

Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business
Asheville Friends Meeting
Fifth Month 14, 2017

Present: Pat Johnson; Margaret Farmer; Edie Patrick; Katherine Kowal; Margaret Normile; Kitti Reynolds; Steve Livingston; Bobby Carter; Jim Cavener; Rylin Hansen; Beth Eddy; Mike Eddy; Sharon Smith; Gita Larson; Satchel Loftis; Rusty Maynard; Nick Mimken; Patti Hughes, Clerk; Barbara Esther, Recording Clerk.

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

"As we work to restore hope to the future, we need to include a new and strange ally - our willingness to be disturbed. Our willingness to have our beliefs and ideas challenged by what others think. No one person or perspective can give us the answers we need to the problems of today."

From "Willingness to Be Disturbed" Margaret J Wheatly *Turning to One Another: Simple Conversations to Restore Hope to the Future.*

Friends accepted the agenda as prepared.

Minute 1: Friends approved Minutes for three months' minutes: February, March and April, 2017.

Treasurer's Report and Budget- Satchel Loftis

We reviewed the operating expenses and income to date. The report also shows that last year's budget has a surplus both because we did not have expenses as high as was predicted and because not all funds were spent as budgeted. Our general fund shows money not allocated to budget items. However, we did spend over \$27,000 on necessary maintenance of the meetinghouse in 2016.

Questions arose regarding the Racial Justice Committee's budget and expenditures. Money not spent last year (2016) for planned activities were carried over because of problems in participating in training within the calendar year. Those funds are now spent in 2017, from the funds budgeted for 2016. Another question raised was whether the origin and restrictions on various funds is known by the meeting. The Finance Committee is working on a document that addresses that question. It was noted that the assessment to be sent to our yearly meeting (SAYMA) has increased to reflect \$65.00 per active member or active regular attender. For a few years the assessment was calculated as a percentage of the overall budget. The Care and Nurture Committee requests that their budget be \$200 instead of only \$50. It was understood that the request was made earlier, but that the information was lost during the change of treasurer. A narrative footnote to remind us that total budget for a committee can be spent in a variety of ways from year to year was requested. A Friend found that the

amount allocated for outreach by Peace and Earth Committee and the amount of outreach to be distributed by Racial Justice Committee is significant. We were reminded that there are organizations in Asheville that need our support in the racial justice arena. Two reasons for a separate funding for outreach by the RJC are that racial financial disparity is something we seek to alleviate in our community and that we want to support organizations owned or run by people of color. RJC will plan to spend their outreach funds in a way that gives back. Although some organizations we have traditionally supported may have goals to involve more racial justice issues, many are led and populated by European Americans. A Friend expressed the hope that we can develop a better understanding of how the various contributions impact the care of the environment, the racial justice issues in our community, hunger and housing concerns and more. Where are we being led to spend our limited resources?

Minute 2: Friends approved the proposed budget for 2017, with the change of line item for Care and Nurture Committee from \$50 to \$200, restoring it to the amount requested.

The format and presentation of the budget was much appreciated by Friends.

Committee Reports:

Peace and Earth Committee - Pat Johnson

Pat wrote, "Earlier this year, I ordered tolerance signs which say "No Matter where You're from, We're Glad You're our Neighbor" in Spanish, English and Arabic. I have placed one of them in my yard and the P & E Committee recommends putting the other one at the Meeting House. This, of course, requires approval by Meeting. We will rely on Meeting to determine the location if the placement of a sign is approved."

Minute 3: The placement of the trilingual sign stating welcome to people from different backgrounds was approved, with the spot for display to be determined by Friends at a later time, considering the Black Lives Matter signs that disappeared earlier from the roadside.

Care and Nurture Committee - Margaret Normile

The Care and Nurture Committee has decided to add the work of the Dying, Death and Disposal Ad Hoc Committee to its work instead of continuing to see these as separate committees, especially since many of the same people served on both committees.

Minute 4: Friends approved the laying down of the Ad Hoc Committee for Dying, Death and Disposal with thanks for their well-planned and executed Spiritual Enrichment sessions. We are encouraged that their work will be folded into the work of Care and Nurture Committee.

Racial Justice Committee - Steve Livingston

The committee brought a draft of a letter to Upper Dublin Monthly Meeting, Abington Quarterly Meeting and Philadelphia Yearly Meeting to us for review. (See attachment 1.) It sounded a little holier-than-thou to some Friends. People of Color have been involved in the SAYF program in the past with some distressful results due to rejection of Black youth who may have different belief systems. We were admonished to face the truth of our less-than-welcoming ways. Perhaps, some felt, it would be enough to offer our prayers and support for those suffering through unhappy events. The judgmental and instructional tone of the draft seems presumptuous to other Friends. We will never be able to reach the "holier" position although that should not keep us from sending a letter. However, this draft may need to be further edited. We have much work to do here at home. Awareness of the way that people of color are suffering is only made known when we take action. Can we change the specific recommendations? What would encourage PYM and Abington QM to take appropriate action? Although we are not in unity regarding sending the letter as it came to us today, Friends are urged to continue the discussion of this letter so that it can be reconsidered in June. An open Spiritual Enrichment time for May 21 will be available to Friends for the purpose of more work and discussion of the letter we can unite around.

Announcements:

We are seeking a date to hold our 50 year celebration of Asheville Friends Meeting. Sept. 3rd, Labor Day weekend, is suggested.

SAYMA Annual Sessions will be held at Warren Wilson College Thurs.-Sun., June 15-18. Registration is going slowly. The deadline for Early Bird registration is May 22nd at a cost of \$45. From May 22nd to June 1st the cost is \$55. After June 1st there is an additional \$20 late fee included in the price. The best way to see it all is to go the website. The schedule is there as well the workshop titles and descriptions. It a wonderful gathering of Quakers from all over our mountain region.

AFM Directory: We are working on the update of our directory so please take some time to look over what is on the clipboard. If you don't find your self or know someone who needs to be added please write this info on the blank pages at the back. Our meeting directory is being updated in time to be sent to SAYMA Administrative Assistant by June 1st.

Friends are asked to hold Max Parson's son in the Light as he is released from prison, and to hold the Charleston, SC, Friends Meeting in the Light as they work on racial justice issues.

We closed with a period of silent worship to meet again as way opens on Sixth Month 11, 2017.

Attachment 1

Date:

Dear Friends:

Asheville Friends Meeting is an almost exclusively white Quaker Meeting striving to come to terms with our own institutional racism and ingrained White Supremacy. We are working towards becoming an anti-racist, multicultural spiritual community. We look upon the circumstances and events in Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (PYM), Abington Quarter, and Upper Dublin Monthly Meeting (UDMM) with sadness and concern as we see our own struggles reflected in theirs.

We recognize the tendency among White Friends to use Quaker process to maintain control of institutional power and resources. We acknowledge with regret that in our efforts to maintain control, we are responsible for spiritual harm to the few Friends of Color amongst us. We have experienced this in our own Meeting, and we see our experiences reflected in PYM, Abington Quarter, and UDMM.

We recognize that significant cultural and experiential differences between ourselves and those few Friends of Color amongst us often lead to misunderstandings. We recognize that self-righteousness and internalized white superiority too often stand in the way of our willingness to respect the wisdom and to support the leadings of Friends of Color, because they don't fit neatly into our White Supremacist cultural framework. We have experienced this in our own Meeting, and we see our experiences reflected in PYM, Abington Quarter, and UDMM.

We acknowledge with regret that when we are presented with competing narratives of events between White Friends and Friends of Color, we are often quick to dismiss the Friends of Color and accept the White Friends' narrative, even though it is clearly intended to maintain the racist institutional framework of our historically white Meetings. We recognize that our inability, or unwillingness, to examine these competing narratives from an anti-racist framework leaves Friends of Color unsupported, unprotected, and vulnerable to spiritual harm. We have experienced this in our own Meeting, and we see our experiences reflected in PYM, Abington Quarter, and UDMM. We feel compelled to take action, because, as Desmond Tutu warned us, "If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor."

We are committed to addressing our deeply embedded institutional racism through education, heightened self-awareness, and respect for the wisdom embodied in the spiritual journeys of those few Friends of Color among us. We implore White Friends in PYM, Abington Quarter, and UDMM to acknowledge that their deep-seated institutional racism harms Friends of Color. It is urgent that we Friends dismantle our White Supremacist institutional structures and affirm the Divine Light within all Friends of Color, their unique histories, spiritual journeys, and lived Truth.

To that end, we recommend that Friends of Color, who are affected by the decisions of PYM, be included in the decision making processes of PYM, so that said decisions work to the

advantage of Friends of Color rather than to their detriment. We also ask that PYM maintain a commitment to meaningful full-time employment for Friend Marille Heallis.

We further recommend that UDMM be released from PYM and Abington Quarter for a period of at least fourteen months, during which time, UDMM Friends will undergo an institutional audit, and training in critical race theory and cultural sensitivity. We ask PYM and Abington Quarter to provide oversight and accountability for this process. We hope this leads to an abiding commitment to reinstate Friend Avis Wanda McClinton as a member in good standing and full fellowship in UDMM and the Religious Society of Friends. Let us honor her leading to oversee the graves of her ancestors and to worship at Upper Dublin.

We recognize, with sadness and concern, that this work is not at all easy for us White Friends, nor often is it even welcome. But we are charged by our testimonies of Equality, Community, and Integrity to acknowledge the harm that has been - and is being - visited upon Friends of Color. We have come far short of being a safe and welcoming anti-racist, multicultural worship community for Friends of Color. May we all commit to rising above, and moving beyond, our shortcomings.

In love and Friendship,