

Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business
Asheville Friends Meeting

Third Month, Second First Day (March 9, 2008)

Clerk: Barbara Esther

Recording clerk: Kitti Reynolds

Attendance: Phil Neal, Ellen Frerotte, Kathrine Kowal, George and Kristi Gjelfriend, Bobby Carter, Rylin Hansen, Bob Smith, Evan Richardson, David Clements, Adrienne Weir, Gary Briggs, Steve Livingston, Pat Johnson

We began with a period of silent worship.

The Clerk read a reading from Oliver Tyson, 1966 Quaker Faith and Practice, Britain Yearly Meeting:

To make a safe home for small children, to comfort one person in sorrow, to do one's work as efficiently as possible, to listen with understanding, to be gentle with the old and courteous to the young – these are the humble tasks to which most men and women are called. They build the home or the meeting or the community which is the first step towards the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. The second is to be aware of greater tasks and be ready to be used in solving them – ready, not worried or anxious or envious, but content to wait, exercising a ministry of prayer to sustain the healers and the reconcilers already at work in their thousands.

1. Minutes from Second Month: We will review them next Business Meeting.
2. Treasurer's Report: Adrienne Weir reported that all bank accounts for last six months have been reconciled. The non-profit checking account is now closed and all that money is in a cap account which pays interest. Balance on Feb 22, for the Self- Help general fund, and Self-Help building fund will be in an attached report.

By Feb 29 we have spent more than we have taken in because Outreach checks were written.

Pat Johnson will be doing data entry for Finance Committee; Bob Smith will review the reconciliation reports, compare them to bank statements, and sign off on them.

3. Request from SAYMA: The Yearly Meeting Planning Committee asked whether we could provide Chat and Chew snacks Thursday evening, June 12, 2008. (Snacks such as the following: popcorn, crackers, cookies, cheese, beverages.) Gary B. suggested we have a sign up sheet for a couple of First Days before SAYMA. Prepare for 30-50 people. Bob S. volunteered to help. Ellen F. volunteered to coordinate the sign up sheet,

and Steve L. will provide transportation from the Meeting house to Warren Wilson on Thursday. **Friends approved that we would provide food for Chat and Chew and up to \$100 for snacks if needed.**

4. Draft of State of the Meeting Report. This was written by the Clerk, Barbara Esther, after a Saturday meeting of Friends. The document was sent out to attenders of that meeting, who commented on it. Barbara responded to those suggestions and it was distributed during Business Meeting today. Ministry and Nurture Committee of SAYMA will look over the reports from monthly meetings to make a synthesis of the state of the Yearly Meeting. Following is the approved version of the report.

State of the Meeting Report Asheville Friends Meeting 2008

Asheville Friends find a number of factors indicating the overall good health of our spiritual community, despite the challenges of diminished numbers. Attendance was about thirty-five Friends on the average First Day last year, compared to about 45 a couple of years ago, but we feel that the quality of worship each First Day is as consistently deep as ever. In the past year we have had two beloved Friends pass away, but we have added seven new members or transfers from other meetings.

A year and a half ago we changed our First Day schedule to pair religious education with adult spiritual enrichment at 9:30, followed by all-ages worship at 10:30. We use the library for family worship, affectionately called “wobble” worship. A speaker and radio arrangement allows those worshipping in the library to hear vocal ministry. Our Library Committee welcomed the children who worship with their families in that space by moving adult materials up, which gave adult materials better exposure; and by providing space for items appropriate for small hands on lower shelves. Two standing committees, Peace & Earth and Religious Education, have led social action and all-meeting activities during the first hour on fourth and second First Days, respectively, each month. On the remaining First Days we have explored Quakerism and meditation practices. An occasional fifth First Day has given us the opportunity to sing together.

The children’s program has also become smaller. We are unsure of the reasons for this decline, whether it is due to the schedule change or natural attrition. The committee has attempted to bring Young Friends of middle and high school age together for events, but hasn’t yet been successful in that endeavor. Those who attend or teach First Day School with the guidance of the Religious Education Committee continue to have great ideas and share plenty of love and care.

Community building has been a concern the whole meeting has worked on this past year with some success. In addition to our monthly Sandwich Sunday, on many First Days a group of Friends eat lunch together at a local health food café, sharing stories and passionate conversation. We recently had our fourth annual Secret Pals month, with older

and younger Friends paired to secretly give their pals handmade items, favorite recipes and stories, or origami, for example. Our Communications Committee revived the newsletter after a three year hiatus, providing a colorful format, distributed largely by email, but with several hard copies made available at the meetinghouse for those who do not receive electronic documents and as outreach to visitors. The Communications Committee also set up a computer in our meetinghouse office to help Friends to send and store meeting information. We have not had a meeting retreat longer than a day in two years. An Ad Hoc Retreat Committee is planning a residential retreat in the fall, to provide an opportunity for additional quality time together. Thus, community has grown among us in Asheville Friends Meeting.

Our Ministry and Counsel Committee meets monthly to take the spiritual pulse of the meeting. It has initiated the formation of a handbook for the meeting for practical use, and has taken on the topic of membership and its meaning among Friends. The feeling persists, however, among those on the committee, that it never quite covers all the important items on the agenda, often preempted by time-sensitive items. We found that our Pastoral Care Committee, a sub-committee of Ministry and Counsel, had become less active, and effort was put into reorganizing our care of Friends in need. Committee members took on the responsibility of checking on specific Friends who are ill, isolated or in need in some way.

Peace and Earth Committee is encouraged by the success of their monthly Spiritual Enrichment sessions and the fact that our budget has allowed the committee to contribute financially to both Quaker organizations and local, like-minded agencies. A mid-week meeting for worship for peace followed by stone soup has a core membership for whom the evenings have been deeply rewarding.

We have had fruitful meetings for business, as well, as we worked on a minute of welcome to all those who come to us, regardless of their sexual orientation. As an extension of that, we have worked on a marriage procedure guide which reflects the practice of treating equally all couples who come to us for support. Our Finance Committee has struggled with major shifts in membership and software challenges. The new meeting computer may help us to improve our record keeping and reporting capabilities.

We struggle with our smaller numbers to have as many members on committees as we would like. Several committees have demonstrated that even with fewer members, fewer meetings, and fewer reports to business; much can be accomplished by a small group primarily by means of electronic communication, holding face-to-face meetings for discernment only as often as needed. Despite the tension of seeing many things to be done and not always being able to clerk our own concerns, Asheville Friends enjoy each other's company and benefit from working in community. We have faith that if we follow the Spirit's leading and take right action, that we will be able to sustain our meeting's health, even with fewer people. We continue to feel power and love from the

Light each time we settle into worship. That power and love has been carried over into our daily lives. For that, we are very thankful.

Friends took turns reading paragraphs from the document. Phil has data on numbers of people who have left and who have joined in the past year which he will send to Ministry and Counsel Committee for use in the census. Editorial suggestions were made. **Friends approved the edited draft of the State of the Meeting Report with those editorial suggestions.** Barbara will change the numbers in this report if necessary after getting the data from Phil. The report will be sent by the clerk to Bob McGahy, Celo Meeting, clerk of SAYMA Ministry and Nurture Committee.

5. Committee Reports

Ad-Hoc Marriage Committee Report:

Introduction: Evan Richardson read through the introduction with suggestions forwarded from an attender. Other suggestions were made for the introduction from Friends present.

Overview: We considered a particular change suggested towards the end of the Overview section defining the difference between marriage under the care of the meeting and after the manner of Friends. We were more comfortable with the wording as it stood (with the newly written bold sections included). Other small changes were incorporated.

Queries: Friends decided to change “our relationship” to “relationship”. There was a brief discussion of inquiring as to approval of the couples’ families. It was felt that that query was not needed. Steve L. commented regarding finances and career. Friends decided to add “How do you intend to share your income, debts, and assets.” We changed the first sentence in the paragraph.

Role of Wedding Committee: We discussed a change after “even garnering support...” Was this a reference to meeting or wedding committee support? We discussed what role Meeting would take in support of couples who can’t legally register in NC.

-potentially involves an act of civil disobedience. Friends approved a slight change after the semicolon.

Resources on Marriage: We added one pamphlet from FGC entitled “Friends and Marriage”. Friends approved.

Friends approved the printing of this document as edited (attached), which will be available in the foyer and in our meeting handbook. We ask that the Library Committee purchase any of the resources that we do not already have, for the Meeting. The Meeting expressed gratitude to the ad hoc committee which worked so hard on this document. The final document will be given to the Communications Committee for posting on the Web.

Ministry and Council: Katherine Kowal reported that Ministry and Counsel Committee has been trying to make contact with members who have been inactive for a long time. Some were reached for comment, and ask that they be released from membership, while others were not found at the address we had in our archives. The committee asks that Meeting release the following from membership in our Meeting:

Pauline Cheek, Sam Foster, David Goldston, Kay Gregory, Ken Gregory, Roy Hood, Susan Humphrey, Janet Humphrey, Leslie Paul Johnson, Robert Kline, Kathie Kline, Daniel Lodbell, Vera Mace, Pat Morris, Leslie Urquhart, Richard Wells

Meeting approved releasing the above from membership. Ministry and Counsel Committee will try to inform the former members to let them know we'd be happy to see them again, but otherwise they are being officially released from membership.

Peace and Earth Report: Kitti Reynolds reported as clerk of Peace and Earth Committee

Peace and Earth Report for Business Meeting
Third Month, 2008

Peace and Earth met on the tenth day of Second Month, and decided to allocate our budget as follows:

Quaker outreach would be the same as last year and also 2008:

Thus: The following organizations would receive a total as indicated, representing two years worth of contributions.

| | |
|----------------------------|---------|
| Friends Journal | \$400 |
| Quaker Earth Care Witness | \$800 |
| AFSC | \$600 |
| FCNL | \$1,100 |
| Friends General Conference | \$400 |
| Quaker House | \$800 |
| FWCC | \$150 |
| Right Sharing | \$400 |
| Ramallah Friends School | \$150 |
| Pendle Hill | \$200 |

For General Outreach we decided as follows, for 2007:

Environmental (\$700): Riverlink \$350 and Clean Air Community Trust \$350

Peace (\$500) No More Victims (helps Iraqi children get medical attention in US) \$300 and radio station WPVM (progressive news, Steve Livingston and Susan O contribute their expertise) \$200

Social Concerns A-B Community Relations \$200

Helpmate \$200

Manna Food Bank (Jen works there) \$600

Meals on Wheels (George works there) \$100

ABCCM Women's and children's Shelter \$100 (plus contributing to SaraJane's grocery bills for food she fixes for them)
Emma Family Resource Center (changed from original minutes)\$100

P and E will sponsor a collection of food for Manna Food Bank for our March 23 P and E presentation, this is Easter First Day.

P and E sponsored a program on Feb 28, when we responded to FCNL's request for our input on legislative issues for next year. It was well attended, with about 13 adult Friends and 6 Young Friends participating. Following is the report sent to FCNL:

Dear Friends, I am reporting for Asheville Friends Meeting. Our Peace and Earth group recently gathered the Meeting together to discuss the legislative priorities. Thirteen adult Friends were present, and 6 Young Friends. Our Yearly Meeting is SAYMA. Contact name and address are below, my email is reynolds.barbara@gmail.com.

Our top priorities were:
immediate withdrawal from Iraq
signing the International Ban against cluster munitions and the nuclear non-proliferation treaties
election reform
universal health care
energy conservation and exploring renewable sources of energy

Hah! That's probably more than 4 or 5, and there are more I didn't include!

Thanks so much,

Barbara (Kitti) Reynolds
Peace and Earth chair
Asheville Friends Meeting

Peace and Earth will participate in upcoming Earth Day Celebrations to be held at All Souls in Biltmore Village on April 20. We plan to have a table with pamphlets about Friends Testimonies, particularly Peace and Environmental Concerns.

6. Other Business:

-Rylin H. asked if a participant in her sewing class could leave a sewing machine here in between sewing classes. It would not be covered by our insurance. Friend suggested that it be stored in the women's bathroom.

-April Business meeting: Adrienne W. will be clerk. Jen Rhode will be recording clerk. Barbara will be attending her daughter Abigail's senior art show at Earlham College.

-Evan R. will be traveling to Celo on the first Saturday in April. We are invited to join in the workshop on exploring our experience in meeting for worship and how it relates to the vitality of the meeting.

-David C. spoke of his yearning to have his and some other kids sit in the main worship room during Meeting even if they prefer to sit on floor and do knitting. Ministry and Counsel will discuss this in their next meeting.

We concluded our meeting for worship for the conduct of business with a short period of worship, to meet again, as way opens, on Fourth Month 13. 2008.