

Meeting for Worship for the Conduct of Business
Asheville Friends Meeting
5/8/2005

Meeting began at 11:50 a.m. Twenty-four Friends were in attendance: Beth Bates, Alice Brown, Lyn-nora Bierce, David Clements, Margaret Farmer, Lena Feldman, Joy Gossett, Steve Houseworth, Martha Huggins, Steve Livingston (recording clerk), Satchel Loftis, Laura Maynard, Rusty Maynard, Susan Mitchell, Phil Neal, Ellen Oldham, George Oldham, Rain Newcomb (clerk), Evan Richardson, Alan Riddle, Suzanna Roettger, Eda Smith, Gerry Smith, and Jennifer Walker.

Opening:

The clerk, Rain Newcomb, began the meeting with several minutes of silent worship. Then she re-counted from her experience of “what it means to be a Quaker”. She recalled a mentor whose Meeting was an evangelical Quaker church whose practice seemed in almost every way to be that of a Protestant Christian denomination. She asked the mentor why he still considered himself to be a Quaker, to which he replied “because we still adhere to Quaker practice in our Meetings for Business.” Rain then de-scribed that a meeting for business affords us the opportunity to observe and practice all of our Quaker testimonies: simplicity, honesty, equality, peacemaking, and answering to that of the Divine in every-one.

News of Ourselves:

Eda Smith shared that her son Colin would be married on 6/11 in Charleston SC. Brian Yaffee, a former clerk of SAYMA from long ago, will be attending.

Susan Mitchell reported that her daughter Lauren will be working in the Nantahala Gorge this summer before leaving for Bangladesh in the Fall.

Evan Richardson invited Friends to see her son Wesley perform with the New Studio of Dance this coming weekend.

Margaret Farmer informed Friends that her daughter Christy will graduate from Carolina Day School on 5/20. Christy was born to Margaret while she was living in our Meetinghouse.

Joy Gossett reminded Friends that our young attender Grey Kirbach will be graduating from Asheville High School this year and is going on to college at Berea. He would appreciate knowing of Quaker contacts that anyone might have in the Berea area.

Approval of Minutes:

Minutes of the 3rd month 2005 meeting were approved as written. A Friend inquired about procedure for getting the minutes and was given instructions.

Transfer of Membership:

Friends approved a letter of transfer for Sam Foster:

Dear Friends at Annapolis Monthly Meeting,

At the request of our member, Sam Foster, Asheville Monthly Meeting approves the transfer of his membership to Annapolis Monthly Meeting. During his sojourn in Asheville, he was a frequent attender of our meetings for worship and became a recorded member on 14th day, ninth month 1997.

We recommend him to you as a member in good standing in the Religious Society of Friends, remembering him and his daughter Adrienne as a welcome presence in our community. We commend him to your loving care, and await your acknowledgement of his acceptance as a member of Annapolis Monthly Meeting.

In the Light,

Steve Livingston

clerk, ministry and counsel committee

minuted by the Asheville Friends Meeting on this the ninth day, fifth month of the year 2005

Release from Ministry:

Lynnora Bierce read a recommendation from the support committee for Jennifer Walker:

“A Clearness Committee made up of Steve Livingston, Satchel Loftis and Lynnora Bierce, met with Jennifer Walker on Thursday, April 21, 2005 at the home of Steve and Lynnora. We met with Jennifer to help her discern whether or not she was clear to attend this autumn’s Young Friends Gathering of the Friends World Committee for Consultation in Lancaster, England. After careful and spirit-led examination, our sense was that Jennifer was no longer led to attend, and that her ministry to the conference stood in the way of her ultimate path. We recommend to the Meeting that Jennifer be released from this ministry and the minute of support approved by this Meeting in 12th month 2004 be set aside. We encourage the Meeting to continue to support Jennifer as her personal ministry evolves.”

Friends approved the release of Jennifer Walker from her ministry to the World Gathering of Young Friends.

A Friend noted that FWCC had distanced itself from the World Gathering due to a lack of unity concerning the diversity of evangelical and non-evangelical Friends.

Jennifer responded to a Friend's inquiry that she was to be representing the Yearly Meeting rather than our Monthly Meeting and that she would notify the appropriate persons as to her release from her ministry. A Friend noted with approval that Jennifer and her committee showed good discernment practice in remaining open and attentive to the need for change.

State of the Society Report:

The clerk described the purpose of the State of the Society Report, then asked Friends to enter a period of silence to focus our attention on the reading of it. Out of the silence, Lynnora Bierce read the report:

“Asheville Friends Meeting State of the Society Report 2004-2005

“Asheville Friends Meeting continues to be a vibrant and growing spiritual community. Although as a meeting we are not in unity regarding certain issues, the spirit still moves within our beloved community. Therefore we find ourselves blessed with many joys and challenges. Our purpose in this report is to relay to the reader what our meeting senses is going well, how we have grown, our challenges and how we have met them, noteworthy Friends’ achievements and ministries, those we have lost, and where we are spiritually in relation to worship.

“HOW WE HAVE GROWN

“In this year we have accepted three new members, approximately 31 new attenders, many with children.

“A weekly E-calendar has been added due to the absence of our newsletter. Announcements, events and meetings are refreshed daily along with links to our monthly meeting for business minutes, and other meeting related sites. Those in meeting who do not have email are given a 'buddy' who can print a listing for them, and we make paper copies available in the meetinghouse.

“We have had a resurgence of our Spiritual Enrichment Committee.

“There is new interest in revising a Long Range Planning Committee.

“We are in the process of putting into motion a Pastoral Care Committee, which has grown out of filling areas assumed to be under the care of our Clerk.

“Our library has received a new coat of paint, and sports a more simplified footprint by the removal unnecessary items.

“A simplicity group began meeting before worship on every other First day.

“Young Adult Friends have organized regular twice-monthly meetings.

“Friendly Eights groups began meeting and aided social interaction among participants.

“Continued support of individual leadings especially relative to the Peace testimony.

“Well attended series on Quaker Process was offered.

“CHALLENGES And how we have met them

“THE CLERK FREE MEETING

“Currently our meeting is operating without a Clerk. It happens that at the end of our past Clerk’s tenure, we could not find a member led to take on the position of Clerk. A surprising thing happened, many members and attenders began to take up the Clerk’s responsibilities.

“BREAKING MEETING—Weekly meeting now has a sign-up sheet, and anyone who attends may sign up to break meeting. Some advantages have been to discover individual’s gifts and provide variety to the end of worship. We also have members of Ministry and Counsel stand and introduce themselves during the rise of meeting, serving as touchstones to the community and newcomers.

“CLERKING MEETING FOR BUSINESS—Monthly meeting now also has a “Guest Clerk” (or Clerk Pro Tem) with a returning Recording Clerk. There was some unease with this arrangement among our meeting that continues at this writing. However, we have not missed a meeting for business, and have been well served by the people who have stepped forward to serve the community in this way. Our worship during meeting for business has deepened.

“COMMITTEE WORK—Creation or renaissance of committees to step up and complete tasks originally assumed to be the Clerk’s responsibilities. Many hands make light work. Some committees have become more active, such as Ministry and Counsel, which has become host to newcomers, a destination for discernment, and in some sense, a collective Clerk.

“MEETINGHOUSE

“We have several concerns regarding the safety and size of our meetinghouse. We have an aging structure, with an outdated deck and bathrooms that are not wheelchair compliant. We have issues with mold, and infestations that are common with a house of this age and use. Our House and Grounds Committee struggles with decisions regarding our space and safety, and the idea of moving, rebuilding, or splitting the community looms in the future.

“RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

There is a sense in meeting that our Religious Education is currently in transition. There are many parents and other interested friends who are actively nourishing this transition. At this time we are not in unity over the future of RE.

“MARRIAGE UNDER CARE OF MEETING

At this time we realize we are not in unity about same gender unions, what they should be called, or if we can take them under our care. Due to this dis-unity over “marriage”, meeting is not able to offer marriage or unions to its members. Review of what it means to hold a couple under the care of the meeting is planned.

“NEW TO QUAKERISM

There is a sense in meeting that many people who actively participate in the life of the meeting are new to Friends, and are not steeped in Quaker process. There has been much interest in offering Quakerism 101 to the community in the coming year, noting the good attendance during the Quaker Process series.

“NEWSLETTER

We are currently without a newsletter. To help with communicating important items, events, announcements, and monthly minutes we have built an E-calendar, and have set up a buddy system to include Friends without email or computer access. At this time we do not know when or if the newsletter will be reinstated.

“FRIENDS OF NOTE

“Special Ministries

Christy Bishoff—working with Christian Peacekeepers in Hebron

Jennifer Walker—serving on the board of Right Sharing of World Resources

Lauren Mitchell—served on the Planning Committee of FWCC World Gathering of Young Friends

“Phil Neal—Friends Committee for Outworld Relations

“Elizabeth Roebing— Teaching indigenous children in Dominican Republic

“Robin Wells—United Religions Initiative, FGC Religious Education Committee

“MEMORIAL

“We lost our dear Friend and elder, Ursula Scott in March of 2005. She was indeed a source of Light in our community, and continues to be greatly missed.

“David Miller also died in March of 2005 and is remembered by members of the AFM community.

“AFM ANNUAL RETREAT

“In September of 2004 we held an annual weekend retreat at Bonclarken, which was attended by 50 members of our community. It was at this retreat that our Spiritual Enrichment Committee was reborn, and continues to be a presence within the community. The committee is in the process of planning our next retreat at Montreat in September of 2005.

“In Conclusion

“As a community we have endeavored to search out the spiritual path, holding our lives and concerns within the light, and to celebrate our joys. We have discovered this continuing revelation of respectful silence, simplicity, and support of the divine within ourselves and each other. We lean on each other during this time of transition, sometimes achieving comfort, sometimes accomplishing great work, and sometimes finding what is unnamed. The spirit moves.

The clerk offered thanks to the SOTS committee and to Lynnora for their work. A Friend observed that a greater prevalence of silent worship in meeting for business had come about because of the conscious effort of those in the gathering to “clerk from the gallery”.

Friends made several suggestions to revise the document. Acronyms should be written out to aid understanding. Our involvement in SAYF (Southern Appalachian Young Friends) bears mention, as should the added burden of the many children new to our community. A Friend questioned why Robin Wells' committee work is mentioned but no one else's. An addition was suggested of the term “connection” in the passage about leaning on one another, and of another descriptive phrase in the comment about David Miller.

Friends inquired whether there would be another chance to review the document after these revision were made. There was discussion of the value of the work of expressing the sense of the meeting rather than coming up with wording that pleases everyone equally, of the tension between meeting the SAYMA deadline versus engaging in good process and bringing it to its rightful end. Friends reflected on the power of the report to stimulate personal reflection and wondered if a community process of self-examination might arise from it in months to come.

A sense of the meeting arose from this discussion, that the document was a true reflection of the condition of our Meeting community.

Friends united with gratitude in approving the State of the Society Report as offered but with the revisions suggested by the Meeting.

Peace and Earth:

The clerk read a written report:

“Peace and Earth Committee feels a great loss with the death of our dear friend and very active member, Ursula Scott. We will continue to work on issues which she had strongly supported, such as the Eyes Wide Open Exhibit and alternatives to the military service information in Asheville High School. We have two new members, Susan Ohler and Katherine Caldwell. Susan is taking the lead on the Eyes Wide Open Exhibit, which we plan to have in Asheville in September on the grounds of All Souls. Linda Alfredson is working with the Asheville High School to distribute information on military service alternatives. We are working on forums for next fall, including a representative from Pisgah Legal Services speaking on the ten year plan to end homelessness in Asheville and a speaker working with the reconciliation project in Greensboro.”

Friends accepted the report.

Spiritual Enrichment:

Lynnora Bierce read a report prepared by Carrie Coward.

“A very large and active Spiritual Enrichment Committee has decided to take ownership for the planning of the 2005 Retreat.

“Here is what we know so far:

“* The retreat location has been moved to the Montreat Conference Center.

“* The weekend has been moved to Sept 30 - Oct 2, 2005.

“* Accommodations include lodging as well as a tent camping option.

“* The retreat will be facilitated by committee members.

“* Most meals will be prepared by our committee.

“* The weekend will be a mix of social time, worship time, and queries with discussions.

“* Lots of down time for fun & outdoor activities.

“* The fee to attend should be quite reasonable.

“* All ages welcome!

“Please mark your calendar!

“Anyone who is interested in bringing input to the Annual Retreat is welcomed to attend the next Spiritual Enrichment Meeting.”

One correction was offered, concerning the food preparation at the retreat, the intention is for the community to do this rather than the committee.

Friends accepted the report with this revision.

Finance:

David Clements read a written report.

“Report of Asheville Friends meeting Finance Committee, May 8, 2005

“1. Satchel Loftis will present an update on meeting finances.

“2. We recommend deferring paying for our commitments to Quaker Outreach and General Outreach until later in the year, a total of \$6,000. We note that we have adopted a budget which will require substantially greater contributions than we have received in the last few years.

“3. We have adopted a policy for payments to individuals, which we present below and for which we request approval by meeting.

“Asheville Friends Meeting is often in the position of writing checks and making payments to others besides our regular employees and contractors. This policy will clarify how these are to be accounted for.

“The general situations to which this policy will apply are:

1. Reimbursing individuals for money they have spent on behalf of the meeting or a committee of Meeting.
2. Giving scholarships to college or to Quaker events.
3. Supporting the leadings or ministries of individuals by giving them money directly or by channeling designated contributions to them.
4. Giving money to Friends in need.

“Asheville Friends Meeting wants to act within the boundaries of good accounting practice and the requirement of the Government that all earnings of individuals be taxed. We are required to have documentation for all of our expenses, usually receipts showing the use of the money. If we pay money to individuals without having received proper documentation, the tax law requires the recipient to consider the payment as income, and Asheville Friends Meeting may be required to report the payment to the IRS as income to the individual. Generally, the recipient will pay about 15% payroll tax plus

income tax on such payments (less whatever expenses the individual wishes to present to balance the income). We encourage Friends to submit receipts and do things “by the book”, so as to minimize what we need to report.

“In addition, we need to abide by the general rule that members of nonprofit organizations should not profit from their connection with the organization.

“1) Reimbursement for money spent on behalf of Meeting.

“a. If a Friend purchases something for the use of the Meeting at the direction of a committee, he or she should submit the original receipt to the Finance Committee for reimbursement. The expense needs to be approved by the Clerk of the Committee. A credit card bill showing the purchase is not sufficient as a receipt, nor is a verbal or written statement that the money was spent.

“b. Checks to pay wages to employees must be made out to the employee. Wages paid by a Meeting member to an employee can not be repaid to the Meeting member.

“c. If the receipt has been lost and cannot be replaced, the Friend may consider donating the items purchased to Meeting. In this case the Friend will receive a letter saying that the goods were donated, and will have the responsibility to supply the documentation in their own records for tax purposes. The contribution will be recorded in our records as “in kind,” and the expense will not be applied to our budget.

“d. If Meeting pays money to an individual to reimburse him or her for an expense where the receipt has been lost, the individual will then have to account for the payment in their taxes if necessary. In some cases we may be required to report these payments to the IRS.

“2) Reimbursement for scholarships

“a. If a Friend receives a scholarship (to attend college or a Quaker event, e.g.) we will ordinarily write a check to the sponsoring organization for the Friend to forward or take with them to an event. If we write a check directly to the Friend, we must *either* receive a receipt from the Friend *or* consider the payment as income to the Friend, and report it to the IRS if required.

“3) Reimbursement for Travels in Ministry

“a. We occasionally set up funds to support a Friend’s travels in ministry. Payments from these funds must follow the same rules as for scholarships. There will always be a committee or individual appointed by meeting or by Ministry and Counsel to supervise and approve expenses from the fund a Supervisor).

“b. The Friend should submit receipts for money spent on activities of the ministry to the Supervisor for approval, and will be reimbursed as usual.

“c. The Supervisor may approve advance payments to the Friend, in which money is paid out before receiving a proper receipt. In this case, the Friend is responsible to return receipts to Meeting after the fact. Any payments for which there are no receipts will be considered as income to the individual, and will be reported to the IRS as income via form 1099 if necessary.

“d. The Supervisor may approve direct payments to the Friend which are not reimbursement for expenses. (For example, money to be used to reimburse the Friend for time spent in the ministry or for wages lost; money to pay for living expenses, money to support the Friend’s family while the Friend is traveling.) The individual will then consider this as income, and Meeting may need to report this income to the IRS through form 1099.

“4) Gifts to the needy

“a. Meeting has not recently given charitable support to individuals within Meeting or without, but we do have a fund available to M&O if the need for this should arise. In the event that Meeting wishes

to give charity to an individual in Meeting, we will make any payments not directly to the individual, but to others (eg, the electric or gas utility, a landlord, etc).

“b. Because we are a tax-exempt organization, we are obliged not to enrich members of Meeting with tax-exempt funds. In particular, we will not give such charity assistance to anyone in a position of responsibility in Meeting, notably the clerk, trustees, ministry and counsel, and finance committee.”

Satchel Loftis reported on donations received so far this year. He pointed out that several of our Meeting's principle donors have not yet made a contribution this year, and that most contributions come in the fourth quarter, but he expressed the likelihood of a shortfall in donations. A Friend inquired about cash donations, and Satchel responded that we have received \$160 so far this year.

There was some discussion about the state of our accounts.

Friends approved the recommended delay in disbursing our donations for Outreach.

Friends approved the policy for payment to individuals as written.

Friends approved a letter being sent to members and attenders soliciting donations.

Nominating:

Steve Houseworth reported for the committee that the search for a Friend to serve a term as clerk and another as co- or assistant clerk continues apace. Nominating Committee also continues to support the effort to revitalize the Long Range Visioning and Planning Committee. Nominating Committee requests that each standing committee of the Meeting provide a brief description of the duties of the committee and the length of terms service.

Steve reported that the committee recommends laying down the ad-hoc Technology Committee and creating a new standing committee with the suggested name of Communications Committee and the stated purpose of supporting the work of the website, newsletter, weekly e-calendar, and any meeting listservs.

Friends approved laying down the ad hoc Technology Committee with thanks to its members for their work.

Friends approved the formation of a standing Communications Committee as recommended by the Nominating Committee.

Ministry and Counsel:

Steve Livingston read a written report:

“Our report covers two meetings. The 3/14/05 meeting was attended by Martha Huggins, George Gjeldfriend, and Alice Brown. At this meeting, the committee decided to continue the Meeting's paid advertisement in the Asheville Daily Planet for six months. The 4/12/05 meeting was attended by Evan Richardson, Margaret Farmer, George Gjelfriend, Kristi Gjelfriend, Rusty Maynard, and Steve Livingston (clerk).

“We bring to the Meeting news of Elizabeth Roebbling's ministry in the Dominican Republic. She reports that she is teaching English language to the children in her village, as well as beginning to instill in them Quaker values of honesty and fairness. She claims no longer to feel as if she were a “traveling minister” and yet continues in her way to bring the children as well as her wider community to comprehend and cooperate with Quaker testimonies. She reports that her young students are in dire need of bilingual books, Spanish and English, to help them learn English as a second language. While not willing to make a formal request, she would be pleased to receive books chosen by Friends, whose taste and discretion she trusts. She would also appreciate the option of enabling others who wish to

donate books or funds to this effort to have a central collection point, and recognizes that the Meeting would be an opportune choice, if we are so led.

“Ministry and Counsel recommends that Meeting support Elizabeth in these ways.

“Margaret shared with us the work of the ad hoc committee to consider the Meeting’s policies around marriage. Margaret, Steve, Paul Endry, and Alan Robinson were present at the committee’s meeting. The committee discerned that first of all, we must be clear about what it means to be “under the care of the Meeting”. What is the “care” that we offer to our community? What is the intention of the clearness process? Margaret asks that Friends share their thoughts with her as she is led to examine the clearness process more deeply.

“A letter from Sam Foster requesting transfer of membership to Annapolis (MD) Meeting was brought to our attention by Steve Livingston. Steve sought and received some instruction in writing a letter recommending Sam to his new faith community, to be approved at this month’s meeting for business. “At last month’s Meeting for Business, Friends approved the addition of four members to the ad hoc Pastoral Care Committee. Ministry and Counsel committee considered that the original intent was for this committee to be comprised of 13 members, but felt that way was open for the committee to meet as constituted and discern for themselves how best to move forward. Ministry and Counsel encourages Friends who feel led to engage in the work of this committee to contact members of Nominating Committee to express their willingness.”

Friends were united in a sense of support for Elizabeth Roebing's work, but not in what form our support should take at this time. A Friend suggested that we should wait until Elizabeth visits later this summer before making any commitment. A Friend suggested that we hold Elizabeth's requests in the Light to see if any in the community would rise up to shepherd her requests. A Friend offered that Meeting donate \$50 to purchase bilingual books. Another Friend expressed discomfort with making any donation before knowing how it would be used or who would benefit.

Friends held these suggestions in the Light for a time and from this emerged an ad-hoc committee to support her work.

Friends approved an ad-hoc support committee consisting of Lynnora Bierce, Jennifer Walker, and Steve Livingston, to explore the means of supporting Elizabeth Roebing's work in the Dominican Republic, including but not limited to obtaining bilingual books for her students. Friends approved postponing the 6th month Meeting for Business until 6/19. Friends approved Jennifer Walker as clerk of the 6th month meeting.

College Age Friends' Fund Committee:

Lynnora Bierce reported for the committee:

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Friends approved setting aside the ad hoc College Age Friends' Fund Committee, with their work being taken up by the Scholarship Committee.

Committee on Bequests:

David Clements reported the committee's recommendation that the money bequeathed to the Meeting be used for maintenance of the Meetinghouse. A formal report was promised for next month's meeting for business. Decision was deferred until that time.

Individual Concerns:

Friends united with the expressed concern that much of the task of setting up chairs on First Day had fallen on older members of our community and caused delays in getting the singing underway. A

Friend suggested that Ministry and Counsel take responsibility for a sign-up sheet. One younger Friend offered to start coming in early to assist with setup.

Friends were advised that our new child care provider would be present at Ursula's Memorial Service. Jennifer Walker reported that she had given a presentation about Right Sharing of World Resources at the City View Friends' Church. She reported that all seven of their members were present. She informed Friends that she is organizing a potluck with City View Friends, with the intention of encouraging dialog between members our community and theirs.

Close of Meeting:

Meeting ended with silent worship at 2:10 p.m.