

Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business

Asheville Friends Meeting

4th Month 13, 2014

Clerk: Jennifer Rhode Ward

Recording Clerk: Steve Livingston

Attendance: Alan Robinson, Dave Spicer, Sarah Jane Thomas,, Rylin Hansen, Joy Gossett, Katherine Kowal, Kristi Gjelfriend, Edwin Brown, Edie Patrick, Patti Hughes, Gjeorge Gjelfriend, Ruth Stewart, Scotty Utz, Barbara Esther, Adrienne Weir, Margaret Normile, Gail Hipkins, Laura Lane, Nancy Kuykendall, Pat Johnson, Bobby Carter

Meeting began at with a moment of silence at 11:50 a.m.

The clerk opened the meeting with a reading from “Journey Inward, Journey Outward”

*Just as we are committed to being on an inward journey for all of time, so are we committed to being on an outward journey, so that the inner and outer become related to one another and one has meaning for the other and helps make the other possible. If this does not happen, then those who are critical of the contemplative process are rightly so.*

The agenda was approved as presented.

**Minutes of 3rd month 2014 meeting were approved as posted on the Meeting website.**

Clearness Committee for Alan Robinson and Dave Spicer

Barbara Esther presented the report.

*Alan Robinson, a member of our Meeting, recently requested a Clearness Committee to help him and his partner, David Spicer, decide if they were ready to get married under the care of Asheville Friends Meeting. Members of the Committee were Barbara Esther, Katherine Kowal, Bob Smith and Kitti Reynolds. We met four times, from First Month, 2014, until Third Month 21, 2014. Our process was to explore with Alan and David how they came to the point of considering marriage; we made extensive use of the “Asheville Friends Meeting Marriage Procedure”, approved Third Month, 2008. This document was very helpful for the clearness process. At the conclusion of our last meeting the two of them were confident that they wished to proceed with a marriage under the care of our Meeting. They are not ready to set a date, and will wait until way opens. The Clearness Committee recommends that the Meeting take this marriage under our care.*

**Friends approved taking the marriage of Alan Robinsons and Dave Spicer under**

## **the care of our Meeting.**

### Hope to Home

Gail Hipkins reported on the Hope to Home sponsorship.

Last November we agreed to sponsor a person. We felt the cost was too much for us to handle alone, so we joined with the Unitarian Universalist congregation to underwrite the \$1800 cost. We are sponsoring a woman named Angela, who is disabled due to a car injury.

A sponsoring team is supposed to have ten members, but ours has only seven: the UU provided two volunteers and we provided five. But with the enthusiasm of the seven we're getting on very well, Gail reported. She said that generous contributions of furniture and household goods resulted in a well furnished apt.

Gail says that Angela seems happy a great deal of the time. Angela says she feels stable for the first time in eight years. Currently she is training for a job she will be able to do at home. Margaret Normile regularly reports back to the parent agency, Homeward Bound. Outings with Angela have included a trip to Brother Wolf shelter and a picnic at Brooks Howell a couple of weeks ago. Other support includes bringing her groceries and frequent visits.

Margaret added that Angela is considering volunteering at Brother Wolf as she loves animals but cannot have a pet in her current apartment.

### Archivist

Laura Lane stated that Meeting has been without an Archivist for several years. She and Barbara Esther have tried to fill in most of the recent information. Quakers pride themselves on keeping good records, she said, and this is the Archivist's job: making entries in the archives when there is a birth, death, or marriage. In addition, the Archivist helps gather census information for our Yearly Meeting, such as the number of attenders, inactive members, and the like.

Please see a member of Nominating if you or someone you know might be led to fill this position. A Friend pointed out that the position does not require prodigious computer skills. In fact the records are all hand written so you don't even have to have a computer to do the job.

### Finance

Pat Johnson presented the Treasurer's reports. She first informed Meeting that we have now closed our account with Wells Fargo. She commended the staff at the West Asheville branch as being very nice people, based on her years of experience working with them. Now, all of our local funds are invested at Self Help Credit Union – more

than \$19,000.

Contributions so far this year have been less than \$4000. We received a refund from the car rental for a recent SAYF retreat, which was reported as “miscellaneous income”. This has been moved over to the SAYF fund where it belongs. So far actual rental receipts are \$645.

So far our contributions income is about 18% of our budgeted amount.

Pat informed us that our insurance costs will be higher this year than the amount we budgeted, which was based on the previous year's budget. She suggested that we might want to explore a less costly insurance provider, but no one on the Committee is currently able or willing to undertake this task. A Friend asked if we are working through an insurance broker. Pat was not sure about that.

**Friends accepted the report with gratitude for Pat's work.**

### Nominating

**Friends approved Scotty Utz to join House and Grounds Committee.**

### House and Grounds

Adrienne Weir reported.

House and Grounds met this morning after much email discussion concerning the ongoing grading and landscaping that was undertaken by one Friend with the approval of the Committee but without its direct supervision. This Friend is not a member of the Committee, and though a Committee member has acted as a liaison, much of the planning for the work that occurred was done without committee or Meeting oversight.

The Committee was especially concerned about the scale of disturbance on the West side of our property. Far more trees were cut down than expected. In fact, Adrienne reported, more trees came down than the Friend had intended. This came about because the grading contractor was not clearly instructed as to which ones to take and which to leave, and was working without supervision on the day when this happened.

As a result of this loss of cover and the grading of the yard in that area, there was an unexpected threat of severe erosion onto our neighbor's property, creating a crisis situation. Our neighbor was also quite dismayed by the loss of woods habitat in the boundary area, having been a forester in her career.

House and Grounds Committee moved swiftly to mitigate the threat of erosion and assuage the neighbor's fears. The “plateau” on the west side was terraced with straw, a silt fence was erected with the help of several Meeting teens, and the neighbor will be included in future planning for the area, Adrienne reported. She reassured Meeting that

we had all of the proper permits for all of the work that has been done.

Adrienne also assured the Meeting that there will be greater communication with and oversight of the Friend as the project moves forward. She noted the complexity of the project, the many facets, and the difficulty inherent in fully understanding the Friend's intentions. The Committee supports this Friend's vision, but acknowledges there was a lapse in Quaker process.

Adrienne also reported that a new drain pipe was installed for gutter runoff, and a Friend braved the second story roof to clear the rain gutters. She showed Friends a rendering of a shelter area proposed to be built on west side. The Committee is seeking input from other committees and individuals as to appearance, style, and size of such a structure. House and Grounds is committed to undertaking this project in a way that is totally safe. For example, we are not yet certain that the plateau on the west side is stable enough to support this structure, so no further plans will be made until an engineering study is completed.

In response to a Friend's inquiry, Adrienne reported that the Committee had brainstormed about using some of the large logs left over from the tree removal for other outdoor projects, or some might be sold for firewood.

Clerk informed Meeting that Ministry and Counsel will be communicating with our neighbor about any and all projects that impact her property and asked that Friends bring their ideas and thoughts to M&C. They will meet this Tuesday with this on the agenda.

Much work remains to be done. There is ongoing excavation in the northeast corner of our property intended to relieve hydrostatic pressure causing seepage into the basement. The Committee is seeking a professional to study our space to determine what are all sources of moisture in the building.

Adrienne described that regular maintenance issues that the Committee must deal with on an ongoing basis are being delegated to individual Friends on the Committee, in order to avoid having one person burdened with everything.

Friends commended Adrienne for her clerking and facilitation.

A Friend expressed concern that Meeting missed the opportunity for whole-community discussion and discernment before we lost all those trees, and encouraged that we have greater input on such large changes in the future. Adrienne reaffirmed that this loss was not approved by the committee nor by the Friend, but came about because a contractor was working with neither direct oversight nor detailed instructions.

A Friend reflected from his broad experience in building and contracting, reminding Friends that contractors do not work by Quaker process, and advising us to provide contractors with complete and detailed written instructions, drawings, and contracts. If

our instructions are not clear, we have no recourse if the contractors do not do exactly what we expect them to do.

A Friend suggested a clearness committee to meet with individuals involved and address the breakdown of Quaker process, as it seemed as though House and Grounds was stuck following behind the project with bucket, broom, and dustpan cleaning up and putting out brushfires.

A Friend questioned the appropriateness of *ad hoc* committee members – is this good Quaker process?

Clerk assured Friends that the Meeting's concerns are being conveyed to the Friend.

A Friend expressed lack of support for any individuals' long range vision in the absence of whole Meeting's support. Adrienne clarified that all of the ideas being implemented have been presented at Business Meeting and receive Meeting approval – in general if not in detail.

At the end of this lengthy and difficult discussion, Adrienne expressed appreciation for our Quaker community.

#### State of Meeting Report

Copies of the report were distributed. Clerk pointed out a couple of changes and additions since the draft that was distributed via email. Clerk clarified that the State of Meeting report is intended to cover the previous year, i.e. 2013. Friends offered several minor corrections which were incorporated. A Friend asked that we add a sentence about participation in SAYF retreats, which was done. A Friend pointed out that grounds improvements did not begin until 2014, so that sentence was struck from the report.

Friends united in appreciation for Ministry and Counsel and clerk's work in putting the report together.

**Friends approved the State of the Meeting report with these changes.**

State of the Meeting Report is included at the end of this report.

#### Yearly Meeting Advanced Program

Advanced Programs for SAYMA's Yearly Meeting will be in the mail this week! Yearly meeting is June 19-22 at Warren Wilson College.

The Advanced Program is as thorough as we could make it, so that makes for a lot of reading, but the topics are clearly marked and as succinct as possible. You will find the full advanced program on the SAYMA website, and an excel version of the registration form which can be filled out online and printed on your own printer. Completed forms

should be mailed to Chris Berg, Recording Registrar, along with your check. It is really, really helpful if you complete your registration in April rather than waiting till May.

Deadline for registration is May 19, after which a \$30 late registration fee is assessed. If you would like the program and/or registration forms emailed directly to you, please contact SAYMA Administrative Assistant Liz Perch. She can also send additional printed copies of the program.

We are looking for to another vibrant and deeply spiritual gathering. We hope you can join us.

### Other Concerns

Gjeorge announced several recent birthdays, including his own. Affected Friends requested that we not sing “Happy Birthday” to them at this time.

### Closing worship

There being no further business, meeting adjourned with silence at 1:05 p.m.

State of the Meeting, 2013  
Asheville Friends Meeting  
Approved 4<sup>th</sup> month 13, 2014

Our Meeting continues to experience robust attendance on First Days. We have welcomed a baby, Cormac Johnson, saw Friend Gita Larsen officially transfer her membership to our AFM, and welcomed long-time attender Alan Robinson as an official member. Our community was sad to lose longtime member Virginia Redfield, and we held a memorial for her in the fall. We have seen an increase in attendance by youngish Friends, singles and couples with young children, many of whom join us for 9:30 a.m. pre-Meeting singing. The latter group uses the combination library / nursery (space created last year, signage added this year), as well as space with childcare in our upstairs area. Our Meeting often shares meals together, and the Hospitality Committee ensures that we have snacks after rise of Meeting for Worship. We were also excited to change from a Meetinghouse landline to a Google number, and we plan to move the bulk of our financial assets from a bank to a credit union. AFM was also able to provide hospitality for SAYF (Southern Appalachian Young Friends) and high school aged students from New Garden Friends School.

Religious Education Friends have been busy with our annual Secret Pal gift exchange, with over 40 intergenerational participants this year. We have held two youngish Friends events, and held our annual intergenerational Youth Celebration cookout in May. Our First Day School has benefited from the participation of both RE members and weekly volunteers from the larger Meeting, which has proven beneficial to all. The Youth Group (middle and high school students) meets bi-monthly, with regular attendance of 2-6 young people. Their recent activities have focused on interviewing Meeting attenders about their spiritual and larger lives. Our youth and adults have participated in various SAYF retreats throughout our region.

The House and Grounds Committee has been active in improving our Meetinghouse property. They have organized bimonthly work days (6 total) on the property, bringing the larger group into active participation in this important work. In addition, two of the First Day School classroom doors have been outfitted with windows as a child-safety measure, landscaping has been added, and porch furniture has been painted.

Ministry and Counsel meets monthly and is confident that our Meeting continues to be strong and Spirit-filled. The quality of our worship continues to be a strength of our meeting. We have gifted ministers among us and still often have completely silent meetings for worship. This year, we sent a member to the Pendle Hill Clerking Workshop.

Peace and Earth has sponsored letter-writing opportunities at the rise of Meeting, participated in the International Day of Peace, is supporting the work of Veterans for Peace, and joined a group of local faith groups in asking our power company to close its coal-fired power plant (as part of the “Beyond Coal Initiative”). With the help of others

in our Meeting, Peace and Earth has continued to contribute on a quarterly basis to the Sunday morning breakfast at Pritchard Park for Asheville's hungry population. Our Meeting also has a Hope to Home team, supporting a woman as she transitions from homelessness to permanent housing. Our Hope to Home person reports that this is the first time in 8 years that she has had stable housing, and that having a place to live has allowed her to begin searching for employment. Finally, we provided housing for members of the National Conference of War Tax Resisters (May 2013).

Our Meeting has sponsored activities of one of our attenders, Stephanie Gossett, a Peace Corps volunteer now working in Swaziland. In December 2013, Friends approved fully funding the Vusumnotfo Reading Project in Swaziland, a project to provide a home for the several thousands of books that have already been donated to promote a love of reading and learning among Swazi youth. Over \$6000 was given.

Spiritual Enrichment Committee, in keeping with its stated mission, nourished adult spiritual sharing and growth in our meeting. They have sponsored second hour discussions on Quakerism, as seen through the pages of the new Guide to Our Faith and Practice.

Our year was not without challenges. Our meeting spent considerable spiritual and emotional energy in a matter that forced us to consider how to compassionately uphold our boundaries. This took up much time in Meeting for Business, and was the focus of committee work as well.

We are looking forward to 2014; with the many contributions of members and attenders we expect to continue our growth in Spirit and in numbers.

Respectfully submitted by Laura Maynard Lane and Jen Rhode Ward, co-Clerks of Asheville Friends Meeting.