

Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business

Asheville Friends Meeting

First Month 13, 2019

(DRAFT)

Present: Robin Wells, Clerk, Pat Campbell, Recording Clerk. Steve Livingston, Sarah Jane Thomas, Kitti Reynolds, Margaret Normile, Canaan Brackins, Bobby Carter, Edie Patrick, Jim Cavener, Rylin Hansen, Jim Barham, Patty Hughes, Scotty Utz, Satchel Loftis, Rusty Maynard, Annika Peacock, Michael Peacock, Barbara Esther, Elizabeth Utz, Pat Johnson

Meeting began with a period of silent worship from which clerk, Robin Wells, read the following query about Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business written by long-time Friend, Arthur Larrabee:

Do you bring a positive attitude to the meeting? Do you participate with a non-judgmental attitude? Is your energy open, or is it closed? Do you welcome the difference that you share with others as well as the similarities? Are you patient with others as well as being patient with the process?

The Meeting accepted the agenda.

Friends asked that the 12th month minutes be held over since they were not posted.

Announcements

Our meeting will be hosting SAYMA Representative Meeting on the 15th and 16th of third month, 2019. As a host meeting, we agree to provide housing for out-of-town Friends attending the meeting. Please consider opening your home to one or more Friends during this meeting. At this time, we are short a significant number of beds and ask that Friends step forward to help. A clipboard is being passed around for Friends to indicate how many people they can host.

Ministry and Counsel would like to announce the marriage of Ben Burgess and Tabitha Ammons who were married under the care of the Meeting. The wedding took place at 7:00 pm in Franklin, North Carolina on Friday, 8th Month 24th, 2018. It was a beautiful outdoor wedding with several members and attenders from Meeting in attendance. (The marriage had been announced in meeting, but was not recorded in the minutes. Please accept our apology for this delay!)

We will have a Meeting for Healing at the rise of meeting on February 3rd. This is an old tradition among Friends that has experienced a resurgence in the last fifty years. It is a gathering to hold people, concerns, and situations in the Light. Individuals can either share a concern with the facilitator, Robin Wells, ahead of time to be read aloud or share vocally with the group. Meetings for Healing can be very powerful and emotional. While Friends may have several concerns needing healing, we ask that each person bring only one concern per Meeting. Not all participants need to share a concern, as many will be needed to hold others in the Light.

Steve Livingston reported on the meeting of the SAYMA Yearly Meeting Planning Committee. The Yearly Meeting gathering will be held from 6th Month 13 – 16 and will be titled “Seek the Light, Act Boldly.” John Adams, a friend of color from Atlanta Friends Meeting, will be one of the Plenary speakers. The other plenary will consist of a panel presentation by Quaker Voluntary Service, composed of young Friends living Quaker values as they provide service to communities.

End-of-Year Treasurer’s Report and 2019 Preliminary Budget - Satchel Loftis, Treasurer, stated that AFM ended up with a budget overage for 2018 (although not all figures are in). But if only the amounts that were budgeted to be spent were considered, then there would be a shortfall of \$3000. He went on to explain the budget lines, discussed the restricted and unrestricted funds including details of the restricted funds. He explained there are two types of restricted funds: Meeting restricted, which the Meeting can unrestrict in a Meeting for Business; donor restricted, which remains available only for the purpose for which it was restricted.

He expressed some concern that there has been a continuing drawdown of the Meeting House Improvement Fund (restricted) with no replenishment. Questions about that were raised. Satchel explained some of the problems resulting from not

replenishing it as well as some potential solutions. He went on to reiterate that the budget was not in balance.

In the past, AFM has used the aspirational method – determine the need and base the expected income on the need. However, the Asheville Friends Meeting has a policy/restriction that the budget for a year cannot exceed the income from the previous year. Satchel also noted that the income has been decreasing over the past few years. Satchel reviewed the psychology of gifting and options for increased donations. Some solutions he discussed for dealing with next year's budget were: covering shortfalls from the restricted funds that the Meeting can unrestrict; look at the committees' expenses and requests; overage from this year can be used to cover any shortfall next year. Also, Satchel pointed out that there were committees that have not spent much of their budget this past year and may be candidates for lowering their requests for 2019.

The Finance Committee is to discuss ways of increasing donations further and will contact Committee Clerks to see if 2019 budget requests can be lowered and will try to get this information into the AFM Digest.

Committee Reports:

Ministry and Counsel--Patti Hughes

Regarding Annika's request for membership:

Annika's Clearness Committee, (Tim B., Bob L., Robin W. and Patti H.), met with her at the rise of meeting last First Day. By the end of our time together Annika was clear that she is ready to go forward with the next step of the membership process. Ministry and Counsel considered all that Patti and Robin shared from the Clearness Committee during our Committee meeting. We are now delighted to recommend her for membership in Asheville Friends Meeting.

Minute #1: The Meeting for Business approved Annika's request for membership within the Religious Society of Friends and Asheville Friends Meeting.

Information for Visitors:

Ministry and Counsel has been working on a handout for newcomers. It will be laminated. The draft document follows:

Asheville Friends Meeting
Welcome
We're glad you are here.

How We Worship

As Quakers we seek that of God in everyone and minister to each other. Our worship is a silent gathering to connect individually and collectively with the Spirit. The quiet waiting allows messages of the Spirit to rise up in individuals who may then stand and speak their truth. This brief vocal ministry is deep and meaningful. Having shared a message, the speaker sits and silence resumes as their words are gathered in. While a message may spring from the message another has shared, we refrain from any direct response but rather offer each message up to all. Worship closes with the offering of a handshake. Visitors will be invited to introduce themselves after the close of meeting.

Please ask after worship if you are interested in further information.

Discussion primarily centered about whether this information should include information about sharing Joys and Sorrows that ends Meeting for Worship each 1st Day at AFM. Patti explained the thinking that went into the handout. Friends pointed out that "Joys and Sorrows" was explained to all but that a newcomer to Friends worship would need help immediately in beginning to understand the process of Quaker worship. Others also pointed out that "Joys and Sorrows" (or the equivalent) is not a standard procedure in all Friends Meetings. Because of the disagreement, the draft was referred back to to the Ministry and Council Committee for further consideration.

Ministry and Counsel: Guidelines for Living in Community--Scotty Utz

Ministry and Counsel has been developing a set of guidelines to help us as a meeting agree upon how we will participate and interact in Meeting. This is only a draft and is intended to be a starting point and a place to begin dialogue about this important issue. Many people have been hurt by well-meaning, but insensitive

communication in Meeting for Worship, Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business, and other more casual interactions at Meeting. Our goal is to come up with guidelines we can all agree upon, so that we can create a space where difficult issues can be explored in a safe, compassionate environment.

The document is being introduced this month and full discussion will begin in 2nd month.

Guidelines for Being in Community
Asheville Friends Meeting
(DRAFT)

At Asheville Friends Meeting, we strive to create a space where people can come together to worship, work, and have fellowship in a spiritual community. Our practices are grounded in traditions begun centuries ago, yet are periodically renewed as way opens. That which has not changed is our goal for a deep communion with Spirit as we worship and work together. We recognize that everyone has that of God in them and we welcome all who wish to worship with us in a spirit of love.

Friends value individual experience of the Divine and therefore we all come to our understanding of the Divine in a slightly different way. We value this diversity and it continuously brings us new perspectives and revelations. Occasionally, these differences can create tension among us. In recognition of this, we would like to put forth a set of guidelines to help us express ourselves and interact in a respectful way and in a spirit of love. We hope these practices will help our ministry and enlarge the spirit of worship in Meeting whenever we gather as Friends:

During Meeting for Worship

- We speak only once in any given meeting for worship.
- “Speak and release” After we have spoken our truth, we release the message to the workings of Spirit without further justification or debate.
- We listen to all other messages in silence while staying attentive to the leading of Spirit, particularly when we think the messages are wrong.

One strategy for this internal work is staying curious to what is motivating others and thinking about what is driving our own reactions. We speak from a personal perspective

and resist
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speaking directly to another person in
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In All of Our Interactions

- We use language that is appropriate for everyone in the building, including our youngest members and attenders.
- Physical and/or verbal attempts to do violence or threaten to do acts of violence violate the spirit of our gatherings and are not acceptable.

Ministry and Counsel would like to know about situations in which individuals are not living into these Friendly practices so that Ministry and Counsel can address those situations. Be assured that members of Ministry and Counsel will always speak to people in confidence.

When An Individual or Situation Becomes Disruptive

If an individual or situation becomes disruptive, Ministry and Counsel will stand in silence as a reminder to return to these practices if they are not being followed. Others will be encouraged to stand as well. If standing in silent unison does not aid our spirit of worship, worship will close and we will quietly walk out of the meeting room. Others will be encouraged to do so as well and not engage with the disruptive person. Once the room has emptied, the disruptive person will hopefully have a chance to regain composure. Two or three designated people will remain in the room to hold the disruptive person in the Light.

The Clerk went on to remind us that it is important for us to think about how we interact with each other and what to do if someone becomes disruptive; that this will be a long discussion about the process. One Friend recalled the history of Non-violence and Civil Rights. To a question about the reason for these guidelines, the Clerk mentioned more recent history of the Meeting when disruption happened. We need to know what to do to keep all safe. As this discussion occurs, we will all need to share from the “I feel” or “I think” perspective. This discussion will need to be Spirit led; we will need to be kind and patient with each other. We will have to listen more than we speak.

Library –

Library Committee Description

The library committee is responsible for the upkeep of the library and the acquisition of books and pamphlets as way opens. They maintain the pamphlet

display in the foyer. They arrange for the collection and binding of Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business minutes and Friends Journal every other year. They work with the Religious Education Committee and other committees to order books they request.

A few clarification questions were asked and some changes made. The description was then approved.

Peace and Earth Committee Minute on Gaza--Steve Livingston

This minute was introduced in the 12th month business meeting but full discussion was held over until this meeting.

Proposed Minute:

We of Asheville Friends Meeting (Quakers) feel led to share our deep distress over the conditions in Gaza brought about by 51 years of occupation and oppression by a close ally of the United States. We are convinced that we must speak the truth as we know it, and we must act upon what we have discerned to be true.

1. Gaza is a prison, everyone there is serving a life sentence for the crime of being born there or having fled there during the Nakba (Palestinian Holocaust).
2. Government policies of denying basic human rights and withholding essential human needs such as water and electricity are forms of collective punishment and as such are violations of international law and deeply antithetical to our Quaker principles.
3. Military actions such as destruction of residential buildings, cultural centers and TV stations are forms of collective punishment and tantamount to ethnic cleansing.
4. We condemn the ongoing oppression of the people of Gaza and the violence that it perpetuates.

5. We stand in solidarity with the oppressed people and are committed to making investment and purchasing decisions to avoid support of these human rights violations and to promote peace, cooperation, self-determination, and reconciliation in the region.

When asked, Steve confirmed that the minute would be sent to SAYMA Peace and Social Concerns Committee and would also be shared with other Yearly Meetings. Most concerns about the minute centered on Points 1 and 3 with some discussion and clarification of point 5.

Some thought the term “ethnic cleansing” was not accurate and too strong, Others thought what Israel was doing was on a step towards ethnic cleansing or at the the beginning of a slippery slope that could easily end in that. Another Friend read the definition from Wikipedia of ethnic cleansing that she thought fit Israel’s actions towards the Palestinians in Gaza. Other Friends thought that ethnic cleansing was already happening.

One friend, acquainted with Arabic said that “Nakba” meant “catastrophe” but was here used as Holocaust. Steve indicated that this is how Palestinians used the word, to mean Holocaust.

Regarding Point 1, a Friend indicated that there was a lot of complicated history, both in the Mid-East and globally, in the founding of the State of Israel.

Other Friends addressed Point 5 wanting to know who “we” are and who monitors individual, Meeting, or other Quaker organization accounts. Steve answered that the Fiduciary Committee of FGC has already divested any relevant holdings, that there is a Quaker testimony on integrity so that no one needs to monitor anything and that the minute starts out as “We of Asheville Friends Meeting.” He also went on to state that the Committee has labored long with this concern. He explained how the history of Israel bombing the Palestinian Culture Center stoked his anger about the situation and led him to undertake this minute.

Finance Committee reminded us that all our money is in Self Help; none of the money is in securities.

The Peace and Earth Committee was asked to take this discussion back to to the Committee and bring the minute back to the 2nd Month Business Meeting.

Asheville Friends Meeting is attempting to create a manual that will include descriptions of the committees and positions routinely held in Meeting.

DUTIES OF THE CLERK

1. The primary duty of the Clerk is to ensure that the business of the meeting is conducted after the manner of Friends and in the spirit of worship. The Clerk ensures that spiritually-grounded and worshipful process is followed. Normally, the Clerk will preside over all regular meetings for worship with attention to business, called meetings, and threshing sessions although they may delegate another person to do so.
 - a) The Clerk sets the agenda for the meeting. The meetings over which the Clerk presides begin and end with a period of worship, noted on the agenda. The Clerk estimates allotted time for other agenda items. Preparation of the agenda depends on the timely advance of items to be included in the business meeting. Format to be used by presenters/committees bringing items to the business meeting helps the clerk and others to be prepared (i.e. what a report looks like and how it is sent to the clerk and recording clerk, as well as who will be presenting the report).
 - b) The Clerk acts with a view toward creating a safe environment by:
 - 1) Insisting that people be recognized before speaking
 - 2) Asking people to address the clerk or the meeting as a whole, not each other.
 - 3) Interrupting if two or more people get into a dialogue.
 - 4) Slowing things down, being slow to continue on too soon, waiting to recognize the next speaker.
 - 5) Asking the meeting to settle for reflection as needed.
 - 6) Interrupting those people who burden the meeting by repeating what has already been said, or who speak too long, or who use tone and language that is hurtful.
 - c) The Clerk helps to bring out the full range of views on a particular matter while being sensitive to time and the fullness of discussion.
 - d) The Clerk and the Recording Clerk test the sense of the Meeting by

suggesting wording of a minute. The Clerk articulates a sense of the meeting, or more than one, as a way of helping the meeting to move forward, answering the question, “How are we led?” Sometimes that sense of the meeting simply records the struggle regarding a topic and the fact that no specific action was taken.

- e) In case further action is required, the Clerk identifies who or what committee can further season a matter and when its discussion will be continued.
 - f) The Clerk is normally concerned with process rather than outcome of the discussion. In those rare instances when the clerk is led to speak out of concern for an outcome, someone else will be appointed to clerk the discussion and the Clerk will become a participant for the duration of the discussion.
2. The Clerk represents Asheville Friends Meeting at public gatherings of faith communities or appoints someone to do so. The Clerk speaks for the meeting as minuted action permits.
 3. The Clerk may attend the meetings of all committees of the meeting. The Clerk is an ex-officio member of Ministry and Counsel and of the Board of Directors of Asheville Friends Meeting.
 4. The Clerk works to be supportive of those in positions of responsibility and committees carrying out their tasks.
 5. The Clerk writes minutes for traveling and sojourning Friends as well as letters of transfer of membership as requested.
 6. Following the meeting for business:
 - a) The Clerk works with the Recording Clerk to make sure that the minutes are accurate.
 - b) Does the required follow-up.
 7. The Clerk makes sure that mail is opened and advanced to the appropriate person or committee.

When spiritual guidance is sought, there are many in the meeting who can provide that, but frequently, Friends request a clearness committee through the Ministry and Counsel Committee. Need for specific therapy is not usually provided through the meeting, but instead is satisfied by professional therapists in the community.

Because of the need for further consideration of this material, the “Duties of the Clerk” was held over until the 2nd Month Meeting for Business.

There being no further matters to consider, the Meeting for Business closed in silence.

Pat Campbell

Recording Clerk