

Twelfth Month Meeting for Business
Minutes
Asheville Friends Meeting
12/10/2006

9:30 settle

Reading: Patricia McBee "What Are Friends Called To Today? (Friends Journal 10th month 2006)

Friends throughout the ages have testified to an inward compass that shapes and directs us minute by minute, if we are willing to pay attention. When we are deeply centered, that compass can point us towards a true leading and away from impulse, secular urgency, or self-involvement masquerading as service. We may hesitate to put our lives to that test for fear that it will demand more than we feel ready to give, yet Friends report that when they go deep they are often led not to take on an onerous burden but to simplify, focus, refresh themselves for the long journey, and to work from a place of love rather than a place of grim obligation.

Worship

In Attendance: Jeanie Martin, Gary Briggs, David Brooks Arnold, Betsy Rose Weiss, Jennifer Walker, Sarah Jane Thomas, Tom Sherry, Alan Robinson, Jim Cavener, Bob Smith, David Clements, Sam Rizzo, Steve Livingston-clerk, Ellen Frerotte-scribe

Agenda – was reviewed and approved

Correspondence: The Clerk shared the Right Sharing of Resources letter the Meeting has received.

Dear Friends,

The Board of RSWR is most appreciative to the Asheville Meeting for its welcome and hospitality. In addition, we found the beautiful weather that enveloped us soothing and stimulating.

We thoroughly enjoyed the meeting families by whom we were warmly welcomed. We regretted that we did not have more time to spend with there. Similarly, we very disappointed that there could not have been a more sizeable representation of RSWR board at meeting for worship.

Jennifer is a valuable addition to the board, as well as a gracious host.

With thanks and blessings,
Connie Archbald Clerk

Correspondence: The Clerk read the Letter of Transfer for David Brooks Arnold.

Dear Friends.

A request for transfer of membership to your monthly meeting has been approved by the Friends Meeting of Washington at its Monthly Meeting for Worship with Concern for Business today, for:

David Brooks Arnold 62 Dye Leaf Road Fairview, NC 28730

Our commendation and good wishes for continued spiritual enrichment within the fellowship of your Monthly Meeting accompany this transfer.

Kennan Garvey
Clerk
Friends Meeting of Washington

Clerk asked what is the way forward concerning this request: 1. accept today; 2. refer to Ministry & Counsel for a recommendation; 3. see if a Clearness Committee would rise to meet with David?

A Friend said that when he transferred to Durham Meeting, they required a Clearness Committee; he found it very enriching; he liked the Clearness Committee route; It forced him to examine his request, "Is this the right place for membership." Another Friend said his gut reaction was to say approved and welcome, but the good order of a Clearness Committee could be beneficial to both David and the Meeting. There is no hurry, so he encourages the Meeting to have a Clearness Committee which will make David genuinely welcome. David expressed that a Clearness Committee would give him a chance to meet other members. His life of responsibility as a Friend is clear to him. He has chosen Asheville as his home. Clerk pointed out that David has been faithful in attendance since he arrived in Asheville. David will be delighted to have a Clearness Committee formed for him. Friends Jim Cavener and Gary Briggs offered to serve, clerk suggested that a representative of Ministry & Counsel typically serves, and offered to be that member unless someone else felt led. David requested Becca Dion to serve.

Friends approved a clearness committee consisting of Jim Cavener, Gary Briggs, Becca Dion, and either Steve Livingston or another designated member of Ministry and Counsel, to meet with David Brooks Arnold concerning his leading to transfer membership to Asheville Friends Meeting.

Marriage Procedure: how are we led to proceed?

The ad hoc committee to examine marriage under the care of the Meeting drafted a procedure which was presented to the Meeting community in 8th month 2006. In their report, the committee enumerated questions that are implicit in their proposal, requiring our corporate attention and discernment. Among those questions:

- What are the membership requirements for couples seeking marriage under the care of the meeting?
- How strictly should the ceremony of marriage under the care of the meeting adhere to traditional Friends' practice?
- Should the meeting act as an agent of the State, assisting the couple in obtaining a certificate of legal marriage where allowed by the State?
- ~~Should our meeting's procedure be entirely gender neutral or should it clearly state that marriage is offered both to opposite gender couples and same gender couples?~~ [See below for explanation for strike-through.]
- Should our meeting's procedure include a minute expressing our sense regarding the State's practice of prohibiting same-gender marriage?
- Should our meeting offer marriage "after the manner of Friends" to those couples that do not seek the level of commitment involved in marriage under the care of the meeting?

These questions raised by the committee, along with the procedure itself, must be addressed in order for us to move forward. Our purpose today is to discern whether we are ready to commit the time and energy needed, and if so, what is the best way to proceed. Some possible ways forward:

- refer the procedure to Ministry and Counsel for review and recommendations
- hold a threshing session to air our differences concerning aspects of the proposed procedure
- bring the procedure directly to an upcoming meeting for business for consideration
- hold a called meeting for business for the sole purpose of considering the procedure

In the event that Friends discern the best way forward is through a threshing session or called meeting, when should such a session or meeting take place? Is there a Friend who is led to facilitate or clerk the meeting?

David Brooks Arnold said that he transferred to Washington Meeting because of this issue. He suggested a Threshing Session because it can be a contentious issue. He offered to facilitate, expressing that he is open to all views.

Clerk asked that we settle and seek sense of the Meeting, and then we can proceed. Gary Briggs said that he has gone through a long process with another Meeting; it took a number of meetings; people spoke from their hearts; in the end it was enriching for the Meeting. He unites with David A. on at least one Threshing Meeting, spending a lot of time on details. This ultimately would lead to a Called Meeting for Business to make a decision. This is bigger than ordinary business and should be given a special spot light. David Clements asked if the fourth query should not be eliminated since the Meeting had approved a Minute saying that same gender couples are equal in all aspects of our community including marriage under the care of the Meeting. Alan Robinson said that if we are serious, if we are intent on living out that minute, it is almost an affront to take it up again. The Clerk removed the gender neutrality query from the discussion.

Friends agreed to hold a Threshing Session to clear the way for a Called Meeting for business. Friends approved David Brooks Arnold to facilitate the Threshing Session.

Friends felt that the meeting would be best attended if it were held after Meeting for Worship, and suggested that planning for food to be served would encourage more to stay. Friends were hopeful to hold the Meeting as soon as possible, the earliest date appearing to be 1/21.2007.

Friends approved leaving the planning of the meeting up to the facilitator and the ad hoc committee.

Friends are asked to review the report of the committee and the queries offered. They are posted on our website at

http://ashevillefriends.org/pdfs/AFM_Marriage_Procedure-2006.05.22.pdf

(Break for Meeting for Worship)

12:11 Settle

worship

attendance

Eda Smith, Rusty Maynard, Sam Rizzo, Gary Briggs, Katherine Kowal, Jim Cavener, Gerry Smith, Ellen Frerotte, Alan Robinson, Barbara Esther, David Clements, George Gjelfriend, Sarah Jane Thomas

Clerk—Steve Livingston

Recording Clerk—Lynnora Bierce

Clerk asked that we focus on the query as it seemed appropriate along with the vocal ministry of the day. “Do you center your life in the awareness of the presence of God so that all things take their rightful place?”

Report of First Day Structure “Nuts and Bolts” Committee

Barbara Esther read the report.

“The committee met this past third day to discuss the schedule change and any reactions or perceived needs received from Asheville Friends.

“The committee’s impression is that the change has been smooth and positive. The new adult spiritual enrichment group has had a consistent attendance of ten to fifteen Friends. If warranted, a second group could break out from that group to keep the numbers small enough for deep sharing. At present, the perception is that a second group is not needed.

“Those who have worshipped in the Family Worship space in the library are encouraged to know that children are now hearing vocal ministry. We are reminded that during the first hour the children need not be too quiet or still now that worship is not taking place concurrently. We hope that each age group will keep attendance so that trends in attendance can be noted. We thank all Friends for their spirit of cooperation as we made the change, and we extend particular thanks to the Religious Education Committee and the Spiritual Enrichment Committee for all they’ve done to make the new schedule a success.

“Nevertheless, we note a few areas that need our attention. Regarding the adult group, it may be that the lesson/sharing time feels rushed since the leader or leaders wait past 9:30 to begin to allow for latecomers to join. We encourage Friends to gather on time and leaders to proceed at 9:30 with the planned activity. Friends may even want to consider coming at 9:00 or 9:15 to allow for having a cup of tea, muffin and conversation before the group time. Of course, someone would need to put a kettle on and put the muffins out for that to occur!

“We noted over the weeks that there are some disturbances to worship that we feel can fairly easily be solved. One problem is that Friends of various ages have traversed the library once worship has begun. We hope that putting a unisex sign on the bathroom next to the kitchen will keep those needing to use a bathroom from crossing the library to get to the women’s bathroom and that a curtain at the east door with a reminder sign on it will both remind Friends to take another route and cut off drafts from the back door. We also note that Friends sometimes use the office between 10:30 and 11:30. We ask that when it is necessary that they close the office door. Lastly, we note that the wiggle aspect does not need emphasis in our children! Therefore, we propose that the library be called Family Worship during that hour.

“Besides the two signs, one on the bathroom, one on the curtain to the library’s east door, the Nuts and Bolts Committee plans to provide a letter of explanation to our families and those who visit our meeting of the choices for families and guidelines for those who choose the Family Worship space. We also plan to generate a short survey in January to gather Friends’ impressions and opinions. As always, we welcome feedback and suggestions. Members of the committee are Barbara Esther, Joy Gossett, Katherine Kowal and Laura Maynard.”

Friends united with the suggestion of a unisex sign on the men’s rest room, noting the noise our old plumbing makes when the commodes in the women’s rest room are flushed. Clerk asked if another sign could be posted at the entry to the Library, directing visitors to the unisex bathroom.

Friends were not united with the curtain idea. Rusty Maynard offered to see if we have a door that would fit there. A Friend expressed concern that the door might impede handicap access.

A Friend voiced a concern that we are losing our teen program altogether due to adjustment of new schedule. Teens do not want to change time of their meeting during 10 to 11. Teens are not coming anymore. Is this the continuation of a trend, or it just not working?

A Friend asked if House and Grounds could investigate the cause of the pipe noise emanating from the women’s rest room.

Clerk asked that these concerns be addressed by the appropriate committees.

Report Accepted

12:36 p.m. Representative Meeting Report

Barbara Esther gave the report:

“We had the pleasure of hosting the representative meeting, providing hospitality and a lunch for participants. Thanks to all who made it possible for the meeting to accomplish its business and enjoy the comfort of being among Friends.

“We were informed that the Cookeville Worship Group has now been approved as a monthly meeting under Nashville Monthly Meeting’s care. A celebration will take place on March 11, 2007, in Cookeville. We look forward to having the new meeting ask for affiliation with SAYMA.

“The treasurer, David Ciscel, Memphis, reported that the budget needs are being met, but Asheville was not listed as having sent in an assessment payment. Since that day, the finance committee has taken action to remedy that. David Ciscel encourages all meetings to consider their assessment level, based on \$60 for every member and regular attender, so that the planning can be incorporated in the budget process. If our fiscal year does not match that of the yearly meeting, we can still let the treasurer know what amount we plan to send and when. We are once again asked to consider quarterly payment so that the yearly meeting doesn’t run too low on funds at any time during the year. We pay three employees of the yearly meeting, along with other periodic obligations, even though the major expense is the annual meeting in June, when money comes in for registration but goes out just as quickly for fees to the college. This past year an appeal for individual contributions brought in slightly over \$11,000. Friends will be happy to know that this generous response to the appeal enabled us to renew our giving to wider Quaker organizations at the level at which we gave two years ago. We are asked to consider personal contributions again this year. Several times throughout the day we were reminded that the job of Assistant Treasurer, to become the Treasurer in 2007, is open. Friends are asked to consider whether they can offer their time for this important function of the yearly meeting. It is estimated to take 6 hours each month, using Quicken software.

“We met the new Administrative Assistant, Liz Perch, who many of you may know from Philadelphia Yearly Meeting and Friends General Conference, where she has been active. She is now living in Savannah, Georgia. Liz plans to have us send in census and directory information in early 2007 so that the information can be ready by the April 14th Representative Meeting in Nashville. Since Linda Alfredson, who began our directory revision, has been very busy with the building project on their house after the tree fell on it, Ministry and Counsel may take a hand in finishing the directory and census, assisting the finance committee with the assessment figures.

“Two committees are planning to meet in Asheville, using our meetinghouse. The first is the Faith and Practice Revision Committee’s work session on the first weekend of February, 2007, and the second is the following weekend, when the Ministry and Nurture Committee will meet. The latter plans to meet with our meeting or committees thereof, as part of its work. We will be asked to provide them with hospitality. The F & P committee plans to be self-sufficient, sleeping at the meetinghouse, but would appreciate any meal help that is possible.

“Steve Livingston reported for the Peace and Social Concerns Committee of the yearly meeting on the discernment process suggested for monthly meetings and worship groups to consider when they ask the committee to take on a minute. The suggested queries include: which testimonies led Friends to approve the minute, what is the balance of spiritual and political/social in the matter, and what hopeful or affirming statement is contained in the minute. We were reminded that the committee takes up items that will encourage spiritual growth within the yearly meeting, not items involving urgent action. It was reported that several meetings have sent minutes regarding the cessation of torture. A session may be available in June, during the yearly meeting gathering for us to consider these minutes.

“The Ministry and Nurture Committee shared that while Auburn Worship Group is not presently meeting and Clemson WG meets irregularly, Clarksville Worship Group has resumed meeting after a year’s hiatus. Positive comments were shared regarding a consultation that Perry Treadwell and Hannah McDermott attended on the Youth Ministry of FGC. More can be heard at yearly meeting. Another consultation is planned on Advancement and Outreach in Pittsburgh on March 30, 2007.

“Nominating Committee reported several opportunities besides that of Treasurer are available. There is a need for another member of the Finance Committee, a Young Adult Friend to join nominating, editor or editors for the Southern Appalachian Friend, the quarterly newsletter of SAYMA, a representative to the board of Quaker House, Fayetteville, a representative to FGC, and to AFSC, SERO based in Atlanta.

“The planning committee for Yearly Meeting reported that registration will be \$40 per person 12 and over, with a cap of three registration fees per family. Jan Hoffman and Peterson Toscano will each give an address. A Hibbard Thatcher memorial folk dance will be part of our Saturday evening celebration. All of us are invited to reserve the weekend of June 6-10, 2007. Financial help is always available when that would keep Friends from attending.

“This representative has been serving for over two years, as I recall. I want to share the opportunity of serving with someone else who loves to gather with Friends, enjoy the hospitality of those hosting us and spend four weekends each year in the company of wonderful Quakers, engaged in worship and care of the meetings of our region. Please search your heart to know whether this might be your leading, to be our meeting representative to SAYMA beginning in September 2007. I highly recommend it!”

Friends discussed whether the current amount we are paying for our SAYMA assessment reasonably represents the size of our community. Friends were informed that we have paid up our full \$4400 for our current fiscal year, and that our fiscal year is not the same as SAYMA’s fiscal year. Clerk asked whether Finance Committee had settled on a budgeted amount for next year’s SAYMA assessment. Finance Committee did not have an answer.

A Friend reminded us that Finance committee must manage the money but does not decide who gets it.

Clerk suggested that our assessment needs to be reviewed. A Finance Committee member suggested that Ministry and Counsel look at the census issue and bring a recommendation back to the Meeting. Friends were reminded that this work was begun by a Friend a year ago, but life circumstances prevented her from finishing. The census must be finished before we can reasonably adjust our assessment.

Report was accepted

Nominating Committee

Jim Cavener gave the report:

“I would like to give a very brief report, indicating that we have met monthly for the past four months, and that we have made some important progress.

“We’ve proposed Mark Peterson and Alan Robinson for the House and Grounds committee, and we are working on an additional appointment to Ministry and Counsel, but it is not quite ready to be announced. Some additional consultation is necessary, while the candidate is willing after checking a couple more points.

“Religious Education committee needs another member or two, and we are hoping to find a Young Friend to represent that constituency on this committee. If anyone present is open to appointment to that, or any other committee or position in Asheville Friends Meeting, we are eager to hear from you. If you have suggestions for others who might serve, do not hesitate to bring those names to our attention.

“We are aware that key officers of our Meeting are going to reach the end of their terms of service in the coming year and we are beginning consideration of suggestions for their successors. The committee consists of Sarah Jane Thomas, Laura Maynard (acting clerk) and Robin Wells, as well as me.”

Friends approved Mark Peterson and Alan Robinson to serve on House and Grounds.

Report Accepted

Treasurer's Report

David Clements reported on behalf of the Treasurer. Our Treasurer is Palin Spruance, who also serves as bookkeeper. Many feel that these two positions should more appropriately be held by two different people.

Friends noted the value of having regular reports from the Treasurer, to know benchmarks such as this is 50% of our fiscal year we have raised 42% of our budget. David reported total receipts for the year are approx \$19,000 expenses are \$18,000. No funds have been given to outreach so far, but we have paid our assessment to SAYMA.

Report Accepted

Finance Committee Report

Palin Spruance, our Treasurer and Bookkeeper, was unable to get our present Quickbooks 2003 software operating correctly, and so purchased a new version. He did this without being aware that the Finance Committee did not have money in its budget for this purchase. The cost was \$330. The Finance Committee considered asking Meeting to pay this expenditure from the 2006 Contingency Budget Line, or to pay for the expenditure from the 2007 budget, which should be approved in February or March. We prefer not to use the contingency line, and do not want Palin to be kept waiting for reimbursement. Instead, we have identified a volunteer who is willing and able to make a gift to meeting to pay for this software. We are asking Meeting's permission to receive this "earmarked gift." Meeting has a current policy not to receive earmarked gifts without advance approval by meeting.

David expressed appreciation to Palin Spruance for taking on the large task of bookkeeping.

A Friend suggested that a gentle explanation of funds being approved before they are being spent be made towards the bookkeeper.

A Friend advised that we accept the gift from this Friend who has volunteered the money for the expense of this computer program, helping us get out of a situation that could have caused quite a lot of worry for the meeting.

Friends united with the proposal to accept this earmarked gift.

Friends recognized that we were not following good Quaker practice in this instance.

Report Approved

Eleventh Month Minutes deferred for fuller review.

1:25 p.m. other concerns

Clerk offered to those gathered the opportunity to hold our Friends, family and friends of Friends in the light.

George G asked that Friends hold him in the Light as Kristi is traveling in India until the end of the year. He also asked for clarification as to what budget line the Meeting's coffee expenditures belonged to, as well as other ordinary household needs such as toilet paper, paper towels, dish washing liquid and similar products, so that

Finance committee could prepare the 2007 budget with these expenses included. Clerk expressed that he would bring up these items with Ministry and Counsel.

A Friend noted that the mailbox had disappeared. Clerk has obtained a replacement mailbox.

Barbara E. said she was counting down the days until daughter Abby comes back from Africa. Hold her in the light during her transition.

David asked that we hold Lila in the light as she has the flu.

Lynnora B asked we remember Phil Neal and Alice Brown who are not with us today, but are recovering from their separate ailments at home today. Rusty M recalled that it was Phil who last supplied the Meetinghouse with toilet paper. Gary B felt moved to say in regards to Phil's gift that there are many things that Friends do for the meeting that are not seen, and are often taken for granted.

closing worship (1:39)

12 Friends were in attendance.