

Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business
Asheville Friends Meeting
Second Month 10, 2019

Present: Robin Wells, Clerk, Kitti Reynolds, Recording Clerk. Patti Hughes, Nikolai Wise, Julia Dorn, Barbara Esther, Jim Barham, Rusty Maynard, Steve Livingston, Katherine Kowal, Jim Cavener, Canaan Brackins, Sara Jane Thomas, Satchel, Edie Patrick, Bobby Carter, Mike Eddy, Adrienne Weir, Sarawila Villatoro-Weir, Beth Eddy, Satchel Loftis, Rylin Hansen, Scotty Utz, Leslee Johnson, Pat Johnson, Bob Lackey

Meeting began with a period of silent worship from which clerk, Robin Wells, read the following query about Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business written by long-time Friend, Arthur Larrabee:

Do you have an expectation that Spirit will be present for you and for the meeting? Do you expect that the meeting will be led in right decisions for it?

The Meeting accepted the agenda.

Minute #1: Friends approved the 12th month 2018 and 1st month 2019 minutes; Pat Johnson will send some corrections of typos for 1st month minutes.

Announcements

Junior Monthly Meeting for Business will meet next First Day, 2-17-19, to discuss improvements and activities for First Day School, the playground, and the formation of a youth group.

Presiding Clerk: Tennessee

Asst Presiding Clerk: Adelaide

Recording Clerk: Kristin

Asst Recording Clerk: Finn

The construction on the back deck and stairs should be finished by next Friday. The emergency lighting out back and the library ceiling fan should be installed within a month. Our thanks go to House and Grounds for making these important

projects happen. Jim B added he thinks the deck and stairs will be complete, safe and useable BUT the city won't inspect them until later, **so don't use them** yet. It may be a month until inspection. It was noted that we can use the completed stairs before inspection only if there is a fire in the building. Also, there aren't lights on the stairs yet.

The Southern Appalachian Yearly Meeting and Association (SAYMA) planning committee for the upcoming annual session is asking for workshop proposals. Workshops will be held 6/14/19 and 6/15/19 from 1:15 - 3:00 pm. A detailed description about what the planners are looking for and how to submit a proposal can be found in the online Meeting Digest.

State of the Meeting Report--Robin Wells

The draft report was read and discussed. It will be posted on the Digest and discussed again at next month's Meeting for Business. The finalized report must be submitted to SAYMA by the end of third month.

State of the Meeting Report 2018

(DRAFT)

As the year 2018 came to a close, our meeting was in a place of guarded hopefulness. The past few years have been troubled as we have dealt with difficult issues and have wrestled with what it means to be a community. We have struggled to communicate thoughtfully and we have lost some of our resiliency. Our dream of being a welcoming, inclusive, and spirit-led meeting is still alive though, and inspires us to dig deep and work hard. We have a long way to go on our journey as a meeting.

It is clear that we need to resume racial justice training so we can develop skills to recognize and confront racism in ourselves and in our community. We need to deepen our understanding of institutional systemic racism and white supremacy and share this reality with our older children in meeting so they are well informed as they become teens and young adults. The ongoing challenge to those of us who are white is to be aware of our white privilege. We will not be able to respond in love and compassion to the needs of friends of color until we focus on our own understanding of how we cause hurt.

In an attempt to work on this issue, our Racial Justice Committee presented several forums using the book, Becoming An Anti-Racist Church by Joseph

Barndt. We looked at how our own practices are rooted in racism and how we can try to overcome this in our meeting. More discussion is needed as we get into the last part of the book. Our challenge is to increase participation in these discussions so we can develop a shared understanding of what racial justice means today.

When discussing racial justice issues, we feel the tension between the testimony of integrity and the testimony of community. We want to speak our truth with courage and conviction while remaining respectful and open to the truth of others. A case in point is over the use of the term "white supremacy" to describe our role in maintaining racism. Members feel strongly about the use of this term and at times we forget that these are beloved F(f)riends with whom we disagree. We have realized that we need to use tenderness with those among us who struggle or do not struggle with our racism. We need to encourage each other to be open to the new ideas today's racial justice work requires. To do this we will need to build trust in each other, so we can share and confront our personal truths. At this time, we do not all have that trust, but we are working to rebuild it.

In this time of increasing nationalism in our country, some immigrants experience increasing prejudice but none more than those who are here without documents. Asheville Friends Meeting partnered with CIMA (Compañeros Inmigrantes de las Montañas en Acción), the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Asheville (the hosting Congregation) and other faith communities to offer sanctuary to some who are at risk of summary deportation. We have minuted our support as well as offered financial support and endless hours of volunteer companionship.

Another area of concern expressed by many in Meeting is our need for right relationship with Indigenous peoples. A member of Meeting went to the Pendle Hill workshop on this issue and is helping Peace and Earth develop education for our meeting and the wider community about the role of Quakers in the boarding school movement and our presence on Cherokee land.

Our Peace and Earth and Racial Justice Committees continue to shepherd our outreach to Quaker and other organizations. Once again, we were able to dedicate a third of our budget to the important work being done in the broader community. Throughout the year, we collected food for MANNA food bank, toiletries for A HOPE Hospitality House for the homeless, and snacks and hygiene products for a Little Free Food Pantry. We also supported some walkers in the local CROP Walk to end hunger in our community.

Our community becomes stronger when we can help each other in times of need. Several families in Meeting have been in transition this past year and we did what we could to support them as they faced the joys and challenges that surround transition. Improved communication within Meeting, thanks in part to our Communications Committee, helped us be more responsive as need arises. Still, we could be more supportive of each other.

The number of children in Meeting continues to grow. Our meeting has a vibrant First Day School with weekly attendance of between 10-20 children. We currently don't have a youth group, but plan to begin one again next year. While we don't have any teens active with Southern Appalachian Young Friends (SAYF), we enjoyed hosting their retreats. Our Junior Business Meetings were productive and gave voice to the needs and desires of our meeting's children. In June we welcomed the birth of Essence Villatoro-Weir-Grant. She is a third-generation Asheville Friend and a precious addition to our meeting family.

In 2018, our First Day School (FDS) invited Meeting members and attenders to share their heartfelt connections with favorite Bible stories, we examined ways children and teens can speak up when something seems wrong and needs changing, and we began a new exploration of the testimonies. Programming has been challenging with a large spread in ages within our FDS and uncertain attendance each week. We have recognized the need to provide some deeper-level instruction with our older children.

Our multigenerational events co-led by the Religious Education and the Spiritual Enrichment Committees continue to bring adults and children together. In the beginning of the year, we had the largest Secret Pal exchange since the beginning of this popular program. In the spring, our Youth Celebration gave everyone a chance to learn more about our children and celebrate their role in our meeting. In the winter we began a new Simple Christmas tradition where all ages came together to decorate cookies, make bird treats, and enjoy a wide range of crafts.

Our hearts were saddened in 2018 by the passing of our dear Friend, Alan Robinson, a former clerk of the Meeting. He was a man of many talents and lived a rich life that many of us knew nothing about. He gave a lot of himself to the meeting and we miss him.

Toward the end of the year we came together as a community with a meeting-wide retreat led by Debra Shaw. We explored what it means to be a compassionate Quaker. Participants shared deeply and envisioned ways to be in relationship with others within our meeting community and in the broader community.

Our year ended with our eyes focused on the future. Our Business Meeting approved the formation of a Long-Range Planning and Visioning Committee that will gather the many voices of meeting into a cohesive plan for the future. We will begin by envisioning what we want for our meeting. From there, we can put in place the things we need. We have a lot of work ahead of us as we become the meeting we want to be. We need more involvement on Meeting committees so the work is spread out among more people. We need to strengthen our spiritual muscles for sitting with unsafe feelings and being uncomfortable, and we need to be patient with each other as we move into the new year.

There was discussion about submitting changes directly to Ministry and Counsel, but a Friend pointed out that making actual changes to a document like this should happen within our Meeting for Business. The document will be made available on the Digest and at rise of Meeting for Worship for the next few weeks. Friends should bring suggested changes to the 3rd month Meeting for Business, unless they cannot be at the Business Meeting and then should submit changes in writing to Ministry and Counsel so they can be read aloud. The Clerk suggested individuals keep copies of documents such as this in a folder so we can save paper and not reprint them each month.

End-of-Year Treasurer's Report-Satchel Loftis

Two committees spent substantially less than anticipated in their 2018 budget: RJC and RE. Utilities were lower than budgeted. This, along with some other savings, led to a net surplus in 2018. (See attachment)

2019 Budget-Satchel Loftis

We are constrained by last year's contribution level for this year's budget (AFM Policy on Budget Process 2-10-08), so we needed to make some adjustments to the proposed 2019 budget. Satchel suggested we use surplus money from last year to reduce deficits in this year's budget. Even with that adjustment, we needed to lower our proposed budget. We budgeted less for utilities in the 2019 budget based

on last year's use. The RE Committee reduced its request. General, Racial Justice, and Quaker Outreach were each reduced by \$300. If donations increase, these budget items can also increase. We were reminded that Friends can make contributions that are restricted to a particular outreach. Long-Range Planning will consider some suggestions from Satchel for ways to raise money for some depleted funds, such as the Building Fund. (See attachment)

Minute # 2: Friends moved to approve the 2019 budget and use the surplus from 2018 for the 2019 budget. The Meeting noted appreciation to Satchel and the Finance Committee.

Arthur Morgan School Request- Pat Johnson

The Arthur Morgan School (based in Celo) is requesting to stay at the Meetinghouse during an upcoming trip at the end of February. Ten students and four adults would be present. In the past we have let them stay without paying our fee. The meeting discussed if we would be willing to do that again and if we could make this a standing policy with them when they request housing. One Friend reminded us that we need to provide them with Use of Meetinghouse guidelines, which could change every year. Another Friend questioned the practice of renting our space. It was noted that the fees charged basically cover the cost of utilities during the renter's stay.

Minute # 3: Friends approved the request for Arthur Morgan School and that it be allowed every year, with fee waived as long as they are given the current meetinghouse guidelines.

Committee Reports:

Nominating Committee--Kitti Reynolds

Nominating Committee would like to nominate Jeremy Seifert for a position on the Spiritual Enrichment Committee, Julia Dorn and Nikolai Wise on Communications Committee, Julia Dorn as Assistant Treasurer, and Canaan Brackens to serve on Racial Justice Committee.

Minute # 4: Friends approved all these nominations.

Ad Hoc SAYMA Representative Meeting Planning Committee--Steve Livingston

Steve reported that we are still looking for more folks to provide hospitality for these representatives. He noted that the committee could use another person to help with the details of the meeting. Pat Johnson offered to serve on the planning committee. The Clerk appointed Pat Johnson to serve on the Ad Hoc SAYMA Rep Planning Committee. It was noted that Hospitality would appreciate help with meal prep and clean up for this group. Continental breakfast and lunch will need to be provided.

Ministry and Counsel

- Information for Visitors-Patti Hughes

Ministry and Counsel has been working on a handout for newcomers. Changes were made to the draft document following the 1st month 2019 Business Meeting and it was submitted for approval.

Asheville Friends Meeting

Welcome

We're glad you are here.

How We Worship

As Quakers we seek that of God in everyone and minister to each other. Our worship is a silent gathering to connect individually and collectively with the Spirit. The quiet waiting allows messages of the Spirit to rise up in individuals who may then stand and speak their truth. This brief vocal ministry is deep and meaningful. Having shared a message, the speaker sits and silence resumes as their words are gathered in. While a message may spring from the message another has shared, we refrain from any direct response but rather offer each message up to all. We reserve the final moments of worship to share our joys and concerns. Worship closes with the offering of a handshake by the person who closes Meeting. Visitors will be invited to introduce themselves after the close of meeting.

We invite you to ask questions after worship if you are interested in further information.

There was discussion about adding information about “whom to contact” at the end of the document. Concern was also expressed about being sensitive to the needs of immune-compromised people when shaking hands and it was decided that both of these issues will be included in our information at close of meeting for worship rather than put it in this document. There was also discussion about changing some wording in the “Information for Visitors,” so the document will go back to Ministry and Counsel to consider these suggestions.

- Duties of the Clerk—Patti Hughes

The meeting is creating a manual that will include descriptions of the committees and positions routinely held in Meeting. The document received some suggested changes and they were incorporated as follows:

DUTIES OF THE CLERK

1. The primary duty of the Clerk is to ensure that the business of the meeting is conducted after the manner of Friends and in the spirit of worship. The Clerk ensures that spiritually-grounded and worshipful process is followed. Normally, the Clerk will preside over all regular meetings for worship with attention to business, called meetings, and threshing sessions although the Clerk may delegate another person to do so.
 - a) The Clerk sets the agenda for the meeting. The meetings over which the Clerk presides begin and end with a period of worship, noted on the agenda. The Clerk estimates allotted time for agenda items. Preparation of the agenda depends on the timely advance of items to be included in the business meeting. An established report format to be used by presenters/committees bringing items to the business meeting helps the clerk and others to be prepared.
 - b) The Clerk acts with a view toward creating a safe environment by:
 - 1) Insisting that people be recognized before speaking;
 - 2) Asking people to address the clerk or the meeting as a whole, not each other;
 - 3) Interrupting if two or more people get into a dialogue;
 - 4) Slowing things down, being slow to continue on too soon, waiting to recognize the next speaker;
 - 5) Asking the meeting to settle into silent worship as needed;
 - 6) Interrupting those people who burden the meeting by repeating what has already been said, or who speak too long, or who use tone and language that is hurtful.

- c) The Clerk helps to bring out the full range of views on a particular matter while being sensitive to time and the fullness of discussion.
 - d) The Clerk and the Recording Clerk test the sense of the Meeting by suggesting wording of a minute. The Clerk articulates a sense of the meeting, or more than one, as a way of helping the meeting to move forward, answering the question, “How are we led?” Sometimes that sense of the meeting simply records the struggle regarding a topic and the fact that no specific action was taken.
 - e) In case further action is required, the Clerk identifies who or what committee can further season a matter and when it’s discussion will be continued.
 - f) The Clerk is normally concerned with process rather than outcome of the discussion. In those rare instances when the clerk is led to speak out of concern for an outcome, someone else will be appointed to clerk the discussion and the Clerk will become a participant for the duration of the discussion.
2. The Clerk represents Asheville Friends Meeting at public gatherings of faith communities or appoints someone to do so. The Clerk speaks for the meeting as minuted action permits.
 3. The Clerk may attend the meetings of all committees of the meeting. The Clerk is an ex-officio member of Ministry and Counsel and of the Board of Directors of Asheville Friends Meeting.
 4. The Clerk works to be supportive of those in positions of responsibility and committees carrying out their tasks.
 5. The Clerk writes minutes for traveling and sojourning Friends as well as letters of transfer of membership as requested.
 6. Following the meeting for business, the Clerk:
 - a) works with the Recording Clerk to make sure that the minutes are accurate.
 - b) does the required follow-up.
 7. The Clerk makes sure that mail is opened and advanced to the appropriate person or committee.

When spiritual guidance is sought, there are many in the meeting who can provide that, but frequently, Friends request a clearness committee through the Ministry and Counsel Committee. Therapy is not provided through the meeting, but instead is satisfied by professional therapists in the community.

Minute # 5 Friends approved this document with suggested changes and will allow formatting adjustments to be made to make the document more readable.

- Guidelines for Living in Community--Scotty Utz

Ministry and Counsel has been developing a set of guidelines to help us as a meeting agree upon how we will participate and interact in Meeting. This is only a draft and is intended to be a starting point and a place to begin dialogue about this important issue. Many people have been hurt by well-meaning, but insensitive communication in Meeting for Worship, Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business, and other more casual interactions at Meeting. Our goal is to come up with guidelines we can all agree upon, so that we can create a space where difficult issues can be explored in a safe, compassionate environment. It was clarified that this is NOT a document for visitors, but is an internal document meant for the meeting manual.

Guidelines for Being in Community
Asheville Friends Meeting
(DRAFT)

At Asheville Friends Meeting, we strive to create a space where people can come together to worship, work, and have fellowship in a spiritual community. Our practices are grounded in traditions begun centuries ago, yet are periodically renewed as way opens. That which has not changed is our goal for a deep communion with Spirit as we worship and work together. We recognize that everyone has that of God in them and we welcome all who wish to worship with us in a spirit of love.

Friends value individual experience of the Divine and therefore we all come to our understanding of the Divine in a slightly different way. We value this diversity and it continuously brings us new perspectives and revelations.

Occasionally, these differences can create tension among us. In recognition of this, we would like to put forth a set of guidelines to help us express ourselves and interact in a respectful way and in a spirit of love. We hope these practices will help our ministry and enlarge the spirit of worship in Meeting whenever we gather as Friends:

During Meeting for Worship

- We speak only once in any given meeting for worship.
- “Speak and release” After we have spoken our truth, we release the message to the workings of Spirit without further justification or debate.
- We listen to all other messages in silence while staying attentive to the leading of Spirit, particularly when we think the messages are wrong.
 - One strategy for this internal work is staying curious to what is motivating others and thinking about what is driving our own reactions.
- We speak from a personal perspective and resist speaking directly to another person in meeting for worship and meeting for worship with attention to business.

In All of Our Interactions

- We use language that is appropriate for everyone in the building, including our youngest members and attenders.
- Physical and/or verbal attempts to do violence or threaten to do acts of violence violate the spirit of our gatherings and are not acceptable.

Ministry and Counsel would like to know about situations in which individuals are not living into these Friendly practices so that Ministry and Counsel

can address those situations. Be assured that members of Ministry and Counsel will always speak to people in confidence.

When An Individual or Situation Becomes Disruptive (in Meeting for Worship or Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business)

If an individual or situation becomes disruptive, Ministry and Counsel will stand in silence as a reminder to return to these practices if they are not being followed. Others will be encouraged to stand as well. If standing in silent unison does not aid our spirit of worship, worship will close and we will quietly walk out of the meeting room. Others will be encouraged to do so as well and not engage with the disruptive person. Once the room has emptied, the disruptive person will hopefully have a chance to regain composure. Two or three designated people will remain in the room to hold the disruptive person in the Light.

There was a good deal of thoughtful discussion about the Guidelines and it was decided that Ministry and Counsel will take this important feedback and work on another draft to be presented in a few months. A few Friends agreed to help rewrite the last two sections of the document. Written comments sent to the Clerk of Ministry and Counsel will be taken into consideration as the next draft is created.

Several Friends expressed a desire to season, think about the document, and listen to each other's feelings about the issues involved. One Friend suggested that we hold a threshing session using some thoughtful queries to help us think through these important issues, especially the ones brought forward in the last two sections.

Following are some of the thoughts that were expressed by individuals in the discussion. (Sorry, we couldn't get all of them.) They were opinions expressed by individuals and were not approved by meeting:

- We need to express what communicating with integrity looks like.

- We need to be careful of micro-aggressions towards others.
- Physical and verbal violence need to be separated. Verbal violence includes bullying, intimidation, and verbal abuse. We need to include what hurts our hearts.
- We need to be explicit in the document that we expect people to disagree and to be in conflict.
- Are we writing this out of love or guilt?
- We need to deeply know at a personal level, what it feels like to be the “disruptive person.”
- Perhaps we should avoid the term “disruptive person.” Does “troubled person” make more sense?
- It is unclear what is meant by “disruptive.”
- We need two sections: When An Individual or Situation Becomes Disruptive in Meeting for Worship and When An Individual or Situation Becomes Disruptive in Other Settings of the Meeting.
- We need to listen to the person who is troubled.
- When meeting has “failed,” we would stand to leave the room, but a small group would stay to listen so the person can be heard.
- The movie, “Listen” was offered up as a way for people to understand what it may feel like to be the disruptive person in this situation.
- There needs to be follow-up with the person who was disruptive. We need to listen and care for that person.

We closed with a moment of silence to meet again as ways opens in third month, 2019.