

Meeting for Worship for the Conduct of Business
Asheville Friends Meeting
09/12/2004

Meeting gathered at 11:45 a.m. Twenty-one Friends were in attendance: Lynnora Bierce, Alice Brown, Jim Cavener, Karen Cernek, David Clements, Agnita Dupree, Al Dupree, Barbara Esther, George Gjelfriend, Krist Gjelfriend, Joy Gossett, Steve Livingston (recording clerk), Rusty Maynard, Susan Mitchell, Phil Neal (clerk), Ellen Oldham, Ursula Scott, Eda Smith, Gerald Smith, Jennifer Walker, Robin Wells.

The clerk offered a reading from FWCC's "The Vocation of Friends in the Modern World", third study booklet, chapter III: The Development of Leadership.

"All Friends share in the problem of the development of leadership, and though it is impossible to present a thorough review of the conceptions of leadership and its functions in the Society of Friends, it may be profitable to examine certain phases and to discuss the common problem. Several Friends have untied in the writing of this chapter; the point of view of an English Friend is presented first.

"It could be held, theoretically speaking, that the Society of Friends should do without leadership. But in practice, mere organization involves some leadership, and so also – in a deeper and more important way – does the spiritual life.

"The type of religion which Quakerism expressed has always relied on the relationship between divine and human, which is directly experienced and unmediated. Here then is the leadership which in personal and corporate religious life is always and immediately available. 'The life of God comes to guide us,' as George Fox said in one of his letters. But there is a prerequisite. We must have become changed beings in ourselves: able to hear and answer to our guidance. In the words of an old Yearly Meeting epistle, 'The demand made on every one of us is the same: You must be born again.'

"Nevertheless, we are so halting and imperfect in the religious life that it would be a mistake to live and worship in a kind of inward isolation. We really can be a great help to one another; the group can sometimes have a clear lead where the individual is confused and hesitant. So the sharing of our most precious experiences makes the still more precious, and we can be grateful for the varied forms of spiritual sensitivity which we find in a Meeting and from which we can all learn."

Clerk Phil Neal asked whether Friends wished to offer changes to the minutes of the 8th month business meeting, and none were offered. The clerk asked for approval of these minutes: this was postponed until Friends had a chance to read them. Phil asked if there were any newcomers among us today, and there were none. We reviewed the agenda and accepted it as presented.

News of Ourselves: Two anniversaries were noted with joy: Gerry and Eda Smith celebrated their 39th wedding anniversary, and Susan and Greg Mitchell their 25th.

Finance Committee report was given by David Clements in the absence of the Treasurer and the clerk of Finance. He reported that the General Fund has realized an income of about \$15,000 since the beginning of the calendar year, with expenses of \$11,000 so far. He pointed out that we have not yet expended the budgeted amounts for Quaker outreach, community outreach, or our SAYMA assessment, amounting to approximately \$8,000 in expenditures. Thus, he pointed out, our financial position at this point is very similar to where we were in 9th month one year ago, with a need to raise an additional \$15,000 in the remaining three months of the year.

Friends accepted the report of Finance Committee. Friends asked that a summary of the report be presented in the Newsletter.

Susan Mitchell read the report of the ad-hoc Pastoral Care Planning Committee.

"This committee was charged by the Monthly Meeting in the spring of 2004 to examine the Meeting community's need for pastoral care and make recommendations for meeting those needs. We have met

several times and are pleased to report that by reading, discussing and laboring in the discernment process, we have come to consensus. We now ask the monthly meeting for approval or advice on our recommendations.

“We have identified three areas of concern:

“*Contact and concern for newcomers to our meeting.* To meet this need, the members of Ministry and Counsel Committee have agreed to take an active role in seeking out newcomers in our midst to offer information on our faith community and its testimonies. We believe it is important to take the first step in welcoming newcomers and new returnees so they may feel at home among us. Alice Brown, who currently serves on Ministry and Counsel, has already assumed the job of writing to those who sign our guest book. We also recommend that all Friends take a minute or two to approach newcomers and offer a friendly handshake or other personal welcome. Often a simple phone call just to say hello can serve as a warm and meaningful contact to a new seeker.

“*Meeting acute needs of members and regular attenders.* Many of us experience urgent temporary needs that could easily be met by others. The Pastoral Care Committee will attempt to meet these needs. Examples of service might be helping friends who suffer illness at home or in hospital, transportation difficulties, providing covered dish meals for one reason or another, or simply placing a phone call of concern for members who experience loss or unexpected problems. To meet these needs, the Pastoral Care Committee would have a Care Team of three individuals who would make themselves available to help with such tasks as needs might arise.

“*Concern for New Members and Distant or Inactive Friends.* It has long been a tradition among Friends to offer home visitation by representatives of the Meeting to those who wish to receive such visitors. The Pastoral Care Committee will offer visitation to all newly recorded members within their first year of membership as well as to distant or inactive members who might wish to continue a friendly connection to Asheville Meeting. While we do not recognize a spiritual divide between recorded members and regular attenders, we feel an obligation to members. However, we encourage anyone, members and attenders, to contact the Pastoral Care clerk to request a visit and it will be joyfully arranged.

“Structure of the Pastoral Care Committee

“Ideally, the committee will consist of 13 Friends:

“3 will serve as a Care Team that will be available to assist with the unexpected or urgent needs of Friends as described above. It should be stressed that these Friends will help with short-term needs. Friends who find themselves in prolonged difficulties will be asked to meet with Ministry and Counsel for further support and advice

“9 will serve on 3 Visitation Teams that will be available to call on new members, distant or inactive members, or attenders who wish to converse with representatives of Asheville Friends Meeting. Such visits will be unpressured friendly endeavors and will offer an opportunity to address the interests and concerns of the host. The visit may consist of an hour or two of simple social courtesy or may include discussion on issues of spiritual concern, as the host desires. A visit can occur at the host’s home or at a place of the host’s choosing.

“A Pastoral Care clerk who will serve as a communications contact for the committee. The clerk will be responsible for calling meetings of the committee. The clerk will also contact distant or inactive members to determine whether they wish to have a visit from meeting representatives. The clerk will receive and communicate Visitation and Care Team needs to the other members of the teams. The clerk will be an ex officio member of Ministry and Counsel.

“The Pastoral Care committee will perform its duties under the care of Ministry and Counsel. Nominating committee will bring a list of names of friends who are interested in serving on the committee. An orientation meeting, a six-month follow-up meeting and a one-year wrap-up meeting will be held for members of the committee. Pastoral Care will be a temporary committee that will function for one year. At

the end of the first year, Ministry and Counsel will recommend that the Pastoral Care Committee be either laid down or else continued as a permanent committee.

“Therefore, the Ad Hoc Committee asks the following minutes of approval by the Monthly Meeting:

“Approval of the recommended format for the Pastoral Care Committee;

“Approval of Susan Mitchell to serve as clerk of the Pastoral Care Committee for the coming year;

“Releasing the Ad Hoc Pastoral Care Planning Committee from its work.

“Submitted by Karen Cernek, Joy Gossett and Susan Mitchell”

In response to questions from Friends, Susan described the role of the proposed Pastoral Care Committee as an effort to fill gaps in the Meeting’s ministry to newcomers, as well as answering the need for acute care, care of distant Friends, and visitation of new members. She indicated that Nominating Committee already had a list of a pretty good number of Friends interested in serving on the committee.

Meeting approved the format of the Pastoral Care Committee as presented by the Planning Committee. Meeting approved Susan Mitchell as clerk of the Pastoral Care Committee. Meeting agreed to lay down the Planning Committee, as their work was completed.

In further discussion, Friends agreed that the work of the ad-hoc Dying and Death Committee would continue independent of the Pastoral Care Committee. Friends were reminded of the upcoming forum to be presented by the Dying and Death Committee on 10/3. Friends also affirmed that the responsibility of touching base with new attenders by telephone still lay with Ministry and Counsel.

Friends accepted the report. Friends asked that Ministry and Counsel attend to the concern about calling newcomers.

Retreat Committee report was read by Lynnora Bierce.

[written report]

Friends accepted the report without further discussion.

House and Grounds report was read by Jennifer Walker. She explained that the report was meant primarily to apprise Friends of progress on work that has already been approved by the Meeting, or by the committee with the support of Meeting. She invited Friends to call or email her with questions or concerns about ongoing work.

House & Grounds Report of Eighth Month Committee Meeting

“The books in the library are becoming rather moldy due to high humidity in the building. After having decided at the July Committee meeting that purchasing a dehumidifier was not the best way to deal with this situation (high cost, inefficiency, may not do any good unless all the doors to the library were kept closed), we decided to focus our attention on ventilating the basement as the primary means of control of the humidity in the house. Rusty has some ideas about an efficient way to ventilate the basement. In addition, we are looking to bring in an outside expert consultant in order to further understand all aspects of our basement issues. In relation to the issues of a moldy library and a damp meetinghouse, Rusty and Gary have offered to clean the gutters, and Jennifer is gather estimates from painters to have the library room repainted (with Kilz or other primer and a top coat).

“Once the library mold issue is resolved, the library committee has recommended the possible addition of cabinets above the bookshelves to be used as storage space.

“One of the big problems with air circulation (as well as human circulation) is that the meetinghouse has become cluttered. We discussed the fact that many people are uncomfortable in the act of getting rid of any item, in the fear that it has a significance or a use to someone else. Gary and Jennifer volunteered to form an

Ad Hoc Throwing Away Committee, and request the larger meeting's approval. The function of this committee would be to facilitate the logical and thorough removal (to include dispersal, recycling, and donation) of unnecessary meetinghouse clutter. We plan to coordinate with other committees and the meeting at large to try to diminish the possibility that any useful item would be removed.

“The issue of the back deck is still under discussion. We decided at the eighth month committee meeting that we would finalize a plan and an amount to complete the plan at the 9th month committee meeting. Please contact Jennifer with information and suggestions prior to the next committee meeting. (email: jennifer@substratedesign.com, phone: 828-423-6832) Additionally, all are welcomed to attend. We meet on the fourth Tuesday of every month at 7 pm at the meeting house.

“The issue of rental fees is still lingering, and as a committee, we decided that we can provide a breakdown of costs related to the meetinghouse, but do not feel that it falls under house and grounds responsibilities to determine a fee schedule. We are working on this cost list.”

Friends supported the idea of an ad hoc “throwing away” committee to discern what may be useful or needed, what might be recycled, and what must end up in the landfill. A Friend suggested that the committee would profit from having a membership of diverse ages, perhaps one representative of each generation in the Meeting. The archivist asked that before recycling papers pertaining to the Meeting, they be cycled first through the Archivist’s box, as many valuable records seem not to be coming before her recently.

In response to an inquiry, Jennifer indicated that House and Grounds did not consider the fee schedule for Meetinghouse use, and did not find that it was their responsibility to do this.

Friends expressed concern for the deteriorating condition of the driveway, and expressed a sense that some improvement would have to be undertaken soon regardless of any longer term plans. Jennifer estimated that even minor repairs would cost upwards of \$2,000.

Jennifer described an idea being stewarded by Paul Endry, of creating a neighborhood playground area in our front yard, which would be constructed and maintained with cooperation and partial funding from the City of Asheville. Concerns were raised about how liability for a public facility would affect our insurance costs.

A Friend inquired about upcoming workdays, and Jennifer replied that none were scheduled at this time.

Meeting accepted the report of House and Grounds.

Barbara Esther reported extemporaneously for the Religious Education Committee. She described how the rooms upstairs had been rearranged to accommodate the changing demographics of our youth, with additional space being allocated for our Middle School aged children, and creation of a separate area for those smaller children who are ready for more organized activity but not yet ready for a First Day School curriculum.

She once again asked for volunteers to assist our child care person in observing the numerous smaller children who grace our Meeting population.

Friends accepted Barbara’s report with thanks.

Lynnora Bierce gave a report for the Newsletter. She described suggestions offered by Friends for a more regular financial report, for a “Young Friends” page, and for an updated list of contact information for committee clerks and individuals in positions of responsibility in the Meeting. A Friend supported the latter request as particularly important during this time when our Meeting is without a clerk.

Lynnora pointed out that due to the failure of our e-version of the newsletter, the mailing list has grown to 143 copies, resulting in greatly increased costs for production and posting.

Friends accepted the report for the Newsletter committee.

Karen Cernek read the Nominating Committee's report.

"After careful consideration of Ministry and Counsel's request that the Nominating Committee resume efforts to fill the Clerk's position, we respectfully ask that we be allowed to put that request on hold until after the retreat.

"We still have concerns about a concrete support system for the Clerk being in place. There is a clear and much appreciated movement in that direction through the efforts of Ministry and Counsel, however the process is still in motion. It seems only fair that our Meeting commit to a support system that will clearly define the role and duties of our clerk.

"It is our hope that some time can be set aside during the upcoming retreat for prayerful consideration and perhaps a discussion of ideas and inspiration. We feel strongly that further seasoning of this concern is needed in order for the Nominating Committee to move forward.

"Any member feeling leadings to serve as Clerk is asked to please let Barbara Esther or me know. Even if, especially if, you have reservations. Knowing what Friends' concerns are will be of great help."

Friends accepted the report of Nominating Committee with no further comment.

Lynnora Bierce read the report of Naming Committee.

"August 15, Steve Livingston, Margaret Farmer and Lynnora Bierce met for lunch and acted as the Naming Committee. We talked about "who" we were looking for to fill out the Nominating Committee, brainstormed and came up with 18 names of members and regular attenders. Then we culled 6 names from that list of people who seemed the best fit for this type of work, seemed to be ready to serve in this way and many other considerations.

"Two have expressed a willingness to serve on the Nominating Committee and they are Ursula Scott, and John Wykle. Stephen Houseworth is in the process of discerning whether he will accept a position on Nominating. Others we have approached declined for their individual reasons.

"As a committee we felt that satisfied with the work, and the outcome, however we are willing to continue our work as needed."

A Friend suggested that Naming Committee might be laid down as their work appeared to be completed. A member of the committee asked that Meeting defer this action for a month or two to see whether the needs of Nominating Committee had been adequately addressed.

Friends approved the naming of Ursula Scott and John Wykle to serve on Nominating Committee. Friends accepted the report.

The clerk read a note from Lauren Mitchell:

"Dear Friends;

"An overdue thank you note to Asheville Meeting for the graduation gift certificate to FGC Bookstore. I've ordered Nickeled and Dimed by Barbara Ehrenreich and am enjoying it a great deal.

"This summer has been stuffed with hard but satisfying work at Earth Fare – I've seen many Friends there! I am happy to hold low levels of stress for a few months while I plan for times to come.

"Love and thanks again,
"Lauren"

Individual Concerns:

Barbara Esther brought several items from the recent SAYMA Representative Meeting at Berea. She reported that SAYMA Ministry and Nurture will hold a retreat on the weekend of Oct 2 and 3 at Crossville, TN. She pointed out that our Meeting has not had a representative on this committee for some years. She also reported that the Southeast Regional Gathering of FWCC would take place at Snow Camp, NC on the weekend of Oct 22-24. Any interested Friend may participate.

Barbara reviewed a list of political activities that churches are not allowed under Federal law, at the jeopardy of their non-profit status, specifically any activity that can be construed as supporting or opposing a particular candidate for public office.

Friends inquired as to who would be clerking our next business meeting. Ministry and Counsel has been charged with seeing to this matter.

Meeting closed with a moment of silence at 1:45 p.m.