Color at national, regional, and local gatherings. We commend Friends of Color for raising their voices around these issues, acknowledging the failure of White Friends to be fully present and mindful of the impediments and mistreatment that inevitably arise as a result of institutional racism in the Society of Friends. We acknowledge that our work is far from done, and we seek the guidance of Friends of Color to bring us together in one spirit so we may discern our way forward in one spirit. Asheville Meeting supports the efforts of all Friends as we listen to and acknowledge the issues raised by Friends of Color, and we are committed to doing the work, however difficult, of addressing these concerns as Spirit guides us. We unite with FGC in undertaking a periodic institutional racism audit, as we are committed to doing in our own Meeting. We support their policy to require a minimum of 50% Friends of Color on their site selection committee. We call upon our Yearly Meeting to institute a similar policy to increase representation of Friends of Color on our YM Planning Committee.

Gita Larson brought a report of her visit to Upper Dublin Meeting's meeting with Abington Quarterly Meeting. A request was made that the question of Avis's having been read out of the meeting be placed early in the day so that Friends could season the issue. Avis spoke of the fact that God had not released her from her leading. She asked that a committee be formed to guide the continued consideration of her concerns. 1) make a schematic of the

graves of people of color buried at Upper Dublin Meeting, 2) place the Upper Dublin Meeting on hold until a time when the issues of racism are faced and the deep wounds have begun to heal. Gita Larson read a portion of her comments to Abington Quarter. (See attachment)

A Friend spoke of his experience of receiving a phone call from the clerk of Upper Dublin Meeting after a letter he had written was posted on Quakers Working on Racism. He read the following:

But the reality is that if messaging has such a big effect on Americans, then messaging matters. Folks on our end have to counter the lies with well-told, unabashed unironic truth-telling. And we have to demand that our media and our politicians, call out the other side. As Perlstein notes, "When one side breaks the social contract, and the other side makes a virtue of never calling them out on it, the liar always wins. When it becomes uncivil to call out liars, lying becomes free." By Sarah Seltzer/AlterNet November 12, 2010

This reminds us that there are various understandings of the same event, and that full understanding will come with listening and seeking truth.

We closed at about 3 p.m. with a moment of silence to meet again as way opens on Third Month 12, 2017.

Attachment:

February 5, 2017

Abington Quarter

PYM

Clerk, I rise to share a concern.

Avis Wanda McClinton has a mission of love. Avis is not "the problem," Upper Dublin FM is the problem.

Upper Dublin Meeting has proven to be out of good Quaker order for most of the 7 years of her membership, and love requires and includes accountability.

The Upper Dublin FM, the Quarter and PYM have become part of the problem by not correcting the actions of Upper Dublin, and are thereby are in collusion with their racism.

This meeting must behave like a Quaker meeting or not use that name. Our recommendation is that PYM and Abington Quarter put Upper Dublin Meeting on probation until it acts to

address its racism, acts in accord with good Quaker processes, and provides a welcoming environment for Avis Wanda McClinton and any other people of color.

Racism permeates all our meetings. White supremacy is manifest in all we do. We claim to want to “undo racism” and yet resist opportunities to learn how to do that.

Hundreds of years of riches built on the taking of land from Native peoples and the work of enslaved people have produced both the economic strength and the dark shadow of our faith tradition. I saw the forges where slaves repaired ironworks while white Quakers worshiped a few yards away at Abington meeting yesterday. These buildings were built by slaves, who were owned by Quaker leaders. Some of these Friends built and sailed and profited from ships, sent to enslave people and to transport goods made from the work of enslaved peoples--for hundreds of years.

White privilege is so much a part of how we do things and how we behave, yet we have chosen not to be aware of it. It is chosen ignorance, for which there is no excuse. There are resources all around us to bring ourselves face to face with our racism.

We are required, as Friends of Truth, to face our part in the current impact of the actions of those who have gone before. Their blood is on our hands. We have schools which do not serve the communities in which they exist. We have many programs which do not address these issues of racism in all our meetings' actions. We have land which accrues value while people of color are enslaved in our jails and prisons because they cannot pay \$100 fines for traffic violations.

Strong and outspoken Friends of color are mirrors to we white friends. We react against their truth when it is our own racism they call out. The charges they make about our racism we turn against them and declare them “the problem.” We dismiss them by labeling them “angry” or “mentally unstable” or “scary.” It is up to us white Friends to listen to them, support them, learn from them and make much needed changes. It's our turn.

Upper Dublin must clean house. It must address its racism by entering into serious study, assessment, and remedial actions, led by professionals outside the Quaker world.

It must welcome Avis Wanda McClinton into full fellowship and worship as the child of God she is, and honor her ministry. It must provide her with the detailed records she has requested of the burial grounds, boundaries, and schematics. It must return with interest and apologies, money donated at Avis' request, by members of the African American community to

commemorate their ancestors buried at Upper Dublin. The meeting put this money into its general fund and refused to give an account to Avis.

PYM and Abington Quarter must acknowledge that Upper Dublin no longer has the designation of a Quaker meeting until it returns to good order and provides a welcoming environment to Avis and other people of color. We recommend that PYM and Abington Quarter contract with Crossroads Anti-Racism Organizing and Training for Upper Dublin, the Quarter, and PYM. Again, we recommend that PYM put Upper Dublin Meeting on probation as a Quaker meeting while it undergoes anti-racism assessment and trainings, and is instructed in the use of good Quaker process.

How many of you here are under the age of 25? I see a handful of hands. Friends, if we continue to ignore racism and its insidious wreckage on our faith communities, what do we have left to offer? Friends around the country and around the world are aware of the situation at Upper Dublin, Abington Quarter, and PYM. Letting the Light into these painful “cracks” is the only way to make needed changes and begin restitution, renewal, and return to good order.

We cannot and will not hide the racism in order to protect racists among us. We all know that Quakers can quickly decide to spend money and conduct programs and act, if we want to. Any attempts to delay or derail this process stated above will illustrate our refusal to address the racism that is rampant among us and at Upper Dublin. No excuses. There are plenty of funds for everyone to get training, for on-going, decades-long attention to racism.

Gita Larson

Asheville Friends Meeting

SAYMA

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