

Meeting for Worship for the Conduct of Business
Asheville Friends Meeting
11/14/2004

Meeting gathered at 11:30 a.m. Thirty Friends were in attendance: Lynnora Bierce, Alice Brown, Peter Buck, Katherine Caldwell, Jim Cavener, Valerie Collins, Carrie Coward, Agnita Dupree, Al Dupree, Krist Gjelfriend, Frances King, Margaret Farmer, Ellen Frerotte, Doyle Horne, Barry Master, Laura Maynard, Rusty Maynard, Susan Mitchell, Phil Neal, Rain Newcomb, Ellen Oldham, George Oldham (clerk, first half), Evan Richardson, Mark Ritzenthaler, Suzannah Roettger, Ursula Scott (clerk, second half), Eda Smith, Gerry Smith, Don Teslow, and Jennifer Walker.

Clerk George Oldham offered a reading from John Punshon's Encounters with Silence, p. 59:

George offered thanks for the assistance of Steve Livingston and David Clements in gathering the agenda for our meeting.

News of Ourselves:

Susan Mitchell reported that she and daughter Lauren visited former long-time members Art and Ginny McVickar in Corydon IN. They were thrilled to receive the letter generated by our Meeting last month. Susan reported that their quality of life is not on par with the conditions they enjoyed at Highland Farms, and that they are becoming more frail, though Art is still feisty. They appreciate receiving correspondence from their old friends in Asheville, and send their love to all.

Evan Richardson asked that Friends hold her sister and her partner in the Light as the referendum against same-gender marriages that was recently passed in the State of Oregon retroactively nullified their marriage license.

Previous Minutes:

Due to the lack of full distribution of the minutes of the previous two business meetings, Friends deferred the matter of corrections and approval until distribution is completed.

Treasurer's Report:

Treasurer Valerie Collins offered a report for the Finance Committee:

Responding to the clerk's inquiry, Valerie explained that a monthly Treasurer's Report is not available at this time due to our lacking an accountant to keep the books current. She reported that the books are current through 9th month, and will continue being updated quarterly.

Clerk *Pro Tem*:

Friends approved that Ursula Scott would take over the clerking of the second half of the meeting as George had to leave at 12:30 p.m.

Agenda:

Friends reviewed the agenda, adding one item: discussion of a Meeting gathering for the holidays.

House and Grounds:

Committee clerk Jennifer Walker reported for House and Grounds:

"Report from House and Grounds Committee, Tenth Month

"The Library, back hallway and stairwell are scheduled to be painted beginning December 6th. It will take one week to paint, and then a few days to dry. Marcia Master will be heading up the library 'pack up' on Saturday December 4th, and continuing on Sunday December 5th. We need people those days to assist with the packing and clean out. We will be unpacking the library on December 18th and 19th, and will need help then as well. Times will be announced as the dates get closer.

"The workdays have been well attended, and we have accomplished much over the past two months. The workdays are happening regularly at 9 am on the first Saturday of every month, and will continue through the winter months.

“The furniture in the library is being removed, and if any committee, or meeting individual can use, or knows of someone that can use, this desk and table, please let me know so that we can coordinate a pick up.”

The report was accepted.

A Friend pointed out that as the Library will be unavailable for the two week period referenced in the report, that Friends should plan accordingly by checking out any desired materials prior to 12/4 and waiting until after 12/18 to return materials.

Ad Hoc Retreat Committee:

Committee clerk Carrie Coward read a written report:

“Financials:

“The total cost of the retreat (including all programming, lodging, food, materials, and childcare) was \$6,361.12. Income received was \$4,680.00. The meeting covered \$1,681.12 toward the cost of the retreat. 21 adults paid full price. \$1070.00 was paid in scholarships to assist 13 adults.

“From the 2004 retreat, attached to this report you will find:

““What I wish someone had told me about Quakerism’ and ‘what I’d like to learn about Quakerism’ lists from the retreat.

““Ideas to work on as a community’ list as brainstormed at the retreat.

““2004 retreat evaluation summary.

[these items may be found at the end of this report – ed.]

“Status of 2005 retreat:

“The 2004 committee has been laid to rest. We are seeking people who feel led to serve on the 2005 committee. Phil Neal has indicated that he will serve again. Evan Richardson indicated that she will help. The remainder of the 2004 committee has made no commitments. The Spiritual Enrichment Committee was asked if it wanted to take ownership of planning the retreat. The committee decided to release ownership and favors an ad hoc committee to be formed as was the case this year. Spiritual Enrichment will be happy to assist in planning the programmed portion of the retreat but not the logistics.

“The 2004 committee welcomes the 2005 committee’s research into locations other than Bonclarken Retreat Center; however, it is our recommendation that Bonclarken be reserved now as a back up location. If a location change is to occur, the research and decision making will need to be done quickly (likely by January 2005). We recognize the risk however of not holding Bonclarken and prefer to offset that risk by reserving it with the knowledge that we can cancel with very little financial penalty. We hold no ties to Bonclarken.”

Friends approved laying down the ad hoc 2004 retreat planning committee, with gratitude for their work. Friends approved forming a new ad hoc committee to plan the 2005 residential retreat.

Registrar Lynnora Bierce expressed gratitude for the value of her experience in that position.

Friends considered that last month’s meeting for business was not united on making a deposit to reserve Bon Clarken for the 2005 retreat. A Friend shared the experience that at least two years of advance notice is generally needed to reserve a new location. Another Friend who served on the 2004 committee affirmed a sense of security in having a reservation well in advance.

Friends suggested that we stay open to a new venue for 2005, especially if we can find a location in Buncombe County that would be more proximate and accommodate those seeking simpler surroundings. Other Friends noted that simpler surroundings may not be appropriate for all attenders.

After some discussion, Friends approved making a \$325 deposit to reserve Bon Clarken as a possible location for our 2005 residential retreat. Friends approved forming an ad hoc search committee to explore possible new locations for either 2005 or 2006.

Carrie offered to serve on the 2005 planning committee, and to convene their first meeting, but not to clerk the committee. George Oldham asked that those interested in serving to contact her. Rusty Maynard offered to serve on the search committee. Interested Friends should contact him.

After a 30 minute meal break, the meeting resumed at 1 p.m. with Ursula Scott clerking.

Ministry and Counsel:

Kristi Gjelfriend read a written report submitted by committee clerk Steve Livingston:

“Our first meeting convened at 6 p.m. on 10/12/04. Present were Alice Brown, Martha Huggins, George Gjelfriend, Kristi Gjelfriend, Rusty Maynard, and Steve Livingston (clerk)

“We began with several minutes of silent worship, during which we held the Meeting in the Light.

“We discussed the matter of the Meeting’s advertising budget. We recommended to Finance Committee that we discontinue the paid advertisement in the Citizen-Times. We considered a variety of other venues where our advertising dollars could be better spent, but without making a specific choice. Since the Mountain Xpress “Cosmic Buffet” will give us a free listing, George Gjelfriend agreed to write one up.

“We returned to the unresolved question of when our Board should hold its meeting. We agreed that it really wouldn’t hurt to try it next year, and 10th month seemed a reasonable choice. We agreed that it would only take a few minutes, and if it were put in the latter part of the agenda, it would not unduly interfere with what might be viewed as more pressing business. A Friend pointed out that since we Friends have “abolished the laity”, we are all in essence members of the Board.

“We talked about ways we could support the Meeting’s need for Friends to serve in the clerking role, such as a pool of co-clerks rotating the role from month to month, encouraging Friends who might be good candidates for serving a full term as clerk. We agreed to continue as we have been, developing a group of seasoned Friends who are willing to serve once or twice in the coming months if needed.

“Rusty Maynard agreed to serve as M&C’s liaison to the Long Range Planning Committee.

“The ad hoc committee to consider marriage was asked to clarify who was serving on the committee and to meet again asap.

“We reviewed the responsibilities of the Meeting Recorder: to keep track of who in our community are members of the Society of Friends, of which Meetings they are members, and to record births and deaths in our community. Phil Neal has offered to take care of the Meeting Record until a Friend takes on the position of Recorder.

“We agreed that our Meeting needs an updated roster.

“We discussed the problem of getting Friends to settle for the start of Meeting for Business. Would it be helpful to have a bell to ring, to call Friends together?

“We shared impressions about vocal ministry and the quality and depth of our worship. We agreed that Friends would benefit from a forum on the subject of vocal ministry.

“We offered thanks to Alice Brown for straightening out the foyer.

“We considered the need for another meeting of committee clerks. We identified the purposes of such a meeting to be: assessing the “state of the meeting”, giving support to the clerk of the meeting, sharing how different clerks view the task of clerking, sharing how different clerks shepherd the committee’s work, facilitating planning for committee meetings and other Meeting events.

“Our meeting adjourned at 9 p.m. with some fellowship.

“We gathered again at the Meetinghouse on 10/31 after rise of meeting and some time for fellowship. Present were Kristi Gjelfriend, Alice Brown, Martha Huggins, Evan Richardson, George Gjelfriend, Rusty Maynard, and Steve Livingston (clerk)

“We discussed the job description for meeting clerk offered by Nominating Committee at last month’s business meeting. We wish to offer the two additional roles of facilitator and expeditor to their list of roles and the trait of openness to receiving support, encouragement, and constructive criticism to the list of desirable gifts. We affirmed that each clerk comes with his or her own set of gifts, and supported the nominating committee’s discernment that the position of co-clerk or assistant clerk should not be filled until a clerk is named, so that we will know what gifts and talents are needed to

complement the attributes offered by the new clerk. We affirmed the value of a committee of Friends to support the clerk, and the prerogative of the clerk to request or decline such a committee. Evan Richardson and Kristi Gjelfriend offered to serve on such a committee.

“We returned to the matter of naming a clerk for the 12th month meeting for business. No one among us felt led to serve. We saw value in identifying a prospective clerk prior to the 11th month meeting for business. We saw value in having the prospective clerk present at the 11th month meeting. We sought ways to avoid “scrambling” to fill the need. We sought ways to discern a prospective clerk rather than merely accepting a volunteer. We sought ways to encourage Friends who had never clerked a business meeting.

“We suggest that while lacking a Friend to serve as clerk of Meeting for the present term, Nominating Committee seek to identify Friends who are open to serving as clerk of business meeting one time in the coming year.

“We reviewed the need for a meeting of committee clerks. We saw that the previous meeting of committee clerks held on 9/08 did not accomplish the goals the meeting had set out. We propose that another meeting of committee clerks be convened, before the end of the calendar year if possible. We identified several goals for this meeting:

“hearing each others’ experiences

“listening to the agendas of each committee for the coming year

“listening to one another’s challenges and goals as clerks of committees

“reviewing and discussing the FGC pamphlet for committee clerks

“Evan Richardson agreed to organize the committee clerks’ meeting

“Our meeting adjourned at 2:10 p.m.

“Minutes for action by the business meeting:

“Board of Directors’ meeting will take place during the 10th month 2005 meeting for business.

“A meeting of committee clerks will be convened, prior to the end of 2004 if at all possible.

“Additions to the Nominating Committee’s discernment of gifts and responsibilities of clerk of meeting: roles of facilitator and expeditor, and gift of openness to receiving support, encouragement, and constructive criticism.

“Questions for discussion:

“Who is serving on the ad hoc committee to consider the issue of same-gender unions?

“How may we facilitate beginning the meeting for business more quickly?

“Who will serve as clerk of 12th month meeting for business?”

In reply to an inquiry about the status of the Recorder role in our Meeting, a Friend related that Ministry and Counsel had been asked to look into this a few years ago, but had not done so. Nominating Committee has been asked to seek a Friend to fill the role.

Friends discussed possible ways to facilitate the beginning of business meeting, noting that today’s meeting started in a timely fashion. A Friend pointed out that child care ends at 2 p.m. making it more difficult for parents to attend beyond that hour. Other Friends spoke of the need for a finite ending time to avoid loss of positive group dynamics and focus, and so that attenders could make and meet other commitments for the afternoon.

Steve Livingston agreed to provide a bell to call Friends to the next meeting. Friends suggested that the person facilitating rise of meeting on second First Day ask for announcements to be kept brief. Friends supported the idea of two or three volunteers setting up the meeting room immediately after rise of meeting, closing doors to outer areas, and encouraging all to gather and begin worship as soon as feasible. Friends supported the idea of setting 11:30 a.m. as the starting time. Friends asked that Ministry and Counsel take these suggestions into consideration.

Friends discussed the process for selecting a clerk for the business meetings, supporting greater discernment as well as listening to leadings and utilizing a rotational schedule of well-seasoned Friends and former clerks. Rain Newcomb was led to offer to clerk the 12th month meeting, describing her clerking experience among Young Friends.

Friends asked that Ministry and Counsel take the matter of facilitating the business meeting under advisement as a principal duty of the committee.

Friends heartily approved Rain Newcomb to clerk the 12th month 2004 meeting for business.

Friends approved holding the annual Board of Directors meeting during the 10th month 2005 business meeting.

Friends accepted the report of Ministry and Counsel.

Christy Bischoff:

Friends were informed that Christy Bischoff had resigned her position as clerk of Peace and Earth Committee as she prepares for her journey to Belfast, Northern Ireland and from there to Hebron, Palestine. She also planned to participate in the action at the School of the Americas with the SOA Watch organization.

Trina Farmer:

The clerk read a letter from Trina Farmer, requesting support for her third year in the Quaker Leaders Scholarship Program. She reported that her experience at Guilford College has been “fabulous”.

Friends approved providing a \$500 scholarship to Trina Farmer for her third year in the Quaker Leaders Scholarship Program.

Holiday Gathering:

Friends discussed the possibility of holding a gathering to commemorate the changing of the year at Winter Solstice. Friends were reminded that early Quakers did not celebrate Christmas at all, choosing instead to testify to the equality of all days in the year. Friends were moved to plan a simpler commemoration than our Meeting has had in past years, one that would include some worship and a simpler shared meal.

Friends approved an ad hoc planning committee consisting of Margaret Farmer, Jim Cavener, Katherine Caldwell, and Alice Brown.

Orphans' Thanksgiving:

Friends were reminded of the Orphans' Thanksgiving gathering at the Meetinghouse on 11/25, with the meal being served at 3 p.m. Lynnora Bierce is providing the turkey and Phil Neal is preparing a “tofurkey”.

Lynnora also mentioned that she is seeking membership in the Society of Friends. Her announcement was greeted with warmth and joy.

Closing of Meeting:

The meeting for business ended at 1:55 p.m. with a few moments of worship.

IDEAS TO WORK ON AS A COMMUNITY (10/17/04):

- Be attentive to the way we greet newcomers
- More forums on membership (Quakerism 101, 201, 301)
- Need to find a way to continue the small group sharing beyond Friendly 8's
- Consider re-structure of the meeting for worship to include first day school for adults as well
- Post information for first timers in a simple, visible place
- Is there a safe way for newcomers to indicate whether or not they want to be approached?
- Quakerism 101 needs to be held regularly throughout the year
- Consider brief introductory remarks at the beginning of meeting
- Discern priorities and then focus
- Take risks
- Who will steward these recommendations and bring them forward for discernment?
- Re-think after meeting time – do announcements crowd out the newcomers?
- Remember to consider families with young children when planning

2004 Retreat – Evaluation Summary

What worked?

- *0 Small group discussions (*****)
- *1 Loves small groups – long for more
- *2 The spirit of the weekend
- *3 Deborah's observations and gentle suggestions
- *4 I made much deeper connections
- *5 I have a better sense of the meeting community
- *6 The weekend ran very smoothly
- *7 The simplicity of the format

What didn't work?

1. Need better vegetarian foods (**)
2. Finding the clerk within was not fully realized
3. Need a teen program
4. One less hour of lecture would have been great – felt preached to at the end
5. Needed more chances to stretch (**)
6. Acoustics were not good for those with hearing challenges

What I Wish Someone Would Have Told Me About Quakerism

- Less is more
- What it means to center down
- Quakers are such poor softball players
- How much silent worship grows on you
- How long discernment can sometimes take
- How to know when meeting is over – my first time I kept wondering “How am I gonna know when to stop being quiet.”
- That Quakers were serious about living with spiritual leadings in all their life, not just as an occasional and extraordinary thing.
- I feel like there has been a vagueness and lack of clear statements about the possibility that listening to the Spirit will take over your whole life.
- In an effort to not be pushy I think we land in a “niceness” that is a muddled compromise with business – as usual.
- I guess I wish someone had told me Quakers expect that their worship will transform them.
- That announcements are always that long!
- I waited for weeks for someone to pass me an offering plate. We could do a better job (subtly) letting people know how we collect donations.
- That Quakerism is a split up religious body – FGC, FUM, EFA, Conservative.
- That everyone has a voice in business meeting, that anyone can bring a concern (even though the concern may not be acted upon).
- That there is a space for unprogrammed worship with a concern for business - potential spontaneity in the midst of agenda
- That there was more to meeting for worship than just being silent and seeking refuge
- About business meetings
- How to discern a message for vocal meeting
- What did the first Quakers believe?
- What was the basis for vocal ministry?
- That meeting for business is held in the same Spirit as meeting for worship: some silence, settling, no arguing, speak only once, no need to say so at length if you agree with the previous speakers
- That even if you get to the meeting house early on First Day, one should refrain from conversation in the room
- That you didn't have to have some physical/mental transformation in order either consider yourself a Quaker or to become a member
- That absolutely nothing happens in a Quaker Meeting unless someone does it.
- Committees aren't just for weighty members over 70
- Friends won't talk openly and frankly about money
- The difference between “being a Quaker” and “membership in a Monthly Meeting”
- I haven't been thrown so far. I have not been discomfited
- That it's OK if you don't receive messages
- That Quakers don't feel that everyone who isn't a certain religion will go straight to hell and that there is that of God in everyone

What I'd Like To Learn About Quakerism

- Everything
- History
- Biographies of early Quakers
- I want to keep up and be a part of our ever changing faith and practice
- How our faith specifically guides, teaches us to deal with negative emotions
- More about process
- I would like to know more of the history of its founding
- Can I be a Quaker if I don't believe in God or the divine?
- The mechanics of Quaker worship, I would like to have explicit directions about how to wait upon the Spirit. I know that there are several ways to open up to Spirit but I really need to get beyond conceptual discussions, to detailed instructions
- More about testimonies
- More about committee work
- More about clearness committees
- I'd like more breadth and depth
- I'm a newcomer and I don't know the traditions and procedures as well as I'd like
- How important today is membership?
- How do we differentiate between members and non-members, do members have certain perks or privileges, such as "marriage under the care of the meeting?"
- What do individuals in my meeting take as their personal peace testimony?
- What is our vision of a perfect world?
- I'd like to learn how to lovingly hold each other accountable...eldering skills
- I'd like more knowledge about early Quakers and their way of worshiping
- How do you form a clearness committee and for what reasons?
- How would I serve on a clearness committee for another person?
- Do Quakers believe at all in the Old Testament kind of God, who played a puppet game with Job and smote people regularly?
- More Quaker outreach
- How early Friends incorporated faith practice into their daily lives. Did they meditate alone? Did they make a distinction between meditation and worship?
- What happened to the spouses of Friends who left to travel in the ministry for long periods? E.g. How did Mrs. John Woolman manage?
- The history of early Quakers in England
- How a group can still consider themselves Quaker when meetings are programmed and there is a specific person giving a sermon?
- I would really like a reading list
- The difference between being a member and an attender?