

Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business
Asheville Friends Meeting
First Month 14, 2018

Present: Satchel Loftis; David Clements; Bobby Carter; Steve Livingston; Adrienne Weir; Gita Larson; Katherine Kowal; Pat Campbell; Beth Eddy; Mike Eddy; NancyLynn Sharpless; Scotty Utz; Margaret Normile; Pat Johnson; Edie Patrick; Bob Lakey; Jim Cavener; Robin Wells; Kitti Reynolds; Patti Hughes, clerk; and Barbara Esther, recording clerk.

Meeting began with a period of silent worship from which clerk, Patti Hughes, read the following:

Clerking the Flow of Traffic

When I'm in a discussion where the people speak on the heels of each other, I feel like I'm trying to turn left across three lanes of oncoming traffic. Without a long pause, I can't enter the intersection to make my turn. The clerk should provide the left turn signal that slower speakers need.

Building Consensus Monteze Snyder
Joanna Schofield,
Earlham School of Religion
and Bethany Theological Seminary

Friends accepted the agenda as prepared.

Friends decided to postpone the approval of the Twelfth Month Minutes since Friends need more time to review them.

Announcements:

Two changes in service were announced. Bob Lackey has decided to step down from the Communications Committee, but will continue on the Peace and Earth Committee. Sharon Smith will step down from the Board of Directors of Asheville Friends Meeting. She will continue to serve on the Racial Justice Committee as clerk.

SAYMA Assessment Proposal-Steve Livingston

Based on the discussion in fall of 2017 when we reviewed our process, Friends agree to pay assessments in alignment with the census for active members and attenders.

One Friend asked about our way of communicating with inactive members. We defer this discussion to another time, but unite in saying we do not want to "purge" but to reach out to see whether we can reach these inactive Friends.

Minute 1: At the request of the Ad Hoc Committee on SAYMA Assessments, Friends approved supporting SAYMA in it's request to have all Monthly Meetings use the SAYMA annual census in alignment with the assessment to be paid.

2018 Budget-Satchel Loftis

Satchel explained the process of requests from various committees comparing regular levels of bills and the income from this year to requests from committees. Our contributions were down this year, but this was balanced by less spending of budgeted money. We may be about \$1,000.00 short when all accounts are entered. The contributions largely come from a small number of contributors. When someone in that group does not contribute for some reason, it has an immediate effect. One Friend suggested that we have to create a balanced budget, another said that after three years of having a budget that we cannot meet, that we need to reassess the situation. This means we can either increase contributions through fund raising or decrease our budgetary expenditures. The treasurer plans to give a quarterly report of whether our contribution level has met our budget to that date.

The training for racial justice work has been difficult to be accepted into for the past two years. People of color are prioritized for acceptance in the training. It was suggested by Racial Justice Committee that a restricted fund for training be established as an ongoing fund so that as a space becomes available a Friend can tap the fund. This fund transfer is not in the budget for this year. However, we are carrying over the \$1200 from 2017 for the 2018 year.

Minute 2: Friends approved the proposed budget for 2018.

Minute 3: Friends approved the carry over of the training fund in the amount of \$1200 for use in 2018, for racial justice training.

Committee Reports:

Racial Justice Committee - Adrienne Weir

[paste in]

Peace and Earth Committee-Pat Johnson

The Ethical Society will bring another workshop on Nonviolent Communication, having sponsored a successful one last year, wanting to continue the impetus of that event. We are asked to join them in sponsoring the workshop on March 24, 2018.

Whereas the Ethical Humanist Society of Asheville is sponsoring a nonviolent communication workshop facilitated by Roberta Wall on March 24, 2018 at the Asheville Friends Meeting House; and Whereas Roberta Wall is well qualified and has multiple years of experience providing workshops in the US, the Middle East and worldwide and has numerous testimonials on how helpful and effective her work is; and Whereas Roberta joined EcoME, an ecological peace center in the West Bank Judean Desert, in 2010 to assist them in creating a culture of communication and organizational processes to develop a safe place where Palestinians and Jews from the West Bank and Israel could meet, connect, process, celebrate and build community; and Whereas Roberta offers her work in service of peaceful transformation of our world, individuals, families, organizations, and communities; and gives 100% of donations to her worldwide work in spiritual health and development; and Whereas the Peace and Earth Committee of Asheville Friends upon request will cosponsor this event and is forwarding a request for the Meeting as a whole to cosponsor this event; Therefore, we the Asheville Friends Meeting agree to cosponsor

and promote a workshop called “Building Bridges across Divides: Communication That Works” with Roberta Wall on March 24, 2018.

One Friend spoke of her experience with this approach saying that we need to be aware of the fact that such training is usually peopled by those of a similar power structure, more like each other. Another Friend spoke of the vulnerability of those who are oppressed and the danger of entering into such training with their “oppressors”. Pat has fully researched the presenter and feels that it has great potential. Another Friend spoke of her knowledge of the book on which the workshop is based. We were reminded that every opportunity to participate in workshops of this type can give us new perspective or knowledge, even though we will never find the perfect workshop. The focus is on the work going on in Palestinian-Israeli relations. Community win-win communication is the goal.

Minute 4: Friends approved that Asheville Friends Meeting co-sponsor the workshop nonviolent communication with one Friend standing aside because of the imbedded assumption that power differences will have an impact.

Spiritual Enrichment Committee - Barbara Esther

The committee has the charge of **coordinating a program twice a month to enhance the spiritual growth of the adults of the meeting, our community.** We open each year’s calendar in September with a discussion of the interests of meeting members and committees so that these can be addressed throughout the year. Following that planning session, each First and Third First Day we endeavor to present or invite other committees to facilitate a presentation or discussion. Within this framework we also foster intergenerational fellowship through four programs in conjunction with the Religious Education Committee: Simply Holiday Activities, Secret Pals, Easter Egg Hunt and the Youth Celebration. Occasionally, a guest is invited or is in Asheville when we can meet around some issue or Quaker related organization. When there is a Fifth First Day the Peace and Earth Committee has arranged for meeting members and attenders to write to our political representatives around an issue. This year the following have taken place: Discussion of how we pay our yearly meeting assessment, discussion of a Swanannoa Valley Friends’ minute circulating throughout the yearly meeting, Parenting (restricted to families at this time), Boycott and Divestment, Whiteness, Holiday Activities and Potluck, Card Writing, and Consensus Building.

There are still opportunities open for committees or individuals to bring to the committee. **The following dates are open at present:**

March 4

April 15

May 6

June 3 (final date for the year)

(the Youth Celebration will be on May 20)

Please contact a member of the Spiritual Enrichment Committee if you have ideas for one of these dates. When no one has come forward to lead a discussion or make a presentation the committee will plan a program such as worship sharing or a discussion of Quaker themes.

FYI, the following committees have *not yet* asked to bring a program or lead a discussion to date:

House and Grounds Committee
Hospitality Committee
Nominating Committee

Attached is a brief report of the recent discussion that five Friends had on January 7, 2018, on Consensus-Building. We invite Friends to plan to join us on First and Third First Days to take advantage of the opportunity to learn something, contribute something and to get to know other Friends better.

Leslee Johnson, clerk

Barbara Esther

Rylin Hansen

Margaret Normile

Other

The clerk reported that a lovely gathering took place to at Katherine Kowal's house to welcome Pat Campbell as a member of our meeting. It was a great opportunity to get to know each other as individuals.

We were reminded that the clean up and the set up of after-meeting snacks is the responsibility of all of us, even though Hospitality Committee has taken on the coordination of snacks and clean-up. The Burgess family has been very generous with that service, but we need to remember that Patty Burgess is also our childcare provider and is conflicted about how to serve the children and get the food out after worship.

One Friend spoke of his heart having been cracked open, letting Light stream in, not always being able to see clearly. He is grateful that Friends speak in our meetings, giving voice to marginalized people. He calls for patience and understanding, and hopes that we all suffer from the same cracks in our hearts.

We closed with a moment of silence to meet again as way opens on Second Month 11, 2018.

Attachments:

Consensus Building

A discussion based on the book *Building Consensus: Conflict and Unity* by Monteze Snyder with Cheryl Gibbs, Susan A. Hillman, Trayce N. Peterson, Joanna Schofield, and George H. Watson. The discussion was meant to assist all individuals, committees and the meeting as a whole in its meetings for worship with attention to business.

We looked at a model of consensus-building as a funnel.

At the wide top of the funnel is the broad participation of Friends, having input and providing various perspectives on an agenda item. Ideally, Friends come with an openness to an unknown decision, but having done the necessary homework to be a full participant.

Following that is a gradual narrowing of the possible decisions. The clerk facilitates an orderly way of hearing the relevant information. Spaces of silence punctuate this process.

Consensus-building takes place as common concerns and issues are discussed.
Common ground and Spirit-led avenues for action are acknowledged.

Consensus decisions emerge. Precise wording and sense of the meeting are formed for consideration.
Sometimes a reflection of deliberation is as far as the process can advance.

The clerk and recorder form
a minute that meets the
approval
of the
meeting.

We took a few minutes to list what each of us felt could be good consensus-building behaviors. We then shared them and compared our list to a checklist in the book. We came very close to mirroring the list! Here is our list (*all* of us chose the first behavior).

Listening to others respectfully, not asking to speak until the present speaker is finished. Showing that you care to hear their view

Acknowledging “my way”, “your way” and **a third way, keeping an open mind and heart**

Keeping an attitude of **Help me to understand** when there is a disagreement

Summarization of the **sense of the meeting**

Exercising **patience**, knowing that in the end we’ll be able to move forward effectively

Leaving **time** between speakers-spaces of silence

Being clear in voicing your views

Keeping judgment aside

Avoiding trying to convince someone

Using “I” messages, **speaking from your own experience**, feelings and perspective

Apologizing when needed, withdrawing an earlier concern when a new insight arises

Learning to **let go**

Caring for the community

Allowing the clerk to keep the flow of ideas going without traffic jams

Coming with your “homework” done, but ready to seek new truth

Speaking only once unless a new truth emerges

Seeking a **learn/learn** rather than a win/lose decision

Showing or tell someone when you **appreciate** what they bring to a meeting

We also discussed the role of the presiding clerk, appreciating the various clerks we have enjoyed as well as our present clerk and her skills and centeredness. A trio of quotes from the book were helpful: (and remember, everyone clerks, not just the presiding clerk!)

Different Lights – One Picture

Imagine we are taken to a room we have never seen. It is the middle of the night and there are no overhead lights on in the room. As a group, we are assigned the task of drawing an accurate picture of this room. We have different kinds of lights to use to be able to see the room: some of us have little penlights for seeing details; some of us

have searchlights for seeing large parts of the room; some of us have strobe lights for catching movement. Using the pieces of information we each capture by shining our different lights, we must agree upon a description of the room.

Determining the “right” decision is often like this. Each of us has a different way of seeing things, and we can benefit as a group by sharing our perspectives. When we are uncertain about the outcomes and consequences of our choices, we are often designing in the dark. We never know which light might provide crucial insight. p. 7

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*Joanna Schofield, Earlham School of Religion
and Bethany Theological Seminary*

I'd rather Be . . . Pulling Weeds!

Good clerking allows everyone to leave a meeting (even a long and difficult one) energized to work, and excited about the future. Poor clerking leaves everyone demoralized, tired, and re-examining their commitment to the group and its goals. (It leaves me wondering whether my time wouldn't be better spent gardening.) p. 33

**Ruth Seeley, American Friends Service
Committee**