

Meeting for Worship for the Conduct of Business
Asheville Friends Meeting
10/10/2004

Meeting gathered at 11:40 a.m. Thirty Friends were in attendance: Byron Belzak, Lynnora Bierce, Peter Buck, Karen Cernek, David Clements (clerk), Agnita Dupree, Al Dupree, Barbara Esther, Ellen Frerotte, George Gjelfriend, Krist Gjelfriend, Joy Gossett, Steve Houseworth, Toby Ives, Steve Livingston (recording clerk), Satchel Loftis, Barry Master, Marcia Master, Rusty Maynard, Susan Mitchell, Phil Neal, Rain Newton, Ellen Oldham, George Oldham, Ursula Scott, Eda Smith, Gerald Smith, and Jennifer Walker.

The recording clerk offered a reading from the Gospel of Thomas, Saying 9:

“Jesus says: ‘See, the sower went out. He filled his hand and scattered the seed. Some fell on the path: birds came and gathered them. Others fell on rocky ground: they found no means of taking root in the soil and did not send up ears of corn. Others fell among thorns; these stifled the grain, and the worm ate the seed. Others fell on good soil, and this portion produced an excellent crop: it gave as much as sixty-fold, and even a hundred and twenty-fold!’”

Clerk David Clements asked if any Friend was attending business meeting for the first time. Rain Newton introduced herself and related that she had attended many times in other Monthly Meetings but this was her first business meeting with Asheville Friends.

News of Ourselves: Susan Mitchell reported that she and Lauren will be visiting with our former long-time members Art and Ginny McVickar in Corydon IN next weekend. The clerk read a brief note from the McVickars. He passed around a sheet of paper and Friends wrote greetings to the McVickars for Susan to carry with her.

Evan Richardson reported on her attendance at SAYMA’s Ministry and Nurture Committee meeting last weekend in Crossville TN. She relayed greetings from Friends in Crossville and reported on an occasion of joyous song and fellowship with Friends there.

The clerk passed around information from Mel and Beth Kaiser of Swannanoa Valley Monthly Meeting, who are overseeing the development of Common Light Retreat Center at Swannanoa Valley’s meeting place in Black Mountain. The clerk reminded Friends that our Meeting’s scholarship fund could make it less of a financial challenge for Friends to attend workshops and other events being held there. A Friend pointed out that the meeting of Pendle Hill’s Peace Network local chapter will be held there next weekend.

Friends settled into silence for worship sharing on three queries relating to our Meeting retreat weekend experience:

- What do we need as a Meeting?
- What do we need to nurture ourselves?
- Where are we going as a Meeting?

Two Friends spoke of difficulties in hearing in the large meeting room at Bon Clarcken. Can our Meeting invest in a portable assisted listening system?

A Friend offered that visitors find us warm and hospitable but may be led not to become more involved due to our seeming impermanence associated with not having a Meeting clerk. The Friend suggested that way might open more readily if we could reduce or remove the onus of clerking, and if Meeting could encourage Friends to attend clerking workshops. This Friend also suggested that offering another round of Quakerism 101 could draw new attenders into further involvement.

A Friend reflected on a recurring theme of the retreat that resonated with her: “if not me, who? if not now, when?” She encouraged Friends to take more initiative in clerking their own leadings rather than expecting some other person or committee to follow up.

Another Friend found the retreat to be fulfilling in the sense of nurturing new relationships and deeper connections among us, and looks forward to our Meeting developing more instruction and practical tools to answer our identified needs.

Another Friend inquired whether our current First Day schedule was serving the community in the best possible way. She expressed the possibility that a more flexible schedule of worship and sharing might enhance participation, especially for those with children.

At the clerk's request, Friends took a few minutes to review the agenda, and found they were comfortable with it as presented.

Lynnora Bierce read a report for the ad hoc retreat committee:

"The Friends Fall retreat was a spirit filled weekend of community building. 38 adults and 15 children attended. With the facilitators and childcare providers included, our total in attendance came to 57.

"Deborah Fisch and Deborah Shaw gave themselves fully to the community. They gave their time and attention for days before the retreat as well as to the retreat itself. The evaluations I got back spoke very favorably about their presence and their ability to identify and meet the needs of the community.

"In my opinion, the retreat was and is very important. The retreat provided a space for people to create community and get to know one another on a deeper, spiritual level. We literally shared spiritual stories with each other. The result, I believe is a community that is more tightly woven together now. This translates into a community that is more willing to work together to support one another and to support the meeting.

"The Retreat Committee included Lynnora Bierce Steve Livingston David Clements Phil Neal, Christy Bischoff, and myself. Many thanks for their hard work and dedication to making the weekend run smoothly.

"The Retreat Committee plans to meet in October and will provide a more detailed follow-up at the November meeting for business. We will provide a financial report at that time as well. In the mean time, we would like the meeting's support in going ahead and reserving Bonclarken again for next fall. The reservation will not be binding. We will reserve a weekend as close to the same time frame as possible. Unless the sense of the meeting is that we 'not reserve', we will go ahead and put down a deposit."

Discussion followed on the question of making a deposit with Bon Clarken for our 2005 retreat. Friends were informed of preliminary figures indicating a \$2000 shortfall in funds. The clerk asked that Friends consider making additional contributions earmarked for this year's retreat.

Friends discussed the cost and quality of cafeteria food, comparing to the value of preparing more of our own meals. A Friend recalled with favor the experience of preparing meals at a previous retreat at Blue Ridge Assembly. Friend Ellen Frerotte offered to coordinate meal preparation at the next retreat.

Friends were not united on the Meeting making a \$325 deposit to reserve Bon Clarken for our Meeting Retreat in 2005. Friends approved holding over the decision until our next business meeting. Friends asked that the Retreat Committee look into other venues.

Friends accepted the report of the Retreat Committee with thanks for their work in preparing for and facilitating the retreat.

The clerk asked if there were any amendments to offer for the minutes of our previous two business meetings.

Friends accepted the minutes of 8th month business meeting as printed in the newsletter.

Friends were not yet ready to approve the ninth month minutes. The clerk asked that any comments or questions be brought to Recording Clerk Steve Livingston for consideration at our next business meeting.

Friend Toby Ives came forward to report for our Board of Trustees. Toby explained that State law required our Meeting to have a Board of Directors or Board of Trustees because we own real property. He explained that the "corporation" is separate from the spiritual part of the Meeting, and the Board's function is to conduct the legal business associated with property ownership. The Board is expected to meet at least annually, for the purpose of approving the Meeting's financial report, confirming any sale or acquisition of property, and reviewing the by-laws. Toby related that the State had agreed, albeit reluctantly, to allow for our "peculiar" practice of requiring a final approval of Meeting, through our consensus process, for any action of the Board.

Toby then read the written report of the Board:

"Present: David Clements, Valerie Collins, Toby Ives, Marcia master, Evan Richardson."

“Absent: None.

“The meeting opened at 9 a.m. with a moment of silence.

“There was discussion of the events since the meeting of September 2000. Art McVickar and Talmadge Neece have moved and George Oldham has requested that he rotate off the Board. It was approved that the five present would constitute the reformulated Board.

“Officers were approved as: Toby Ives, Chair; David Clements, Treasurer; and Valerie Collins, Secretary.

“There has been no acquisition or sale of real property since the last meeting.

“It was approved that the report of the Treasurer of the Meeting be accepted as an accurate record of income, expenditures, and financial standing.

“It was approved that the By-Laws be amended pending approval of the Meeting as follows:

“Article II Section 1 amended with the addition of: ‘Officers of the Board shall be the Officers of the Corporation.’

“Article II Section 4 to read: ‘The number of Directors of the Board shall be a minimum of five.’

“Article II Section 7 to read: ‘The Annual Meeting of the Board of Directors shall be held at the office of the Friends Meeting within the Meeting for Worship for the Conduct of Business in October (second First Day).’

“The minutes of the previous meeting were reviewed and approved.”

Discussion followed on the proposal to hold the annual Board Meetings during our 10th month business meetings. Friends were not united that the value of enhanced exposure of the Board’s work was worth the investment of time taken away from the Meeting’s spiritual discernment of its other business. An alternative suggestion that the Board report its business to the Meeting in the manner of any other standing committee, as Toby had just done, met with equal favor. The clerk suggested that we hold this particular matter over until our next business meeting.

Friends approved additional members of the Meeting’s Board of Trustees: David Clements, Evan Richardson, and Valerie Collins. Friends approved new officers of the Board: David Clements as Treasurer, Valerie Collins as Secretary, and Toby Ives as Chair.

Friends agreed to hold over until next month the question of whether to hold the Board of Trustees annual meeting during a Meeting for Business, and if so, when.

Ursula Scott reported for the Peace and Earth Committee. Earlier in the year Meeting decided to have the Peace and Earth Committee make general outreach contributions for the year without need for approval by Meeting. The Committee decided to contribute to flood relief efforts in the amount of \$1000 each to Riverlink and the Community Foundation. In addition, the Committee will donate \$100 each to the Asheville-Buncombe Community Relations Council, Helpmate, Manna Food Bank, the United Religions Initiative, the Mediation Center, the WNC AIDS Project, the Elisha Mitchell Audubon Society, Veterans for Peace, International Link, and the Jail/Prison Book Ministry. Friends were reminded that each of these community organizations supports core Quaker principles and receives support from individuals within our community.

In response to a question about the size of the outreach budget, Ursula described that Meeting had approved a budget of \$500 for the Committee which has not been used this year. Friends spoke favorably about the current proportion of our Meeting budget allocation to community outreach as well as the possibility of increasing it. Friends spoke favorably of the process adopted by Meeting opening the way for Peace and Earth to discern distribution of these funds, and the appropriateness of the Committee’s recommendations for flood relief.

Friends accepted the report of the Peace and Earth Committee.

Jennifer Walker presented the report of House and Grounds Committee.

“Ninth Month House and Grounds Committee Meeting Report, September 28, 2004.

“In attendance: Kristi Gielfriend, Satchel Loftis, Miles Loftis, Rusty Maynard, Jennifer Walker, Rebecca Wallace.

“Piano – The piano that was donated by Lucille Carlson several years ago has been in storage at the office of a former attender who recently requested that we find a new place for it. The House and Grounds Committee decided that in light of our current space limitations, no real need for a piano, and the fact that perhaps someone else could use a piano, it was

decided that we would donate the piano to the West Asheville Library Community Center on Haywood Road. They are very appreciative, and we feel certain that the piano will see years of positive use at this new home.

“We discussed need for a workday to clean up from the hurricane damage. One workday would be happening on 10/2/04 for that purpose. At that workday, attendees decided to have a workday regularly, every first Saturday of the month, from 9am, until about 2. Childcare is available if needed.

“We are obtaining bids on the painting of the library, and perhaps a few other rooms downstairs. We will be making these decisions in the coming week, and hope to have the painting started in the beginning of November, ending about a week after starting. We will need assistance from Friends in temporarily clearing out the library before the painting begins. The date of this endeavor will be announced as soon as it is known.

“Although we had hoped to have come to consensus about a new back deck and fire escape design by this point, we have come to see that we are still in the search for clarity on this issue. It has become quite time consuming for House and Grounds to consider this issue during our monthly committee meetings. We decided that the best course of action would be to create an ad-hoc committee that includes members of other committees and interested persons where we could sit with the goal of creating a plan that would best suit the needs of our entire meeting. This committee would be called the Deck and Fire Escape Committee and would be under the care of House and Grounds.

“The meeting closed with a few minutes of silent worship.”

A Friend asked whether the painting of the Library had been scheduled and Jennifer replied that it had not.

The report of House and Grounds was accepted.

Satchel Loftis presented the report of the Finance Committee.

“We have received a bequest from the Estate of Pat Lyon in the amount of \$12,000. We will segregate this money in a separate fund until Meeting decides on a use for it. The clerk has a letter from Pat and Bob’s son, Christopher Lyon.

“Satchel Loftis has agreed to become the Bookkeeper for the Meeting. He and David will work together to obtain a computer for the office and to secure the office with a lock.

“We will be offering period reports to Meeting, at least quarterly, and propose to make a copy of our most recent financial statements available in the foyer.

“We have not yet made any contributions from the \$3,000 allocated for Quaker Outreach Contributions for 2004. Last year an ad hoc committee was appointed by Meeting to review these contributions and make suggestions for 2004 in a report to the Finance Committee. The members are Alice Brown, Margaret Farmer, and Robin Wells. We propose that if we do not hear from the ad hoc committee by our next meeting, on November 7, the Finance Committee make recommendations for 2004.

“We remind Meeting that an ad hoc committee consisting of Lynnora Bierce and Elizabeth Roebing was asked to make recommendations regarding Meeting’s College-Aged Friends Support Fund. We have not yet heard from the committee.”

“We encourage Meeting to reconstitute a Long Range Planning Committee.”

The clerk then read the letter from Christopher Lyons:

“Dear Friends,

“I’ve enclosed a check from my mother’s estate. I’m sure the cash is important and you will find a use for it, but her relationship with the Meeting provided much greater wealth during my parents’ years in Asheville. She was eternally grateful for what she received from her membership – community, laughs, support, babies to play with, and on occasion some spiritual assistance. You who knew her know that the order and priority of these gifts shifted frequently and they were often of equal value!

“My brothers and I thank you for all that you gave, and for the warm welcome we received whenever we passed through. Please use the bequest as you see fit. In typical Quakerly fashion, she provided no guidance or expressed wishes. You will have to reach a decision in the usual way.

“If you have any questions, please call.”

Peter Buck offered to reply to Christopher extending the Meeting’s gratitude.

Friends approved that Peter Buck write to Christopher Lyons expressing the Meeting’s gratitude for his mother’s bequest, noting the apparently hereditary aspect of the Lyons sense of humor reflected in Christopher’s letter.

It was noted that since the departure of Elizabeth Roebling, only Lynnora Bierce remained on the adhoc committee to make recommendations about the College Age Friends Support Fund. Steve Houseworth volunteered to help shepherd the fund. Elizabeth Roebling is released from her service on the committee.

A Friend expressed discomfort with the loss of confidentiality that would result from posting our Meeting’s financial report in the foyer. Friends deferred this item to be taken up again next month. Another Friend reminded the Meeting of the value of trusting our committees to do the work of the Meeting rather than micro-managing by the business meeting. Meeting was reminded that we approved the revival of the Long Range Planning and Visioning Committee, and that each standing committee was expected to identify at least one Friend to serve, with Nominating Committee to name the committee’s clerk.

Friends accepted the report of Finance Committee.

Evan Richardson read the report of Ministry and Counsel.

“We gathered at 6:00 p.m. at the meetinghouse. Steve Livingston, the clerk, had to leave due to a family emergency. Committee members present were: Alice Brown, Margaret Farmer, George Gjelfriend, Kristi Gjelfriend, Martha Huggins, Susan Mitchell and Evan Richardson. In Steve’s absence Margaret Farmer agreed to clerk the meeting.

“We entered into a period of silent worship, holding in the light several members of our meeting community.

“Steve Livingston’s request for a scholarship to attend a clerking workshop with Arthur Larrabee in November was approved. Susan agreed to contact Christine McQuiston of the scholarship committee.

“We decided to wait until our October meeting to look over the advertising budget.

“We discussed the position of recorder and including in the job description keeping updated rosters of the members of the different committees and keeping the directory current.

“The scholarship committee has requested another member from M&C to join the committee. Alice has agreed to.

“We agreed that in addition to Satchel Loftis the clerk of the meeting and the clerk of M&C should be authorized to post messages on the meeting listserv.

“We want to review the current format of business meeting- i.e. a session with a break for a meal followed by another session. We recommend that the clerk of meeting close meeting for worship that First Day. This will enable the clerk to help Friends limit their announcements and move in a timely fashion into business meeting.

“We ended with a period of silent worship. We held in the light people in the meeting about whom we share concerns.”

The report of Ministry and Counsel was approved.

Friends expressed support for the decisions made by the committee without the need for formal approval by the Meeting.

Barbara Esther gave a brief report of items from the SAYMA Representative Meeting that were time sensitive. Barbara’s e written report is presented here in its entirety:

“Report of Representative Meeting on Ninth Month 11, 2004

“The clerk, Kristi Estes, outlined a calendar of meetings for SAYMA which doesn’t list our hosting until 9/9/06. We will be asked for approval of that date when time gets closer.

“As part of the treasurer’s report, David Ciscel reminded us that when we have expenditures related to serving as our yearly meeting’s representative to a Wider Quaker Organization, it is helpful for the treasurer to receive an accounting, although at

present twice the expenditure amount requested is donated in-kind. Careful budgeting and reporting will allow for Friends without the means to donate so generously to participate in representation.

“A World Gathering of Young Friends ages 18-35, will be held on August 16-24, 2005, in Lancaster, United Kingdom. Application for participation is due on December 5, 2004. The yearly meeting is prepared to send two Young Friends, one representative and one at-large attender paying up to \$2000 to cover the cost of travel. The fee for board and room is fifty pounds. If we wish to forward information to Young Friends from our meeting to nominating committee clerk, Sharon Annis at sharonannis@comcast.org or nom@sayma.org. It was suggested that anyone having air miles to donate toward the cost of transportation could help to send Young Friends in that way.

“A Young Friend was invited to join the FCNL annual meeting. Nicole Rennie of Atlanta responded to that invitation.

“The Ad-hoc e-committee reported that its charge is to 1) coordinate and collect concerns regarding the list serve and website, 2) submit policy and procedure items for approval, and 3) propose ministry mission statements for our electronic committee systems. Concerns could be expressed through monthly meeting discussion through forums or other modes.

“FWCC Regional Gathering will be held in October, 2004. There is still time to register.

“The SAYMA nominating committee brought forward several names for approval but is still seeking a Young Friends Gathering representative, an FGC Traveling Ministry consultation representative and an Assistant Clerk to serve with Kristi Estes.

“The Faith and Practice Revision Committee has forwarded the remainder of the Yearly Meeting section of the Guide for monthly meetings to discuss before the December 4, 2004 representative meeting in Chattanooga. We are scheduled to have that discussion here on November 6, 2004. Copies will be available by October 31.

“Some discussion took place regarding job description and payment for the Junior Yearly Meeting Coordinator’s position. An ad-hoc committee was formed to look into to possible formation of a Religious Education Committee for the yearly meeting. Names suggested for this committee include Robin Wells of our meeting.

“A retreat was held in early October by the Ministry and Nurture Committee. Our meeting is invited to seek a member to that committee who is concerned to contribute in that manner.

“We are reminded by the Administrative Assistant, Mary Calhoun, that our proof list of directory updates is due in her office by October 30, 2004. She will provide a final form directory by the December representative meeting. She also asked that any Quakers with computer skills be advised that the office needs a pre-owned Microsoft access compatible computer with Windows 98.

“Our SAYMA web manager, Tim Lamm, reports that he would like each monthly meeting to check its own meeting page for accuracy and updates needed. He can then implement the changes.

“The planning committee for the yearly meeting sessions announced the theme “Challenge of Change: Finding Our Witness.” Friends may see a space on the next registration form to indicate the wish to participate in the worship sharing sessions. SAYFers will join worship sharing on only one afternoon. There may be a change in the time when Friends may arrive at the Rome, Georgia, campus from Thursday to Wednesday evening to allow folks to be prepared to join the first business meeting session on Thursday at 1:00 p.m. Meals would begin on Thursday morning. A conflict in availability has prevented one of our registrars, the one with experience, to participate this coming year. Therefore, we are seeking a registrar to serve with the remaining registrar. Friends are invited to volunteer for that position as soon as possible.”

Karen Cernek read the Nominating Committee’s report.

“We would like the Meeting to consider including a position of Assistant Clerk to the Support Committee for our Meetings Clerk.

“The proposed role would include helping the clerk with discernment, keeping centered and helping with process. We wish to emphasize that this would not be a “pre-clerk” position. Ideally, the gifts of this person would compliment those of the Clerk.

“Because we do not have a formal description of the role of Clerk, we spent some worshipful time considering possible duties and helpful gifts. Our lists are simple and are as follows:

“Proposed Role of Clerk:

- “1. To convene Meeting for Worship with attention to business and discern the sense of the Meeting.
- “2. To convene called Meetings and threshing sessions and to discern a sense of the Meeting.
- “3. To serve as our legal representative and contact person when needed.

“We suggest that some combination of these gifts be present in our Meeting’s Clerk:

- “1. An awareness of Quaker process, but will allow spirit to lead the meeting in new or different ways
- “2. Gift of allotting time and preparing the agenda
- “3. Sensitivity to the feelings of others
- “4. The ability to know when he/she should step aside
- “5. The ability to maintain focus on the work of the Clerk and to encourage individuals and committees to do the work of the Meeting.

“Because none of us serving on this committee knows everyone that attends Meeting, we would like to encourage Friends to help us. Please make us aware of gifts you would like to share, or gifts that you see in others that could help in the work of the Meeting.

“Our committee asks the Meeting if we can move forward in our process to seek a Clerk based on our discernment of what the role encompasses.

“The Nominating Committee will be convening again this Wednesday after mid-week Meeting for Worship and welcomes anyone that would like to attend or has leadings they would like share.”

In discussion, Friends spoke in support of our current practice of rotating clerks of business meeting and the facilitation of rise of meeting. There was some discussion as to whether or not the clerk must be a member of the Meeting. We recalled that Meeting had already approved creating the position of Assistant Clerk.

Friends approved the Nominating Committee’s resumption of seeking a Meeting clerk using the guidelines presented in their report.

The report of Nominating Committee was accepted.

Friends heard an individual concern about forestalling the spreading of flu and other communicable diseases, and questioned whether we ought to be more mindful of this in our habits around shared meals.

Meeting closed with a moment of silence at 2:08 p.m.