

Minutes

Meeting for Worship With Attention to Business

8th month 13th day, 2006

Opening of Meeting

Friends settled into silent worship beginning at 11:45 a.m.

The clerk opened the meeting with a reading adapted from queries on the practice of meeting for worship with attention to business in the *Guide to Our Faith and Practice* of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting:

Our meeting for business is held in the spirit of a meeting for worship, in which we seek Divine guidance. Let us be careful to keep in the spirit of worship each of the concerns that emerge, whether of nurture, of Spirit, of social concerns, of property, or of finance. Let our decisions be directed by prayerful consideration of all aspects of each issue. May we consider difficult matters carefully with patient search for truth, unhurried by the pressures of time. May we constantly return to the center, seeking the Divine presence at all times. May we speak as eloquently and truthfully in our silence as in our words, in our inaction as in our action.

The clerk presented a listing of key ideas that had arisen from our recent forum on business meeting:

- Everyone is responsible
- Time
- Preparation
- Spiritual vs. Temporal
- Staying Centered
- Process vs. Result
- Vulnerability and Tenderness
- Experiment

Attendance

17 Friends were in attendance at the start: Lynnora Bierce (recording clerk), Gary Briggs, Alice Brown, Jim Cavener, David Clements, Valerie Collins, Becca Dion, Barbara Esther, Katherine Kowal, Margaret Normile, Steve Houseworth, Steve Livingston (clerk), Sam Rizzo, Frank Roberts, Alan Robinson, Eda Smith, Gerry Smith, and Sarah Jane Thomas. Joy Gossett arrived during the discussion about playground equipment. Jim Cavener and Alan Robinson arrived during the Peace and Earth report.

Agenda

Friends reviewed the agenda and approved it as presented.

Correspondence

The clerk read a letter of thanks from Lindsay Bridges:

Dear friends,

This is a belated thank you to all of you wonderful people at the Asheville Friends Meeting for the love and support over the last ten years and the great send-off for us to Charlotte. Our move has been a very good thing for us all - girls, myself and grandparents. It has been surprisingly wonderful for me even just being back in my hometown of Charlotte. (Even if it doesn't have mountains...) My father's dementia is definitely progressing, so the move has

also been challenging and well-timed.

I hope that you all are doing well. We miss you and look forward to visiting with you in the future. If any of you find yourselves coming to Charlotte, look us up. We would love to see you.

Lindsay, Irina and Masha Bridges

Request from Jennifer Walker

Jennifer asked that Meeting consider hosting the annual meeting of Right Sharing of World Resources (RSWR) board, on which she serves, taking place 10/12 – 10/15.

Meeting approved hosting the annual meeting of RSWR.

Evan R has agreed to act as “point person”. Likely responsibilities will include accommodations for six to eight board members, use of meetinghouse for their meetings, offering of meals. Note that 10/15 is third first day. Friends asked that RSWR provide a second hour forum. A Friend pointed out that Celo Friend Geeta McGahey also serves on the RSWR board.

Review of Sixth Month Minutes

Friends approved the sixth month minutes as posted, with the addition of the date of the meeting.

Board of Directors

David Clements read the report:

“The Board of Directors of the Asheville Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends met in a Special Meeting on July 9, 2006. Directors present were Marcia Master (Chairperson), Steve Livingston (ex officio as Clerk), Valerie Collins, George Gjelfriend, and David Clements.

“Carrie Coward sent a letter of resignation from the Board.

“The Board approved the following changes to the bylaws, per a request from Meeting made at the June 2006 Meeting for Business. The changes approved by the Board need to be approved by Meeting in order to have effect.

“ARTICLE II, SECTION 1. OFFICERS. The Officers of the Board shall be a Chairperson, Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, and Secretary. The Treasurer of Asheville Friends Meeting shall serve *ex officio* as the Treasurer of the Board. The Assistant Treasurer of Asheville Friends Meeting shall serve *ex officio* as the Assistant Treasurer of the Board. The Chairperson and Secretary shall be elected by the Directors. Officers of the Board shall be officers of the Corporation.

“SECTION 3. TERM. The Board of Directors shall be self-perpetuating, being chosen by consensus of the existing Board. The Clerk, Treasurer, and Assistant Treasurer of the Meeting shall be included as members. This selection shall take place at the Annual Meeting of the Board, subject to the approval of the Monthly Meeting for Business.”

A Friend reminded us that in the past we have had Treasures who were not members of the Society of Friends, and questioned whether the requirement that members of the Board of Directors must be members of the Society of Friends would constitute a conflict. David Clements speaking for the Board said that there was no mention in the bylaws about the Board members also having to be a Member of the Society of Friends. David expressed dismay that meeting for business was burdened with discerning unseasoned structural issues regarding the Board of Directors, and hoped that this would not be repeated in the future.

The Friend questioned whether there were legal issues regarding Board members being members

of the Society, as she recollected from times past.

Clerk pointed out that both our current Treasurer and the assistant Treasurer are members of the Society of Friends and this issue will keep for two years. The matter was referred back to the board for consideration.

Friends approved the changes to the Bylaws.

The report was accepted.

Communications

Report was read by the clerk.

Although this committee has not fulfilled its intention and charge, we feel we have accomplished much with the e-calendar and website. This committee is exceedingly challenging to convene. We feel as a committee that the key functions and responsibilities of the e-calendar and website could be handled without the structure of a committee. It is offered this committee stay in form, but will not convene. We feel this committee would do better to put aside regular committee meetings for the time being, with Friends attending to key functions as necessary.

There was no discussion.

Friends accepted the report.

Long Range Planning and Visioning

The recording clerk read the report of the July 2, 2006 meeting

“The Long Range Planning and Visioning Committee has been focusing upon three major issues concerning Asheville Friends Meeting House and grounds.

“These three issues include:

- “1) The Playground area
 - a. Impacts approximately 30 children
 - b. Impacts Religious Education
 - c. Is Urgently in need of a solution
- “2) Our Existing Structure
 - a. Issues concerning bringing the structure up to code
 - b. Issues concerning safety and accessibility
 - c. Issues concerning use of space
 - d. And other issues relating to our testimonies
- “3) Finding a new alternative
 - a. Building an Annex which brings both solutions and challenges
 - b. Selling this building—and the issues which arise from that possibility
 - c. Looking for another building
 - d. Building elsewhere

“We recognize we are not in agreement on any of these topics, but feel that further work and research is necessary before we can come to any conclusion. Although we were not in agreement we recognized that the issue of the Playground Area urgently needs resolution. To that end Becca Dion was charged with researching and meeting with others to discuss movement around this issue.”

A Friend imagined what we would do with this great gift we have with appreciation of the worth of the building, with the assets left to us, that we have an opportunity to create something of great use to the community with regards to holding and sharing our testimonies.

Clerk conveyed to the Friend that there is no convener of the LRPV, and clerk invited the Friend or any Friend to take over convening of the meeting.

Friends accepted the report.

Report of Forum on Use of Outdoor Space

Report was given by Becca Dion

Religious Ed and Long Range Planning hosted a forum to envision the use of our outdoor space. Among many varying ideas that arose, there was a sense that the needs of our children need to be addressed without further delay. Religious Education brought Meeting a proposal for purchase of playground equipment that was portable enough to be taken in when not in use, or taken with us in the event that we move to another location anytime soon.

[see appendix “Proposed Playground Equipment”]

Friend asked that we be aware of safety and liability issues regarding toys and equipment. Friends were reminded of unsafe conditions in some areas of our yard including trees with large dead limbs and a dilapidated fence. RE obtained a cost estimate of \$500 for removal of the fence and one dead tree, and removal of a second tree for an additional \$125.

RE suggested and Meeting concurred that it would be helpful to have a larger storage shed onsite to house the equipment. A Friend uniting with the recommendations of the report offered to assemble the shed. A Friend suggested that Religious Education had its own funds to spend on this, and could be trusted to make the best choices.

Friends approved empowering Religious Education Committee to purchase playground equipment as they suggested, up to the amount that is in their budget.

Friends accepted the report with thanks.

Friends were easy with additional purchases being made if RE raised funds independent of their budget. The matter of tree and fence removal was referred to House and Grounds, as well as procuring and erecting the shed. Until the shed is built, Religious Education will be responsible for seeing to the storage of the new equipment in the meetinghouse.

Peace and Earth

We have been emailing each other over the summer, as committee members have been away a lot.

- 1) Peace and Earth has agreed to co-sponsor with the Unitarian Universalists a free showing of Al Gore’s An Inconvenient Truth at the UU church during the week of Oct 1-8. In addition we will have a DVD called “The Great Warming” which P and E will show for the meeting sometime in September. These movies are courtesy of the Climate Connection of the NC Council of Churches.
- 2) Peace and Earth has agreed to co-sponsor (for a \$10-\$20 donation) an upcoming celebration of the 100th anniversary of Gandhi’s first use of non-violent direct action in South Africa. The celebration will be at Pritchard Park Sept. 11 at 5:30. Following music, poetry and speeches, the celebrants will walk to First Presbyterian for a meal and more celebration. Margaret Normile, Nancy Kuykendall, Alan Robinson, Jim Cavener, and Susan Oehler will be going. Everyone is welcome to participate.

Friends accepted the report.

Retreat Committee

Asheville Friends Meeting will hold a one-day retreat on September 23rd from 8:30 until 5:00 at Common Light Meeting Place in Black Mountain.

The retreat will be led by AFM member Joyce Rawlings-Davies who is an experienced retreat leader. The retreat theme is “Deepening Our Roots”.

Lunch and child care will be provided. The cost will be \$20 per person with children 12 and under free. Child care will be provided but teens are encouraged to participate in the adult program.

Registration may be completed by contacting Carrie Coward via e-mail , cmccoward@charter.net or by signing the registration form located at AFM meeting house foyer and placing it in the mail slot in the office door.

Retreat Committee: Margaret Normile, Katherine Kowal, Joyce Rawlings-Davies, Carrie Coward, David Clements.

The Retreat Committee requests that Meeting approve a total of \$700 in expenditures for the retreat, to be taken from the contingency budget line. This represents an increase of \$200 from the amount previously approved by Meeting. The Committee remains committed to recouping the full cost of the retreat from fees and directed donations.

Friends approved advancing an additional \$200 from the Contingency Fund, with the expectation that revenues from the Retreat will reimburse the fund.

Friends accepted the report.

Thirteen Friends remained in attendance at 1 p.m.

State of Society Report

Clerk distributed copies of the draft report, and asked Friends to consider whether to approve it as written, to offer minor changes, or if changes were needed that were significant enough to send it back to committee. Clerk then read the report.

Friend united in support of offering minor changes, agreeing that the report accurately reflected the state of our Meeting. Friends suggested the following minor changes:

- When describing the effect of not having a newsletter, change “no record” to “no paper record”.
- A Friend noted that there were inconsistencies in capitalization. The spelling of Adrienne Weir’s name needs to be corrected.
- Friend said it should be called a State of the Meeting Report. Clerk said he would feel easy changing the name of the report. Friends also felt State of the Meeting Report was a more accurate title.
- A Friend pointed out that the “e-letter” should be called “e-calendar”.

Some Friends were uneasy with including the matter of our alcohol policy. Clerk explained that it was a strongly expressed concern in a committee’s feedback for the report, and that even though the representatives of that committee at the committee clerks’ meeting agreed that it could be omitted, the Friend who had raised the concern about our policy in the first place requested that it be left intact.

Friends agreed to leave the statement about our alcohol policy but striking the phrase “making no progress”.

Friends approved the State of the Meeting Report with these changes.

A Friend expressed gratitude to those in the community who worked on fashioning this State of the Meeting Report. A Friend expressed concern over lack of paper record due to our not having a newsletter.

Clerk accepted the responsibility to amend the report as agreed, post it on the Meeting website, and submit it to the Yearly Meeting.

A Friend was moved to share a paragraph from the book Grounded in God, a new addition to our Meeting library. It says:

Resting in uncertainty goes against the grain, especially in a business meeting. Groups rush to solutions. They feel the pressure of time. They believe that quick action is expected of them and that it demonstrates efficiency. Fear and anxiety may prompt a group to clamp a lid on difficult questions. To explore an issue may be painful, force a change, or delay action; but it can also be a doorway to greater understanding. It is not that solutions are undesirable; rather, an early solution may shut off a deeper exploration of the question and foreclose the opportunity to listen to God and one another.

First Day Structure Change Implementation Committee

Joy Gossett read the report:

Ad Hoc First Day Structure (Nuts & Bolts) Committee

August 13, 2006

History of the consideration of our First Day schedule, concerns and base for this Committee’s work:

Asheville Friends Meeting has continued to address the question, “Is our current first Day time structure serving us, meaning adults and children, as well as it could?” In 2005 we engaged in four threshing sessions as well as other means of listening for answers to this query. Four strong themes consistently emerged. These included (quoting from the Ad Hoc Committee on First Day Structure’s Report to the 11th Month, 2005 Report to AFM Meeting for Business in that Meeting’s minutes):

1. “A strong hunger for some sort of on-going Adult Spiritual Enrichment that is part of our First Day time together. . . .
1. “There was also a strong sense of desire to support First Day School teachers who, in our current schedule, have to miss Meeting for Worship in order to be with the children. . . .”
2. “The issue of children in worship was more varied.” There was the strong desire for our schedule to give children “the opportunity to be in full worship without having to choose between worship time and First Day School,” as well as “a universal strong sense that Meeting for Worship should not be forced upon anyone, and that if some change is to happen, great care must be taken in how we offer loving support of our community children.”
3. “Finally there was a strong sense of willingness, even eagerness for some, to try something new.”

Continued Work of the Committee

The committee has met several times this summer with a variety of Friends joining us and some combination of committee members, as well, since summer plans took us out of town from time to time. Nevertheless, we have something to report to you regarding our seasoning of the change in our First Day schedule. While we do not want to rush the movement of the Spirit in this matter, we realize that the First Day School program will begin on September 10th, and know it would be helpful to the Religious Education Committee to have a change in place by that date. However this is a report of our progress, not a plan requiring action today.

We began our seasoning of the schedule change by considering the areas that would need our attention as follows:

Space: Wiggle worship room (Library with a screen, lamp(s), beanbags, pillows, chairs)
First Day School/Spiritual Enrichment spaces for each age group (center of the worship room
&/or library, foyer for adults, same spaces for children & youth as before)
Holding the worship space
Traffic/parking issues

Religious Education:

Childcare needs (hired and volunteer)
Teens controlling their schedule (flexibility)

Time: Transition between religious education and worship

Beginning time for first hour, second hour

Singing

Preserving unstructured informal time together

Meeting for Business & Sandwich Sunday:

Fitting them into the new schedule gracefully

We also discussed the following: announcing changes in advertisements and on our sign, sending of a postcard to announce the change to everyone possible, and continued work by the Ad Hoc Committee while adjustments are made this fall.

One of the most crucial decisions is regarding which hour comes first, RE classes or worship. While we considered both, and both have advantages and disadvantages, the committee thinks the meeting could try the following schedule for a period of six months with this committee continuing to gather feedback and tweak problems in that period of time:

9:30 – 10:15 a.m. First Day School Classes & Spiritual Enrichment for adults

Transition to worship: 10:15 to 10:30 (Longer transition might allow people to engage in deep conversation and make it harder to enter the worship room quickly.)

10:30 – 11:30 a.m. Worship available for all ages, childcare provided (with volunteer assistance) for infants to four year olds (pre-kinder), wiggle worship available in the library for other children accompanied by family member(s) with speakers provided for ability to hear vocal ministry. No provision is made for speaking from that space, however. When the youth group is finished with their time together they may join us in worship or otherwise be engaged in quiet activity until break of meeting.

The placement of singing could remain in the transition time, or could be part of the first hour's activities. This decision might be the choice of the committees that are in charge of the FDS and SE planning, or could be referred to the Ministry and Counsel Committee to consider. Some Friends have reservations about singing just prior to meeting for worship, finding that it doesn't help them to settle into the silence.

Some reasons for placing worship after FDS classes are: cars would probably be arriving at both 9:15 and 10:15, not leaving at the transition; teachers can settle into worship better, not worrying about the preparations for the lesson to follow; children would have had some time to move around, engage in activities during the first hour, making it easier for them to stay in

worship second hour; classes and lessons might serve to prepare all of us for the worship together. To that end, we hope that at least part of the curriculum for FDS classes will involve preparation for being part of worship. We would have the added advantage that, while we transition to a 10:30 worship time, those who arrive at 10:00 would be early instead of late.

While we spent a good deal of time grappling with the scheduling of business meeting, our committee realizes that the whole meeting and other committees are dealing with this at present. We see several possible alternatives: meeting on an evening, splitting the business meeting on a First Day, or continuing to meet after meeting for worship.

We are still seasoning this proposal. This is a report of our progress. We hope all Friends, particularly the youth group, and families, will sit with this report so that we can be guided to present a sound proposal next month. We welcome your feedback to the committee and, as always, Friends are welcome to join our next meeting on August 28 at 4:30 here at the meetinghouse.

Friends accepted the report.

Personal Concerns

Lynnora Bierce—A couple of major changes have recently happened in my life that are making it difficult for me to continue contributing the time and energy I have in the past to Asheville Friends Meeting. The first, and most obvious is that after ten years of being, for the most part, a stay at home mom, I am once again working full time. I have not yet adjusted to my work life, nor have I found a balance with my home responsibilities. Also, my periodic illness severely eats into my Friends time.

Until I find my stride I fear that I will not be much of an asset to either the Long Range Planning, nor the Fundraising Committee. As both committees are on the brink of making progress and doing what I consider to be important work of the meeting, I do not want to hinder their advancement with my own personal impediments, which are lack of time and lack of energy. Both of these committees are rich in resources and diverse in make-up. I have every confidence that the work of the meeting will be done.

I will continue, if meeting will allow, to be the recording clerk for another year. However, for the time being, I will set aside committee work and try to support the meeting in ways that I am able.

Margaret Normile—Need for an updated membership roster. In response to an inquiry, the Clerk related that the Friend who had taken this task last Winter was having a particularly frustrating time relating to repairs precipitated by a large tree falling on her home, and that the delay was thus unavoidable. Barbara Esther offered to contact this Friend to see if she wanted to relinquish the task.

Close of Meeting

Meeting ended with worship at 1:55 p.m.