

Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business
Asheville Friends Meeting
8th Month 11, 2013

Clerk: Kitti Reynolds

Recording Clerk: Steve Livingston

Attendance: Rylin Hansen, Gail and Jim Hipkins, Ruth Stuart, Edie Patrick, Kristi and Gjeorge Gjelfriend, Rusty Maynard, Bobby Carter, Laura Marlow, Alan Robinson, Joy Gossett, and a visitor from coastal NC

Meeting began with a moment of silence. The Clerk read from the SAYMA *Guide To Our Faith and Practice*, 2012. p. 55:

“Harmony with Nature: Friends' concern for the earth is a spirit-led extension of established Quaker testimonies in response to our persistent, and now global, overuse and disruption of Earth's ecological systems. This concern is rooted in a profound awareness of and love for the Divine indwelling within the material world.”

Friends approved the agenda as presented.

Friends approved the minutes of Sixth Month Meeting for Business as posted on the website.

Clearness Committee for Membership: Clerk read a letter from Alan Robinson requesting membership in the Religious Society of Friends, Asheville Monthly Meeting:

Dear Friend Kitti,

It is after much thought and consideration that I make the decision that it is my desire to associate myself with Asheville Friends Meeting and the Religious Society of Friends in a more formal way. For this reason, consider this letter as my application for membership.

There will probably be more than a few within the Meeting who have long assumed that I am already a member of the Meeting. When I first associated with Quakers more than twenty years ago in Southern California, I was asked then if I didn't want to apply for membership. But the wounds of dissociation from my former faith community had not yet healed. Much has changed between then and now to cause me to request this change be granted.

If the Meeting is receptive, I would like to request a clearness committee for membership consisting of yourself, Barbara Esther, and Bob Smith if you are willing.

Sincerely,
Alan Robinson

Clerk reported that Bob Smith was not available to serve, so Katherine Kowal served in his stead. The Clearness Committee met twice with Alan. They discussed why he wanted to join now, after his active presence with us for some years. The Committee was satisfied that he had approached membership thoughtfully and will continue to be a strong part of our Meeting.

Meeting approved Alan Robinson's request for membership in the Religious Society of Friends and Asheville Monthly Meeting with great joy and several huzzahs.

Clerk suggested that we have a welcoming celebration on the upcoming Sandwich Sunday, 8/25. Friends were amenable to this suggestion.

Peace and Earth

Gail Hipkins rose to exhort the Meeting to support the Hope to Home program of Homeward Bound through participation in a transition team. Peace and Earth Committee met last week to consider this proposal and united in support.

Gail described Homeward Bound as one of the finest agencies dealing with homelessness, and applauded their success not merely in providing for basic human needs, but in striving for, and succeeding, in transitioning formerly homeless people to permanent housing. Homeward Bound provides its clients with a physical address and a telephone number to facilitate their job search, as well as shower facilities, storage for personal belongings, meals, counseling, and other services to reduce the vagaries of homelessness.

Once a client has reached a level of stability and self-sufficiency to make the transition to independent living, Gail explained that a Hope to Home team of approx. ten volunteers is formed to facilitate the transition. Peace and Earth contacted Unitarians to join us in making a team, and they were agreeable.

Gail explained that \$1800 is required for funding a transition. She reminded the Meeting that she and Jim used their birthdays as fundraising opportunities, and raised about \$600. Adding \$300 of their own funds, they have therefore already raised half the required amount. Peace and Earth agreed to put up another \$450 out of their funds, and the Unitarians will contribute the remaining \$450.

Gail and Jim have already agreed to serve on the transition team. Gail asked if there were Friends present who felt led to serve. Bobby Carter, Sarah Jane Thomas, and Margaret Normile agreed to serve, thus bringing the number of volunteers to the required five. Gail indicated that Friends will be called on to provide other kinds of material assistance, such as

kitchen utensils, small appliances, bed linens, toiletry items, such as we have sometimes done in the past.

Bobby Carter rose to read a Minute on the Israeli-Palestine conflict that has been approved by Swannanoa Valley Meeting, and is being circulated among other SAYMA Meetings for consideration.

As Quakers we endeavor to listen deeply to all sides in any situation of conflict in the belief that all sides deserve a respectful hearing, and that no lasting solution to conflict can come unless the just claims of all sides are in some measure satisfied. In the case of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which so sorely torments the international community generally and the peoples of the Middle East in particular, Israel's just claim for security is fully heard and supported by our government, and we join with the great majority of Americans who support Israel's claim for a secure existence.

The just claims of the Palestinians, on the other hand, are not widely recognized nor discussed in this country. Further, they receive little support from our government. Several from our Meeting have had direct experience with the on-the-ground realities in Israel/Palestine and others in the Meeting have undertaken a journey to educate themselves, through reading, conversations and forums about the claims of each side. We believe that three Palestinian claims deserve our support.

1) The Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory beyond the 1949 Armistice Line (the Green Line) is illegal under the Fourth Geneva Convention, to which Israel is a signatory. Article 49 of that Convention specifically prohibits an occupying power from transferring members of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies. Thus the steady acquisition of Palestinian land for Israeli settlement development is illegal and is eroding the Palestinians' right to a viable homeland.

2) The Israeli domination of Palestinian land denies the Palestinians' right to personal freedom, national sovereignty and self-determination. This domination through continued expansion of settlements is preventing substantive peace negotiations from taking place.

3) The Palestinians also claim that those who support these illegal Israeli settlements by buying products produced there are contributing to the perpetuation of a grave injustice against the Palestinian people. People may be unaware of the origin of these products, but once they are made aware that they are illegally produced on the West Bank, they have the responsibility not to be complicit in a continuing injustice.

In support of Palestinian justice, as well as in support of a peaceful and lasting resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, we encourage our members and all citizens not to buy products (eg., Soda Stream, Ahava cosmetics, etc) made in the West Bank settlements.

As members of the Religious Society of Friends who believe that all women and men are our sisters and brothers we are led to respond to the cries of suffering of the Palestinian people by supporting the boycott campaign until the Occupation has ended and the basic

human rights of those living under the intolerable conditions of this Occupation are secured.

Friends expressed support for the sense of the minute. Clerk called for publication of the minute and suggested that we season it for a time. It will be brought to our ninth month Meeting for Business for further discussion.

Finance Report

Clerk noted that in the absence of our Treasurer or any other member of the Finance Committee, the Finance report had been distributed electronically, and suggested deferring discussion and approval until next month. Friends were comfortable with deferral.

Communications Committee

Steve Livingston read the following report for the Committee:

Communications Committee Report 8th Month 2013

Communications Committee met after rise of Meeting on 6/30/13 to discuss the Meeting's need for telephone service, and how best to fulfill it. Present were Leslee Johnson, Rylin Hansen, Satchel Loftis, and Steve Livingston (clerk).

We acknowledged that Meeting benefits from the connections to the wider community and world that telephone service provides. Over the past several months, through polling of visitors to Meeting, we have concluded that our ad in the Yellow Pages does not provide a beneficial connection to the wider community and world. A review of our experience with our telephone answering machine leads us to believe that it does provide the beneficial functions of informing callers of our meeting times and providing avenues for further inquiry.

We suggest that, while it is almost certain that any users of our Meetinghouse will have in their possession their own wireless telephones, it is still incumbent upon us to provide some backup means of at least calling 9-1-1 in the event of an emergency.

We share the concern that the cost/benefit ratio of our present landline telephone is very low, and the money currently spent on our landline phone service could be put to much better use.

We therefore recommend that:

- 1. We discontinue our landline telephone service.*
- 2. We subscribe to Google Voice, a free internet-based telephone service that provides voice mail and telephone redirect to any number of existing phones. Any one of those phones can pick up the call. If no one picks up the call, the caller is routed to voicemail. Google Voice allows 60 seconds for our outgoing announcement and allows callers to leave a message of up to 3 minutes each. Voicemail can be retrieved from any phone or computer using the access code we assign.*
- 3. We obtain from Meeting members/attenders at least two cellphones, with chargers,*

that are no longer being used. Any cellphone can be used to call 9-1-1, whether or not it has an active cellphone subscription. These cellphones would be placed in strategic locations, one upstairs and one downstairs, with signage indicating that they are to be used only in case of emergency for the purpose of calling 9-1-1.

4. *We inform our current renters of the changes to our telephone system. Our Meetinghouse Coordinator has inquired of current renters whether these changes would be detrimental to their use of our facilities. She received no responses.*
5. *We add to our rental agreement this information about the limitations of our Meetinghouse telephone system.*

Friends offered questions and comments.

A Friend asks whether Google Voice would provide an initial announcement so callers don't think they've reached the wrong number when a private party answers.

A Friend who currently uses Google Voice shared her experience that it may only be redirected to one phone at a time, not any number of phones simultaneously as the Committee's report indicated. The Friend expressed that we need to be mindful that groups using the space rent free must be informed that they must furnish their own phones. Steve suggested that he will check with Swannanoa Valley Meeting to see how they handle this issue, as they have never had a phone.

The Friend most involved with current system expressed strong support for the recommendations, but suggested it would be better not to redirect incoming calls, but rather let all calls go to the voice mail, as is our current practice with our answering machine. Which of us would want our phone ringing at 2 in the morning with a request for help?

In response to another Friend's inquiry, this Friend reported that our current telephone service costs about \$1000 a year.

Meeting approved Communications Committee's recommendations regarding discontinuing our landline telephone service, and asks that they move forward with working out the details.

Memorial Committee

Clerk reminded Friends of the passing of Virginia Redfield, long associated with our Meeting as the host of our Midweek gathering, and beloved by all who knew her, through this connection and many others. It was Virginia's wish that her memorial meeting be organized by Asheville Meeting. Alan Robinson reported that he and Laura Marlow (our current Midweek host) have been in contact with Virginia's daughter Wendy, and that she suggests sometime in October as the best time for the memorial.

Alan described the duties of the Memorial Committee: setting the date, securing a venue,

printing a brochure for attenders describing a Quaker memorial meeting, writing a memorial minute, and organizing a “meeting for eating”. Three Friends are needed to serve on the Memorial Committee, and since Alan and Laura had already agreed to serve, only one additional member was needed. Barbara Esther agreed to serve.

Nominating Committee

Friends approved Leslee Johnson as a member of Communications Committee for a two year period ending Seventh Month 2015.

Singing

Clerk explained that Meeting had previously agreed to start our First Day singing at 9:30 and end at 9:50, allowing a ten minute transition to silent worship, and it is so indicated on our website. In reality however, singing more often begins at 9:45 and does not end until 10. Clerk asked whether we should change our website to match our practice, or change our practice to match our website.

A Friend said that the singing is disruptive to settling into worship. Some Friends are not comfortable with the “doctrinal words” in hymns. Another Friend wondered what a visitor might think coming into the Meeting at 10 when there is singing going on.

A Friend was concerned that the Meetinghouse worship space was not getting set up in good order. We need to convey to all attenders what time we set up, and hold to it. Friends acknowledged the connection between not getting set up and not finishing in time. A Friend recalled the practice in a previous Meeting wherein a volunteer set up the meeting room on Saturday evening rather than waiting until Sunday morning. Could we adopt this practice?

A Friend suggested that Hospitality Committee add “chair setup” to our hospitality signup sheet. Another Friend suggested that groups using the meeting room be required to set it back up the way they found it. A Friend wondered if this might be overly cumbersome and less likely to succeed if several groups are using the room in the course of the week. A Friend suggested that we make chair setup into an “honorable thing”, and pointed out that if Meeting volunteers are doing the task, they would be able to report the condition of the chairs.

Friend considered the idea of having the singing upstairs in the mural room, but there were several reasons why this was not acceptable: singing is a practice of spiritual preparation for some of those who sing, and is associated with the worship space; being moved to a different room conveys a sense of banishment; we encourage our young people to join us for the first few minutes of meeting, so being in a different room would be counterproductive; singing is part of the process of “holding the space”.

A Friend pointed out that we all have a stake in every aspect of the Meeting, whether we are directly involved with it or not, and suggested that rise of meeting announcements include a reminder of how important it is for everyone to be on time. This Friend observed that this is the crux of the issue: being on time.

A Friend expressed concern that a signup sheet might not be adequate to the task. Someone needs to have oversight, to cover when no one signs up, to keep it organized. Another Friend suggests that if no one has signed up for the following week, this be attended to at rise of meeting.

Friends united with the need to adhere strictly to starting and ending time. This seemed to open way for unity. A Friends suggested that silence begin five minutes before worship rather than ten.

Friends approved setting the time for singing to begin at 9:30 as before, but ending “no later than 5 of” Friends approved adding “chair setup” to the hospitality signup sheet. Ministry and Counsel is charged with adding a flash card to rise of meeting process describing the need for a chair setup volunteer. Hospitality Committee is charged with adding “chair setup” to the Hospitality signup sheet.

Other

A Friend received an email from a woman from New Garden Meeting who will be bringing some youth sometime in October to visit colleges, and will likely be seeking hospitality for a Saturday night.

Closing worship

Out of the silence, a Friend was moved to express gratitude for Kitti's years of service as clerk, thankful for her willingness to sit and laugh with us.