

Meeting for Worship for the Conduct of Business
Asheville Friends Meeting
2/13/2005

Meeting gathered at 11:30 a.m. Twenty-one Friends were in attendance: Lynnora Bierce, Karen Cernek, David Clements, Carrie Coward, Barbara Esther, Margaret Farmer, Ellen Frerotte, George Gjelfriend, Kristi Gjelfriend, Joy Gossett, Willie Kaylor, Nancy Kuykendall, Steve Livingston (recording clerk), Laura Maynard, Rusty Maynard, Phil Neal, George Oldham, Evan Richardson (clerk), Ursula Scott, Eda Smith, Gerry Smith, and Robin Wells.

Clerk Evan Richardson invited Friends to join in worship in the hope of being transformed by the unexpected. She offered the metaphor of a listening device attached to our hearts. She read a passage from Quaker Meeting: a Risky Business

“A Meeting was raising funds for a new Meetinghouse and the clerk was calling on members for pledges. One weighty, affluent, but tight-fisted Friend rose and said 'I'll subscribe five dollars.' Just then a piece of old plaster fell on his head. Half stunned, the weighty Friend mumbled, 'I mean f-five hundred dollars.'”

Agenda:

The clerk reviewed the agenda and Friends were comfortable with proceeding as planned.

Introductions:

The clerk asked if there were any present for the first time at a business meeting. We found that all were seasoned beyond that point.

Approval of Minutes:

Friends approved the minutes of 1st month 2005 as posted on the Meeting website.

A few Friends are still not receiving copies of the minutes, due to the limitations of electronic dissemination. Written copies will be provided in the foyer to serve those who need them.

Clearness Committee for Membership:

Lynnora Bierce read a written report from the Clearness Committee for Membership for Lindsay Bridges.

“The Clearness Committee, comprised of Evan Richardson, Ursula Scott, Steve Livingston and Lynnora Bierce, met with Lindsay Bridges to hear her readiness to become a recorded member of Asheville Friends Meeting and the Religious Society of Friends, on January 24, 2005 at 9:30 AM in the home of Ursula Scott.

“Lindsay related to us her full readiness to accept membership in the Society of Friends, to be an active part of our spiritual family, and for the community to know that she is willing to support us and accept our support.

“We recognize Lindsay’s long attendance and her participation in the nurturing of our meeting, and see her as a fellow traveler upon this spiritual journey. She has found a home with Friends.

“It is our happy recommendation that Lindsay Bridges be accepted as a recorded member of Asheville Friends Meeting.

“Lindsay wishes to have more time to discern whether her daughters require membership, associate membership or no membership and will apprise the meeting when the answers come to her.”

Friends approved with joy the membership of Lindsay Bridges in the Religious Society of Friends, Asheville Monthly Meeting.

Friends approved a welcoming committee for Lindsay consisting of Lynnora Bierce, Steve Livingston, Margaret Farmer, and Ursula Scott.

Ministry and Counsel:

Steve Livingston read a written report.

“Ministry and Counsel met on 1/11/2005, beginning at 6:15 p.m. Present were Martha Huggins, Evan Richardson, George and Kristi Gjelfriend, Rusty Maynard, Alice Brown, and Steve Livingston (clerk).

“We talked about the upcoming committee clerks’ meeting, its focus, and the agenda for our time together. We returned to our efforts to discern the meaning of membership in our Meeting. We expect to be offering a forum on the subject in the near future. We reviewed our practice of meeting for worship with attention to business, with a sense that the community is supporting our interim clerks well, and that the practice of offering light fare is serving the needs of the meeting better than having a full meal.

“We acknowledged the need to get the Long Range Planning Committee back in gear. We wish to remind the meeting’s standing committees to identify a representative as soon as possible.

“We have placed a paid advertisement in the Daily Planet newspaper, a new publication somewhat geared to the University market. The cost is very minimal and the obligation only one month. We will review this decision at our next meeting. We will be hearing from George Gjelfriend later in the meeting today concerning results of our recent changes in advertising.

“Ministry and Counsel brings no items to the Meeting that require action or decision by the community at this time, but as always, the comments, observations, and support of individual Friends are welcomed.”

Friends accepted the report of Ministry and Counsel.

Ministry and Counsel was encouraged to submit an advertising budget.

Spiritual Enrichment:

Carrie Coward read a written report. Friends present at the committee meeting included Carrie, Willie and Jen Kaylor, Tricia Ridgeway, Carolyn Haag, Margaret Farmer, Joy Gossett, Mark Cobb, and Evan Richardson (clerk). Others serving on the committee include Ellen Frerotte, Laura Maynard, Mindy Beller, Peter Buck and Satchel Loftis.

“As many of you know, SE committee has been working to find ways to achieve a couple key objectives, these being:

- “1. To break meeting each week in a worshipful, mindful way
- “2. To enhance the spiritual connections between meeting attendees and members

“We appreciate the participation and feedback of meeting attendees regarding the way that break of meeting and community building activities have been going. The feedback is helping us hone in on what works and what does not.

“Our revised thinking on the above mentioned issues is this:

“Community Building Activities:

“We will have 'community building' exercises/activities every 4th Sunday (Sandwich Sunday) only – perhaps and sometimes on a spontaneous basis when no after meeting activity has been scheduled. This will eliminate any conflicts with forums and with meeting for business. On forum or MFB days, the meeting will end efficiently and we will move into the scheduled event, after a period of 'more spacious' fellowship. On 4th Sundays, the activities will be varied and will be a mix of 'need to think' mixed with practical and fun.

“Forum Times:

“Forums will begin at 11:45. This will be clearly communicated (see below).

“Break of Meeting:

“We will strive to break meeting in a worshipful way and in a way that leaves our community with a more relaxed sense of time for fellowship between meeting for worship and any programmed events. This will continue to mean that announcements are handled in a 'new way'. This is what we offer as our ongoing experiment:

- “There will be a large poster board created that will highlight the 'regular/on-going' happenings of the meeting. There will be a pocket with printed version for 'take aways'. Covered will be: mid week meeting, Sunday schedules (1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc.), regular committee meetings and contact people, etc. This board will be mentioned at the close of meeting each week.
- “We are asking folks to consider the email list that Steve Houseworth prepares each week as THE main venue for announcements in the meeting. While these announcements will not be reiterated verbally on first day, they will be available to all, either via email during the week or on first day in written form.
- “In terms of announcements at the close of meeting, we offer a limited focus that may include:
 - “1. Mention of on-going events calendar/hand outs in foyer. You can get on email list and instructions are on the poster.
 - “2. Mention of 'silent announcement' sheet with handouts available.
 - “3. Mention of today's event (if any) and what's coming up next week (forum, meeting for business, sandwich Sunday).
 - “4. Ask if there are any time sensitive announcements that were not able to be posted on the silent announcement list and won't be relevant when next week's list comes out that need to be shared aloud.
 - “5. Make time for the passing around of clipboards needed to facilitate community sign up for various items (hospitality for groups, pastoral care, first day school, etc.)

“We believe that it is not the work of the meeting to get into details that are best worked out in committee, but as a committee we recognize that we are serving the meeting, so we want our process to be open. From this perspective, today's purpose is to inform the meeting of our work and open up our

process for input from the meeting. We are not asking for approval. In this vein, perhaps it is important for folks to know that we have and will continue to seek guidance from M&C in implementing these changes AND that we are responding to concerns/desires/needs that have been expressed by members and attenders that have been brought to our committee for consideration. If you have suggestions and input, please see Evan Richardson or me or plan to attend our next SE committee meeting on March 9, 2005 at 6:30pm.”

Friends accepted the report of Spiritual Enrichment Committee.

Carrie expressed the committee's gratitude for the many comments and suggestions offered by others in the Meeting. The clerk described the new format for rise of Meeting as an “ongoing experiment” rather than a clear discernment of process. In response to an inquiry, Carrie described in more detail the poster that will be displayed in the foyer. Friends were informed that Steve Houseworth's weekly e-letter is not under the care of any committee, but that he consults regularly with both Ministry and Counsel and Spiritual Enrichment Committees.

Finance:

David Clements read a written report.

“Asheville Friends Meeting Finance Committee report, 2/13/05

“1. The Finance Committee will present final figures for 2004, together with preliminary budget figures for 2005. We will discuss the 2005 budget more on February 17, and welcome any additional comments. We will plan to present a final budget at the March Meeting.

“2. Rental Rates for Meeting House use. At the January Business Meeting the Finance Committee proposed taking over setting rates for the use of the Meeting House. We had been asked by the House and Grounds Committee to take over this function. The Finance Committee suggested setting rates based on covering the expense of keeping up the Meeting House. There was some discussion in Meeting regarding the best way of deciding on fees for rentals, and Friends with different views were invited to contact the Finance Committee to give input. Meeting wanted to have the Finance Committee report back to Meeting with a proposal rather than simply taking the responsibility for setting the rates.

“We have considered the matter. No one from Meeting contacted us with any thoughts or concerns about this matter. Jennifer Walker gave us a rough assessment of the cost of maintaining the House and Grounds, approximately \$10,000 per year. We currently are bringing in \$4,000 to \$5,000 per year in rent. We did not have the expertise or energy to make a formal study of the matter, and have preferred to make a recommendation based on our limited knowledge of rental rates for similar spaces in Asheville. We realize that there may be some interest among friends in a more comprehensive analysis of the situation, and welcome the appointment of an ad hoc committee if Meeting sees this need.

“Our recommendations are as follows:

“1. Increase the hourly rental rate to \$10 per hour from \$7.50 per hour, with a minimum rental of two hours. Maximum daily rental will continue to be \$50.

“2. Continue the present \$25 fee for the use of the kitchen.

“3. Offer a discounted rate of \$40 per day to groups that rent the Meeting House for four or more days in a months. (Presently this applies only to the Imagine Homeschool Group.)

“4. Continue the practice of halving the rental rates for groups that include Meeting members and attenders.

“5. Ask the House and Grounds Committee to implement the new rates by selecting a date for the change.”

In response to Friends' inquiries, the clerk restated the proposed changes and David affirmed that the new rates would not cover the estimated costs of maintaining the building at the present frequency of rentals.

Friends approved raising the rental rate from \$7.50 per hour to \$10 per hour as recommended by Finance Committee.

Friends accepted the Finance Committee's report.

Nominating:

Karen Cernek read a written report.

“Positions currently needed to be filled include: Clerk of the Meeting, Newsletter Editor, Archivist and Members for the Pastoral Care Committee. Please contact any member of the Nominating Committee if you are interested in any of these opportunities, or know of friends with gifts in these areas that we should consider.

“John Wykle seeks to be released from the Nominating Committee. We are grateful to have gotten to know him a little better and thank him for all his help and enthusiasm.

“The Nominating committee has worked very hard to prepare a workshop event to help Friends connect with each other and to learn about the work of the meeting. Due to weather concerns, our event which was scheduled for last month was cancelled. It is our hope that this workshop will create awareness and inspiration among Friends and help Nominating Committee with its work. We feel a very strong sense of urgency with regard to having this event as soon as possible; however, it will be five months before a forum slot will be available. The committee, therefore, asks that, if anyone who has reserved a forum slot would be willing to reschedule their forum, or if there is a cancellation, we ask that Nominating Committee be notified as soon as possible.

“In our work to find a Clerk for our Meeting as well as other roles, we have been lead to explore the option of hiring an Administrative Assistant. Time constraints have frequently been cited as a deterrent for Friends' ability to serve - not just in this area, but others as well. As we reported earlier, the demographics of our Meeting have changed dramatically. No longer are we blessed with a good number of active retired & semi retired Friends, we also have more single parent families and families with 2 working parents. Several Friends within our Meeting have come from Meetings that had such help and found that it worked well.

“Some of the benefits of hiring an Administrative Assistant:

“1) Making the transition smoother from Clerk to Clerk

“2) Would insure that important administrative details are taken care of properly and in a timely manner. This is especially important when we are between Clerks.

“3) May encourage Friends to accept the role of Clerk knowing there is an experienced, reliable assistant solidly in place in addition to a support team/committee.

“4) An Administrative Assistant could take on some of the work of other committees, (ex: booking/scheduling groups that use the Meeting House, help with finance committee... possibly book keeping, assist the newsletter editor).

“We are not requesting action or discussion at this time, only that Friends carefully and faithfully consider this option. The Nominating Committee will raise this suggestion again at the March Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business.”

Friends were asked to hold in the Light the suggestion for hiring an Administrative Assistant. A Friend working professional as a hiring consultant offered to help with hiring if Meeting decides to move forward.

The report of Nominating Committee was accepted.

Friends approved with gratitude and regret the release of John Wykle from Nominating Committee.

Nominating Committee will inform the *ad hoc* Naming Committee if there is a need to identify an additional Friend to serve with them.

In response to an inquiry, Friends were informed that Ministry and Counsel has taken on the task of identifying interim clerks to serve the Meetings for Business, and that Jennifer Walker would clerk in 3rd month, Steve Livingston 4th month, and Rain Newcomb 5th month, and are ready to clerk the meetings for the upcoming three months.

Recorder:

Phil Neal read a written report.

“New membership forms have been printed on chlorine-free paper: 250 copies. They are quite similar to the ones originally obtained from Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, with changes made to fit the current needs of Asheville Meeting. It is intended to continue using the same binder 1 which, although of an obsolete style, appears to be suitable to hold member records and protect them. The printer was unable to make holes in the new pages that fit the posts of this old binder I but the expertise of a skilled member with the proper tools will make possible the required drilling.

“The next task of the recording committee will be to update the membership records and to furnish data regarding active members that will contribute one part to compilation of the annual list of active members/attenders that will be the basis for computing the Meeting's current assessment to SAYMA. The recording committee has not yet convened to plan details of records search and entry of data on the new forms.

“It should be noted that the recorder (JPN) has received the help of two other Friends (Lynnora Bierce and archivist Susan Mitchell), and these will be available to assist the recorder in the necessary updating, thus forming a committee of three. This committee decided that computer recording should not

take the place of a record book. Computerization is an additional option, to be decided on, by the Meeting if necessary.”

A discussion of our census for SAYMA's assessment came up when our SAYMA representative, Barbara Esther, inquired whether it would be appropriate to give the census form to the Recorder for processing. Although it seemed that in recent years our census figure has remained fairly constant at around 80, there was no certainty as to who makes that determination. Friends agreed that our practice has been to include those Friends who are actually involved in our community, whether recorded members or not, and not to include those recorded members who are not in any way involved in the community. Barbara was advised to pass the census form to Ministry and Counsel.

Friends accepted the report of the Recorder.

Ad Hoc Committees:

Meeting was informed that the *ad hoc* committee to consider our First Day schedule has met twice but is not yet ready to bring a report to the Meeting. Friends were asked to hold this committee in the Light as they proceed with their discernment. The *ad hoc* committee to discern the disposition of bequests from Pat Lyon and Lucille Carlson has not yet met.

Religious Education:

Barbara Esther read a written report.

“We are pleased to say that the Youth Group is now restored to adult leadership under George Gjelfriend. The arrangement was finalized after an invitation was offered to George by the YF to discuss terms for his return to the position. Anyone wanting further information can ask a teen. Adults will continue to visit the YF as a guest alongside George. The committee is pleased that the process was handled so well by the youth without much adult input. It is precisely this leadership skill that we hope to see more and more as our children mature into adult members of the meeting. We thank all who assisted and upheld the YF during this process.

“We are in the midst of our Secret Pals event, and hope that everyone will join us in the Feb. 20th celebration and revelation following meeting for worship. It will be a potluck.

“We have finalized the tri-fold brochure to have available for visitors. It can easily be changed via Robin Well's computer whenever warranted.

“On March 11-13, 2005, Asheville, Friends will host the retreat of SAYF -Southern Appalachian Young Friends. We need Friends for overnight FAPping (Friendly Adult Presence) and for day FAP positions. The lead FAP is Barbara Esther. Please contact her for volunteer information at 683-4839, or sign up on our clipboard. We may be providing a potluck supper on Sunday evening if requested by the planning committee: Stephanie Gossett, Christie and Ellen Farmer, and Molly Rosch. We thank the meeting for their support of this event. The theme is clerking. Perhaps this will nurture our own discussions of late.”

Friends accepted the report of Religious Education.

Our First Day School Coordinator, Robin Wells, urged Friends to volunteer for service with the smaller children upstairs, to enable those who volunteer very regularly to join in worship with adults downstairs. Robin expressed that volunteers have not been forthcoming lately when asked at rise of meeting. She agreed to schedule volunteers as far in advance as they may wish, and assured potential volunteers that the age ranges and activities of the children would be fully elucidated.

Individual Concerns:

George Gjelfriend reported that he had received a call from radio station WPVM asking for a representative from our Meeting to participate one week in their upcoming series on "Pathways to the Sacred" and that he agreed to do so. Friends supported his leading. Meeting suggested that another Friend accompany George as an Elder, and Steve Livingston agreed to do so. George reported that he has received three other calls as a result of our new advertising.

A Friend requested that Meeting consider the progress of our State of the Society Report at our next meeting for business.

Several Friends spoke about the arrangements for eating during today's meeting for business. The food was left in the kitchen rather than being rolled out into the meeting room, and some Friends were not made aware of its availability at all. A Friend observed that we have not yet found the balance between the needs of the community to stay focused on our business and the need to receive sustenance. Some Friends are distracted from our work together by the occasional interruptions of those getting up to serve themselves. A Friend offered that it would be better to bring out the food at the outset of the meeting despite the risk of some staying to eat but not to engage in the meeting. A Friend offered that it would be better to take ten minutes out of our work to eat than to have the frequent traffic of Friends going to the buffet. A Friend offered that we might delay the start of business meeting until 11:45 rather than trying to get underway at 11:30. Friends were reminded that a small child in our meeting is deadly allergic to peanut butter. Friends were reminded that the preparation of food for our community is a deeply-held calling for Friend Gerry Smith, and that any decisions regarding the serving of food in the meeting should be made only in consultation with him. Friends were reminded that cleanup is part of any meal plan, and our community might be better served if this were planned in advance even for a simple meal.

Friends united in appreciation for Gerry Smith's long-standing, faithful, and very palatable ministry to our community.

A Friend rose to speak in concern for Martha Huggins, who will soon undergo an operation to donate a portion of her liver to her brother. Friends were moved to offer some sort of farewell occasion, and Karen Cernek, Ursula Scott, and Robin Wells agreed to organize an ice-cream social to raise funds for the operation. Friends were concerned about what other kinds of support – monetary, personal, and spiritual – might be made available through the Meeting community. Barbara Esther and Evan Richardson offered to explore such opportunities, and Karen Cernek will provide them a list of Friends who have offered to serve on Pastoral Care Committee, who might have an interest in assisting.

Lynnora Bierce announced that she and Steve Livingston would be worshipping in Charleston SC next week, and Friends united in sending greetings to Charleston Friends Meeting.

Karen Cernek announced that she will be undergoing a minor surgical procedure in New York soon. She learned from recent blood analysis that she has some form of leukemia. Friends held her in the Light.

Robin Wells reported that her husband David will be traveling to Haiti to provide medical care to orphan children there. Friends wished him Godspeed, and hoped that the political unrest in Haiti would subside.

Close of Meeting:

Meeting ended at 1:20 p.m. with a brief period of silent worship.