

FMW Newsletter, April 2015

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Friends Meeting of Washington

Monthly Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business

March 2015

Queries

Are love and harmony within the Meeting community fostered by a spirit of open sharing? Do you endeavor to widen your circle of friendships within the Meeting, seeking to know persons of all ages and at all stages of the spiritual journey? Does the Meeting provide for the spiritual refreshment of all members and attenders? Do Friends provide spiritual and practical care for the elderly, the lonely, and others with special needs?

Advices

While Quakers believe that a seed of God is in every human being, it is sometimes easier to believe this of persons at a distance than it is of those near at hand. This is particularly true when the need arises to address contentious issues. A meeting community should always seek to consider openly matters at issue, seeking a loving resolution of conflict, rather than to preserve a semblance of community by ignoring issues. Even when resolution is not immediate, the Meeting should make room for different expressions of continuing revelation while persisting in earnest search for unity.

At the same time, it is well for Meetings consciously to cultivate fellowship and unity. The goal, in George Fox's words, is to "know one another in that which is eternal, which was before the world was." Religious education programs for Friends of all ages are a primary bond. In the common experience of worship we draw together in a most essential way. The discussion of matters of concern, as well as fellowship based on recreation, intellectual pursuits, music and other aesthetic interests, can help unify the Meeting community. Working together also builds bonds of trust, understanding, and communication. In all things the principle of simplicity suggests that leisure activities, working, and faith be compatible and complementary.

- The Meeting as Caring Community, Baltimore Yearly Meeting

Voices

The life of a religious society consists in something more than the body of principles it professes and the outer garments of organization which it wears. These things have their own importance: they embody the society to the world, and protect it from the chance and change of circumstances; but the springs of life lie deeper, and often escape recognition. They are to be found in the vital union of the members of the society with God and with one another, a union which allows the free flowing through the society of a spiritual life which is its strength. - William Charles Braithwaite, 1905

Dear Friends:

The past several years have been difficult ones for our community. In our Meetings for Business in Worship, we have struggled with conflicts between concerns for safety and conscience, financial stresses, staffing for our Meeting, and balancing the views of society with our own leadings. Deep wounds have been caused to members of our community, and some long-time members have left.

In recent years some members of our community have articulated a sense that our worship during business meetings has not been deep enough to sustain us, and that our deliberations and decisions are often not coming from a Spirit-led place. Underlying these worries and sense of disconnectedness has been an undercurrent of concern, suspicion, and even resentment that we are not all unified by a common assumption of the central importance of the Divine, and its place at the center of our Meeting and our decision-making. Certainly, Friends before us have known difficult times and have met them in the strength of a gathered community.

...

May we continue to seek our ground of unity through our Quaker traditions, world spiritual traditions, and new revelations on the nature of the universe? With humility and dedication, perhaps we will find new words and images, or reclaim old images and words, that awaken our hearts to greater connection with each other and Spirit.

- An Epistle to Friends Meeting at Cambridge from the Meeting on Ministry and Counsel, May 16, 2010

2015/3-1 Welcome of Visitors

Meeting for Business opened at 12:19 pm with 21 present. Friends welcomed Nicole Else-Quest as a first-time attender to Meeting for Business.

2015/3-2 Clerk's Report

The clerks have noticed in several committees that there seems to be emotional and difficult disagreement on a number of topics. We hold that our relationships with each other are more important than our positions on these issues.

Major items

2015/3-3 Ministry and Worship

Blair Forlaw, clerk of Ministry and Worship, presented the first draft of the Spiritual State of the Meeting report. The committee felt this year was a good year to try a new and refreshed process to seek clearness on the spiritual state of the meeting, including a long meeting during the ice storm last week. We had 76 responders to the on-line survey and seven focus groups: one for each of the three meetings for worship, committee of clerks, young adult friends and two groups with first day school. Some themes which arose were:

Many have a spouse or partner or a child who is not a Friend.

Friends travel a great deal, including worshiping with other Friends Meetings and other religious group.

Friends continue be divided about the nature of Friends' beliefs including whether we emphasize Christianity more or less.

Friends should do more welcoming of newcomers, enhancing relationships among Friends, and improving meeting for worship and improving simplicity.

There are tensions within the community for which we must find a sense of balance. It is possible to hold intentionally in creative tension the many differences including small groups versus large communities; long term members and newer members; quiet and vibrant speech; safe meetings and welcoming to all; laboring over difficult issues and letting go of them.

We always must be comfortable with uncertainty.

Friends are invited to take this report and labor over it and provide comments to Ministry and Worship prior to their meeting on April 4th.

Ministry and Worship also kept a list of action items that arose during the focus groups and will provide that for Friends to begin to use at a later date.

The committee will bring a final report to Meeting for Business in April.

One Friend expressed how impressed she was with the method and report. It was noted that the comment at the end about “the Meeting is okay” was made by a 6 year old Friend. One Friend wondered if he could have a percentage on the agreement of Friends Values as referred to about partners and children who are close to Friends values. How can we say that when we don’t have agreement as to what they are? A member of the committee noted that each person taking the survey identified the answers that were meaningful to them. The Clerk noted that trying to give a brief summary to a visitor this morning found that she struggled because we have no credo. Another Friend reminded us that we must let our lives speak. We should especially look to our children. The Committee nevertheless will provide the statistics.

The report will be laid over for one month with thanks to the committee for its work so far.

2015/3-4 Marriage & Family

Jane Edgerton, clerk of Marriage & Family Committee, brought forward the second presentation of the proposed marriage of Michael Andrew Hubbard and Stephen Ryan Ashworth.

The taking the marriage under the care of the Meeting was **APPROVED**. The oversight committee for the wedding on April 25, 2015 will be Jane Edgerton, clerk, Ann Herzog, Hayden Wetzel and Kimberly Myer.

A Friend rose to express her appreciation of a message at meeting for worship earlier about marriages being under the care of the meeting. The Friend was reminded of a message of a while back about personal aid committee describing it as not being care that is thrust upon you but that you ask for. Marriage under the care should be that way as well—we should encourage couples to come to the marriage and family relations committee to ask for help. The committee is currently making it a point to contact people married under our care to see if they need help in any way. This includes new parents.

2015/3-5 Worship sharing on proposed Friends Meeting of Washington Guidelines for Safety and the Welcoming of Friends with a History of Sexually Abusing Children.

The Meeting continued its consideration of the underlying issues of the Guidelines for Safety and the Welcoming of Friends with a History of Sexually Abusing Children a copy of which is attached. The Meeting participated in thirty minutes of worship sharing in February and will continue with thirty minutes of worship sharing during the March and April Meetings for Business to allow for careful discernment.

Friends were reminded that we are seeking our Guide—God’s will—through our worship not debating. Friends are asked to focus on principles rather than editing. Friends were reminded to rise and speak only after you have been acknowledged by the clerk and to speak only once over the three months process. When everyone who wants to has spoken, then people may speak a second time to bring additional Light to the process.

There are many conversations going on in committees and small groups. In addition, a trial run of the guidelines is being tested using a fictional character who is a sex offender. An individual has been alerted to

the individual and that person is going to read the guidelines and try to follow them. The process as it unfolds will be monitored—more or less a role play over time.

A Friend noted she has participated and read the draft and talked to people and clearly people are having strong differences. But she cannot understand what the differences of opinion are about and would like to know.

A Friend read names of approximately a dozen Friends and attenders who reached out and said that they would not be coming back to meeting until they feel that their children are safe. She said that it feels like the “other side” have won . . . these people are gone. The people who remain feel as though that they have learned a lot. Reaching out across the generations, the children coming in at the end of meeting and being welcomed and having a child coordinator have all been wonderful changes. Pedophilia is a life-long addiction and we need to support the addicted and reassure parents at the same time. Some say the answer is that the parents will watch their children but parents will fail and need back up. She is sharing all this not because she has a clear answer but that she believes sharing is part of the process of coming to clearness.

A Friend appreciated the work involved so far and that will continue. He observed that he was an adult and has no children and lives in a world of adults. When he comes to Meeting he sees lots of children but he has no connection to them. This guideline says we are all responsible for the children of the community. “No child will be alone without their parent when they are on meeting property.” He explained, “When I see a child with an adult I am oblivious and have no sense of anything being wrong or of what is my responsibility.” He wants to know what his responsibility is.

A Friend said she waited to speak because she is single and never had children and rarely has worked with children. There may be more resources if there was an introduction and training session for nonparents about “This is a child” and about ages and age groups and appropriate activities at different ages. This may well help with encouraging our teens to be involved. This could enrich the life of the Meeting.

A Friend noted she and her children were part of the community and not little animals or aliens. She feels the Meeting is safer because of the policy. She noted that now her children are never alone with one adult except their parent. When child care for meeting for business appeared to have fallen through they found two people—not just one—to take care of it and that is important.

A Friend expressed her concern about the discernment committee and support committee and how originally she was thinking about the duality of the committees. The discernment committee could be too legalistic and the support committee could be too sympathetic. But she came to the realization that she should trust the committees to do their job and the discernment committee could be loving and the support committee could be honest. We need to have only one committee and trust that the committees will do their jobs realizing that they are dealing with a human lovingly and discriminatingly. But she noted that she may yet change her mind on this.

A Friend noted that she has attended Baltimore Yearly Meeting for many years and has gotten to know many persons over the years and watched them grow. She learned a lot about why people go to prison over this issue

at worship sharing with a person who had experience at Frederick Meeting with sexual predators. At the worship sharing it was noted that when the predator was rebuffed they began “church shopping” to find a place to be predatory. We must deal with this as the addition that it is. She encouraged everyone to attend interim yearly meeting as well which will be at Patapsco March 25th. The answers are closer than we think.

A Friend noted that he had heard many messages from the heart. He speaks as a parent. He notes that child safety goes way beyond child predators. There were issues at camp and Young Friends and children climbing on the fences here. He agrees that training would be helpful on the most basic information. But there needs to be other kinds of training. He recalled how hurt his son was when an older Friend yelled at him and his son never forgot it—even though that friend helped his son later with discerning his own sexuality. We need to get to know our kids, we need to get to know each other, we need all to be responsible and to avoid being too bogged down in the legislative aspect.

A Friend speaking as a parent, a member of the meeting and who has served on many committees noted how grateful she is for the meeting and its support of her and her spiritual and family and life. She wants us to trust our committees. She finds the language in the guidelines about how different committees and others will come together when there is need insures a wonderfully inclusive and diverse group of individuals. Our Nominating Committee can identify a strong committee by selecting from this diverse group. She felt angry last meeting when a Friend spoke about the possibility of exclusion from an extreme point. She thought he was ignoring the issue of safety. She came to realize that he was coming from a place of extreme exclusion himself. Nevertheless she sees that the only place of extreme exclusion is if someone refused the recommendation of not leaving a child with only one adult—that would be such a fundamental disconnect that that person would be excluded. She asked to be held in the Light as she struggles with her frustration and inability to rise above some of her anger.

Other business

2015/3-6 Personal Aid Committee Annual Report

Emilie Schmeidler, Clerk of Personal Aid Committee, gave its annual report, a copy of which is attached. She noted that Alex Matthews should be listed on the report. They deal with people that are brought to their attention. Many needs are short-term needs. Friends should let them know that they might be available to be called to help. Special thanks for Bob Meehan’s treasure chest bread fundraising for personal aid.

A Friend noted that there were only four members of the committee—a small committee for a huge job. She encouraged Friends to volunteer information and to make suggestions of how to network better to assure that the whole meeting is being served. In particular she encourages Friends to visit others of the community. We need to redistribute care for each other to the entire community.

A Friend recalled that when there were Friends who needed attention we used to have “piano letters.” He committed to bringing the cards but will ask other to help decide to whom to send them.

Friends **ACCEPTED** the report with gratitude.

Emilie Schmeidler presented a minute of appreciation to Jim Steen for his decade of work with the committee.

The Personal Aid Committee thanks Jim Steen for his decade as a member and co-clerk of the committee. We particularly value his way of addressing complex and difficult situations with sensitivity and compassion.

Friends **APPROVED** the minute with thanks.

2015/3-7 Friends **APPROVED** the minutes.

2015/3-8 The Meeting closed at 2:20 pm with approximately 23 members in attendance to reconvene as way opens on 12th day Fourth Month 2015.

ATTACHMENTS

Friends Meeting of Washington Guidelines for Safety and the Welcoming of Friends with a History of Sexually Abusing Children

Background

Quakers experience and are therefore convinced that there is that of God, or something of the Divine Spirit or Light, in everyone. This belief is manifested in the testimonies of Integrity, Equality, Community, Simplicity, and Peace, which generally lead us to welcome Friends and strangers to our Meeting community and worship without further inquiry. In the case of persons who may be perceived to pose a threat to the community, we need to find ways to know them better and understand their situations well enough to manage both possible dangers and our own fears and concerns.

We have developed the following guidelines for including individual worshippers who may have committed child sexual abuse. The guidelines grow out of established Quaker structures and practices for corporate oversight and discernment, such as clearness committees, that can be adapted to maintain the security of our children and honor our values as a Society of Friends community. They complement the Child Safety Policy adopted by the Meeting at our Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business in October 2013.

Guidelines

Sexual offenders fall along a broad spectrum ranging from those who have been convicted and ultimately released to the community to those who have never been identified or prosecuted. These guidelines are intended to address all cases as they become known to us. Individuals adjudicated to have committed sexual

abuse and others who may self-identify or become known to us through other means are expected to meet with the Safety and Welcoming Discernment Committee (“SWDC”). The SWDC will be a special committee of 4-6 individuals chosen by the Nominating Committee and composed of Members, Sojourners, Quakers and Attenders of the Meeting who represent but may not be limited to, the Child Safety, Religious Education, and Healing & Reconciliation Committees. Nominating will select individuals with an eye toward the Meeting’s dual concerns for safety and welcoming.

Upon being contacted by or learning of the presence in our community of an individual with a history of sexually abusing children, the SWDC will notify the Clerk and Alternate Clerk of the Meeting of the contact and will meet with the individual to explore his or her needs and expectations. Members of the SWDC agree to honor and protect the individual’s privacy within the confines of the law. The committee is responsible for getting to know the individual’s history and character well enough to evaluate concerns raised by proposed participation in the FMW community, form a plan for managing those concerns, and assist in putting that plan into effect. It will inquire into details of the individual’s history of child sexual abuse, views regarding that history, treatment experience, legal status, reasons for wishing to join our community, and aspirations for his or her role and level of participation in FMW.

Together, the SWDC and the individual will decide on the terms of that person’s participation in FMW activities. Those terms may range from total exclusion from the community to unrestricted inclusion under the terms of the current Child Safety Policy, although most such individuals will be expected to agree to avoid direct interaction with children at the Meeting and refrain from volunteering for or participating in First Day School activities. The process and the agreement will be tailored to the individual and may include specific procedures (e.g., having an escort at meeting events at which children are expected to be present). The procedures and limits may be adjusted or terminated with the mutual agreement of the SWDC and the individual. In exigent circumstance, or if the committee is unable to reach agreement with the individual concerning procedures and limits, or the individual cannot or will not cooperate, the SWDC may, in consultation with the Clerk, decide to take steps outside of this process to protect the community. This may include the committee communicating restrictions on the individual’s participation in Meeting activities.

If the parties agree that such support is needed or desired, the SWDC will appoint a support group to work with the individual for as long as he/she and the support group consider necessary. The support group will include responsible members of the community who agree to safeguard the privacy of the supported individual and to continue in service with that person. The support group will provide both practical and spiritual assistance to the individual, especially in cases of persons who have been in prison and are attempting to rejoin the larger community. If desired by the supported individual or recommended by the SWDC to protect the children of the Meeting and as protection from unwarranted accusation, members of the support group will escort the supported individual at Meeting events in which children are expected to be present. Ultimate authority resides with the SWDC to act on behalf of the meeting with regard to procedures and limits to protect the community. All decisions of the SWDC will be recorded in minutes and reported to the Trustees of Friends Meeting of Washington.

Community Responsibilities

As with other aspects of our Meeting, members and attenders share responsibility for ensuring the safety of our children and welcoming newcomers to our community. Each of us is responsible for helping to ensure that ***no child will be alone with an adult who is not their parent while he or she is on Meeting property or engaged in a Meeting activity***, the guiding principle of the Child Safety Policy. Any person who becomes aware of a problem or has reason to suspect a problem that may endanger a child should share that concern with the Clerk or Alternate Clerk of the Meeting or the Clerk of the Child Safety Committee.

Parents are asked to talk with their children about child sexual abuse, safety and safe conduct at Meeting activities. The Child Safety Committee will provide assistance to any parents who seek support on how to speak with their children about this issue. Affirming our belief in the Light in each individual, the community expects individuals who have feelings of sexual attraction to children to reach out to a member of the SWDC. Each of us is called upon to work in concert to make our community the joyous, safe and welcoming haven we want it to be.

Personal Aid Committee's Annual Report for 2014

We must be concerned about the welfare of every member of the Meeting community. While Friends need to guard against prying or invasion of privacy, it is nevertheless essential that Meetings be aware of the spiritual and material needs of members of the community and express caring concern in appropriate ways.
– Faith and Practice, BYM

Current Committee Members: Pam Callard, Patty Murphy, Malachy Kilbride, Alex Matthews, and Emilie Schmeidler (Clerk).

The Personal Aid Committee meets monthly to review new or ongoing needs of FMW community members who have sought the Committee's help or been referred by others, plan special assistance and public education projects, and address other concerns brought to our attention. Its deliberations are confidential, and we strive to maintain the privacy of Friends while responding to their needs.

Personal Aid attempts to meet its responsibility for "caring concern" by providing practical assistance designed primarily to meet short-term needs of members and attenders, e.g. transportation, shopping assistance, compassionate support, and limited financial assistance. In the process, we listen, identify expert resources, visit, make telephone calls, track down absent friends and family, and serve on support groups.

Beyond providing assistance to individuals, the Committee carried out a number of Meeting-wide activities this past year:

- **First Aid Workshop** - In March, the Committee held a full day workshop for some 17 individuals. The workshop included training on First Aid, Automatic External Defibrillation (AED), and Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR). With financial assistance from the DC Government a certified contractor was employed to provide free training to the workshop registrants. The training was considered a success by all who attended. The Committee is considering offering the workshop again.

- **Emergency Information** – Each year we ask the FMW community to fill out a confidential emergency form providing contact information in the case of an incapacitating event or death. This year we again are asking members to fill out or update this form. Copies are in the information rack in the Meeting House entrance way. It also is available on the FMW website under "Personal Aid Committee/Personal Aid". All submitted forms are kept in a confidential file under the supervision of the Administrative Clerk.

- **FMW Scholarships and BYM Certificates** - Several years ago the Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business approved a Finance and Stewardship Committee's proposal to establish a small scholarship fund to help members and attenders participate in educational activities that enrich the spiritual life of individuals and contribute to the Meeting's corporate life. The Meeting for Business assigned responsibility to the Personal Aid Committee. This year for the first time the Committee formally solicited applications from the Meeting and gave funding priority to young adult friends who applied. Scholarships were awarded in the spring to two young adult friends, one to help finance attendance at the BYM Yearly Session and Friends General Conference and the other to help with attendance at a family care giving workshop. Three scholarships also were awarded to help adult friends attend the BYM Yearly Session, the Friends General Conference, and the BYM Spiritual Formation Retreat.

Personal Aid also administers BYM's two free day certificates to encourage first-time attenders to go to Yearly Session. Two certificates were issued last year.

During 2014, the Committee was blessed with a core of experienced members including four current members who are listed above. Three members rotated off the Committee at the end of the year - Montague Kern Co-Clerk, Rachel Kidanne, and me, and Adam Hixson moved to California. We also were fortunate to have the invaluable informal assistance of past members, Ylene Larsen, Marcia Reecer, Merry Pearlstein, and Janet Dinsmore. Debby Churchman, Administrative Clerk, helped us in a multitude of ways, especially in identifying and reaching out to FMW persons in need.

For years the sales of Bob Meehan's Treasure Bread has provided the funds for the Personal Aid budget. This resource has enabled assistance to individuals in critical need of emergency funds and help with travel to Quaker gatherings and workshops. It also has permitted the filling of Meeting wide needs such as the purchase of the AED equipment in the Assembly Room. The Committee is again tremendously grateful to Bob for his longstanding and significant contributions to the welfare of our community!

At the moment, the personal assistance that can be rendered by the Committee is somewhat limited by a membership shortage. If anyone is interested in possibly joining Personal Aid, please get in touch with any of the current members listed above.

We also depend heavily on non-Committee members who help us respond to individuals in need. We are looking for volunteers to help with occasional services, e.g. transporting members to Meeting and medical appointment, phoning or visiting an isolated Friend, and making and delivering meals. Please let the Committee know if you could provide this type of assistance. A volunteer form is available on the FMW website under "Personal Aid Committee/Personal Aid" that describes in greater detail possible volunteer services.

February, 2015

Friends Meeting of Washington

Report on the Spiritual State of the Meeting

DRAFT Presented to Meeting for Business, March 8, 2015

The Spiritual State of the Meeting report is Ministry and Worship's annual effort to feel the pulse of the Meeting. In 2015, we used a refined version of the familiar short survey that eliminated open-ended questions, provided more detailed demographic information about those responding, and could be answered in ten minutes. Friends must have liked it because participation was considerably higher than in the last two years. In addition, a series of six focus groups encouraged Friends to look together at important questions regarding our spiritual health and well-being and speak to them personally and directly.

Here are a few findings from the survey. They show us what we look like from some slightly unfamiliar angles, and raise some important questions:

- Two-thirds of us have partners and children who are "close to Quaker values but are not Quakers." Is this challenging us to reach out and draw more family members into the FMW community? Are there ways to do this without proselytizing?
- Friends are out and about. In 2014, more than half of us attended a Friends Meeting other than FMW, and almost two-thirds worshiped with a different religious group. We might see this as an opportunity to be examples in the world of who Quakers are and what they do and an opportunity to bring new ideas and perspectives from other religious groups to our Meeting.
- Friends are divided about the nature of Quaker beliefs and the emphasis that God and the Bible should have in our worship. 21 percent of those who took the survey said we should put more emphasis on God, but 11 percent said we should put less. 19 percent said we should emphasize Christianity and the Bible more, but 23 percent said less. Can we create and maintain a vibrant community that balances differing views?
- Four items stood out on the list of things that Friends think deserve more attention from the Meeting: (1) welcoming newcomers, (2) enhancing relationships among Friends, (3) improving the quality of worship, and (4) Simplicity (this ranks above Social Justice, Global Issues, and God as a topic we should do more about). While the first three challenges appeared on previous surveys, the fourth was something of a surprise. What does "simplicity" mean in the context of the world we live in today, and how can we do more about it?

In addition to these perspectives on who we are and what we consider important, the survey and focus groups revealed a number of polarities or areas of tension, some familiar and some less so. These pose challenges not to be answered one way or the other, but for which the Meeting must strive to find balance, in the context of continuing revelation and loving awareness. There are tensions, for example, between:

- Small Groups and the Larger Community. At the moment, FMW rejoices in numerous small groups that allow Friends to pursue their varied spiritual interests. Many consider them a sign of the Meeting's spiritual vitality. Others feel concern that the number and success of these groups could fragment the Meeting and cause us to lose our sense of ourselves as a community. Some even see our worship groups as part of this problem. What if members of a worship group identify primarily with the group rather than with the Meeting community? Is the fact that we do not worship together a problem or is it part of our strength? Do worship groups encourage cliquishness or diversity?
- Old and New. Otherwise known as the Old Guard and the Young Friends, this is the predictable tension between longtime Friends who may see themselves as the people who have "carried" the Meeting and young Friends who are the bringers of new energy and new ideas. The Old Guard (i.e., those who have worshiped here for over 10 years) wonder why the young'uns don't hurry to join committees and pick up "their share" of the work. In fact, the Young Adult Friends (YAFs), the majority of whom are new to Quakerism, may be a little uncertain of how things work and how they can fit in. With the Meeting's help, they'll find their footing in Quakerism – and spread their wings.
- Quiet and Jarring. Friends of all ages speak very movingly of what the silence means to them. They lament about having it broken by messages that come from "the head and not the heart," by "prepared statements" and "even harsh words." On the other hand, a Friend reminds us that spirit-led messages come in many different forms, not all of them attractive. He notes that one of the few messages last year that was important to him could have been called "extremely disruptive." He says we need to listen and discern.
- Difficult People and Safe Meetings. This is an acute form of the previous and a perennial question. How can our Meeting be open to and care for difficult and troubled people at the same time as we try to create a safe place where no one feels threatened or offended by anything that is said? Can efforts like those carried on by Healing and Reconciliation be helpful in reconciling the tension between "open" and "safe"? What responsibility do individual Friends have here?

· **Laboring and Letting Go.** One of the most remarkable differences between focus group discussions with Young Friends and Young Adult Friends and our older participants (who made up more than half the survey respondents) was the emphasis that younger Friends placed on the importance of letting go. YAFs said: “We can share each other’s burdens/crosses, but perhaps we have done as much as we reasonably can in some cases.... We should rely more on God and less on ourselves; we need to remind ourselves often.” Is it possible that we sometimes labor with difficult issues too long? After we have done our best, is it then time to let go and let God?

Friends in the focus groups were aware of how very hard it can be to deal with tensions in the Meeting, but they believed that, when we are faithful to our testimonies and leadings, we can do it. You have to learn, one said, “to be comfortable in uncertainty. This is difficult for our community.” A young Friend observed that we need to seek patience and that of God “in ourselves and others when we disagree.” Another added that we should be “gentler with others in conflict.” Finally, a member of the group that has been working with conflicts connected with the Child Safety and Welcoming policy said that all those involved could see Spirit working in the process.

Ministry and Worship believes that these voices sum up the Meeting’s challenges and its strengths and tell us much of what we need to know about its state of health. But the last word surely belongs to our youngest speaker, a First Day School student. When asked what he would like to tell us for the report, he said “the Meeting’s okay.” We hope you all agree.

Respectfully submitted by the Committee on Ministry and Worship: Bertie Rossert, Debby Churchman, Gene Throwe, Greg Robb, Hayden Wetzell, Marcia Reecer, Marsha Holliday, Michael Huffington, Blair Forlaw (clerk).

Addendum: Looking to our Future

Words We Most Often Heard in Focus Groups with Teens and Young Adult Friends



Wednesday, April 1:The **Grate Patrol** will prepare sandwiches and soup to take out people starting at 5:30. For more information, contact Steve Brooks at sbrooks@uab.edu



Saturday, April 4:Come to **SOME** and help make breakfast for our vulnerable neighbors. For more info, contact Betsy at betsy.bramon@gmail.com

Sunday, April 5:Come **sing** at 10:00 a.m. in the Meeting Room. Sure and shy voices welcome. This is a lovely way to prepare for Meeting for Worship.

April 10-12:BYM Men's Retreat, Catocin Quaker Camp, Thurmont, MD Since 2002, men from Baltimore Monthly Meeting, Stony Run have gathered early in the spring to build connections among Friends at one of BYM's magnificent camps. In recent years, male Friends from other Meetings have participated in the weekend. This year, all men Friends in BYM are invited to register and gather at Catocin for dinner sixth day through lunch first day - or any portion thereof. The retreat is very loosely programmed and includes time to relax, work cooperatively, hike (or nap), talk, tell stories, play, and have fun. For more information, including the registration form, contact Blaine Keener. (443-414-9103 or blkomg@hotmail.com)



Saturday, April 11:**Come Sing with Friends!** Herndon Friends Meeting Join Friends for a day of singing, beginning at 10 am. We will be having a POTLUCK lunch around 12:30. Ruth Fitz will be leading us in her Soulful Singing, with harmonies, followed by your choices from the hymnal & Rise Up Singing (please bring it if you have it!) We will also be chanting, so please come & share your Spirit with us! Come for all or any part of the day! Childcare will be available—though singing will be kid-friendly (please request by 4/4/15) Both shy and sure singers are welcome! This gathering is not about bringing strong singers together—it's about joining our voices together in Spirit! Please contact Stacey LaRoy (staceybear@alaroy.com or 703-599-9390) if you have any questions.

Sunday, April 12:The group that's reading **Waking Up White** will consider the fourth chapter, and the Adult Study group will continue its reflection on Nantucket Quakers

April 17-20:**Ecumenical Advocacy Days on Ending Mass Incarceration** This is an annual

conference held in Crystal City where Christians (and other religions) gather to focus on a particular issue from the lens of social justice and peace. This year the theme is "Breaking the Chains: Mass Incarceration and Systems of Exploitation." "Our goal, through worship, theological reflection and opportunities for learning and witness, is to strengthen our Christian voice and to mobilize for advocacy on a wide variety of U.S. domestic and international policy issues." Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) and the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) are partners in EAD and have a presence at the conference. For details, see <http://advocacydays.org/2015-breaking-the-chains/> One day registration costs \$110; the registration fee for the whole event is \$215. If you have questions, please contact Melaura Homan-Smith (melaura.hs@gmail.com)

Saturday, April 18:**Friends Wilderness Center: Storytelling** On Saturday, April 18, from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., Friends Wilderness Center will host a storytelling event in the Niles Cabin. Workshop leader Lisa Libowitz is a professional storyteller and adjunct professor in the Department of Electronic Media and Film at Towson University in Baltimore. Lunch will be provided (\$10 and reservation required) or you may bring your own. This will be limited to 12 people because of space limitations, so please register early. FWC is just 1.5 hours from D.C. on a 1,400-acre tract of land which backs up to the Appalachian Trail in West Virginia. Going there provides a wonderful opportunity for hiking, camping, and communing with nature, in addition to special programs such as this one. If you need directions or have questions, please contact Sheila Bach (snbach@earthlink.net, 304-728-4820). The website is www.friendswilderness.org

Sunday, April 19:

First Day School training Want to learn how to teach First Day School (or up your game in doing so)? Come to a fast, fun workshop at noon. For more information, contact Virginia Avanesyan, fmwyouthprogram@gmail.com

Compassionate Life– The group reading Karen Armstrong’s 12 Steps to a Compassionate Life will convene. All are welcome. For more information, contact Joe Izzo at jizzo4102@gmail.com

Friendly Bible Study is reading the Gospel of Mark. All are welcome. For more information, contact David Etheridge at david.etheridge@verizon.net

Perennial Plant Sale At Bethesda Friends Meeting on Sunday, April 19 from 10:30 to 10:50 a.m. and noon to 1:15 p.m. Proceeds benefit Ramallah Friends School scholarships. Questions? Contact Liz Hofmeister (hofmeister@earthlink.net, 301-229-6341).

April 24-26: Young Friends Conference, Location TBD. Contact Alison Duncan youthprograms@bym-rsf.org, 301-774-7663

Saturday, April 25:

Friendly Adult Presence Training. There will be a training to become a Friendly Adult Presence at BYM Youth Programs events at Friends Meeting of Washington (Decatur Room) on April 25th from 10am to 4pm. Email Alison Duncan (youthprograms@bym-rsf.org) to register and receive advance materials. There is no fee to attend, but please bring a bag lunch.

A Meeting for Worship with a Concern for the Marriage of Michael Andrew Hubbard and Stephen Ryan Ashworth will be held in the Meeting Room at 1:00 pm. All are welcome.



Sunday, April 26:

Have you ever wondered why the Society of Friends is not growing? Our testimonies for peace, justice, equality, and good stewardship of our earth and its resources are of vital importance for the future of our world, so why are more people not uniting with us in support of these things? What can we as Friends do to make ourselves and our meetings more visible to our communities? **How can we make our Meetings more friendly and welcoming to visitors?** How do we deepen the spiritual life and identity we share as faith communities? The **Gathering of Friends** in the Blue Ridge this year will explore some of these issues. Jeanne-Marie Barch, clerk of the Ministry and Nurture Committee of Friends General Conference, will be facilitating our discussion using some of the ideas and information included in the Quaker Quest program sponsored by Friends General Conference. Meetings all across the country have used Quaker Quest to raise

awareness of Friends and their testimonies in their communities. Our Friends at Blacksburg Friends Meeting will be hosting the gathering again this year and have invited us to join them for Meeting for Worship at ten o'clock followed by a pot luck lunch. Jeanne-Marie will be sharing with us directly after lunch. In addition to the adult program, there will be activities for Young Friends and children as well. We hope you will plan to be with us for a day of worship, food, fellowship, and nurture. For more information, contact Tony Lowe at preacherboy71@hotmail.com

Ministry and Worship invites you join us for the next session of **Spiritual Journeys**. It will be held at 9:15 in the Parlor. Two members of the FMW community will describe the spiritual paths they have followed. As is the custom, one will be a Friend who is relatively new to the meeting, the other, one who has been worshipping at FMW for a number of years.

The **Fibre Party** will be held at noon in the North Room. All knitters, crocheters, quilters, and other fabric and yarn art folks are welcome.

Looking Forward:

William Penn House Summer Opportunities From June 28 to July 5, "Community Gardens/Community Health" will be taking place in DC. This workcamp will be an exploration of the community around the Capitol at the peak of July 4 celebrations. Connecting myth with reality, we will be engaging in a range of activities that expose participants to the vibrant yet underserved and often-invisible parts of DC, while also partaking in celebrations and festivities. Many of the projects will have a focus on community gardens and clean watersheds. From July 15 to July 29, we will be returning to Pine Ridge SD to continue our partnership, friendship and service in this beautiful but challenged region. As in past years, we will spend time building for a sustainable future while honoring sacred traditions. Along the way, we learn more about the history (much of which is untold or rewritten), as well as the day-to-day experiences of people on "the Rez." This is our effort to carry on William Penn's commitment to create the Peaceable Kingdom. What better place to start than where many of the struggles for rights and honoring of treaties continue to play out? For details on these two events, see: <http://williampennhouse.org/2015Workcamps>

July 5 to 11:**Friends General Conference (FGC) Annual Gathering** The FGC Gathering this year will be at the Western Carolina University near Asheville NC. The theme this year is "Seeking Wholeness." The Gathering is a chance to be together with over 1,200 Friends. There are many opportunities to address spirit, mind, and body. Look up the program for this year at www.fgcGathering.org You can enjoy lots of activities:

singing, dancing, good food, and good conversation. You really ought to go to a Gathering at least once. Early registration for the Gathering opens April 2. There are both half-gathering and part-time attender options for adults. Financial aid is available. Of special note is that there will be a pre-gathering event and five days of Couple Enrichment Leader Training at the Gathering. To learn more, www.fgcquaker.org/ce-training or marshaquaker@gmail.com There are also pre-gathering Saturday retreats for Adult Young Friends (18-35); New Meetings; People of Color and Their Families; and Quakers and Business.

August 3 to 9:**Baltimore Yearly Meeting Annual Session**

Baltimore Yearly Meeting will gather from August 3 to 9 this year at Frostburg State University in Frostburg MD. The theme is "Living into Right Relationship," focusing on the need to live in harmony and balance with ourselves, our community, and the natural world. You can learn more about workshops and interest groups in the Spring Interchange which will be coming out very soon or on the Baltimore Yearly Meeting web site: www.bym-rsf.org/events/annualsession

THINKING ABOUT RACE(April 2015) – *Showing up for Racial Justice* by Shan Cretin

The Winter 2015 issue of *Quaker Action*, published by the American Friends Service Committee, focuses on “Where Do We Go From Here?” In it, Shan Cretin, AFSC’s General Secretary, tells about her efforts to support the Black Panthers through teach-ins and demonstrations in New Haven, CT in the 1970s. She writes, “...one of the Black Panthers with whom I had been working took me aside. He said, ‘I know you mean well, but if you want to do something about the conditions you see in this community, you need to work in your own community. We can take care of ourselves—we black folks can take care of ourselves. The real problem is with the white folks, and I really wish you would go work there.’”

“That message helped me understand my responsibility to end racism, not by ‘helping’ disadvantages African-Americans, but by working with those with privilege and power. I realized that white people need to talk about race first – as uncomfortable as that is – so that we can begin as a whole society to actually achieve racial justice.”

This column is prepared by the BYM Working Group on Racism (WGR) and sent to the designated liaisons at each Monthly and Preparative Meeting for publication in their newsletter or other means of dissemination. The WGR meets most months on the third Saturday from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm, usually at Bethesda Friends Meeting or Friends Meeting of Washington. If you would like to attend, on a regular or a drop-in basis, contact clerk David Etheridge, david.etheridge@verizon.net.

RANDOM HAPPENINGS



Last month, **Greyson Acquaviva** achieved his goal of becoming an Eagle Scout. Congratulations, Greyson! Quakers, of course, don’t do pride (too creaturely), but if we did, we would apply it to thee, Friend.

Our hearts are with **Byron Sandford** and his family as he undergoes surgery on April 1 in an effort to allay some of the symptoms of Parkinson’s. We will be holding him in the Light.

Our hearts also go out to **Donna Hartman**, who recently lost her husband, **Arthur**. A career diplomat, Arthur served as the U.S. Ambassador to Paris and Moscow, as well as other foreign service roles. Donna joined FMW in 1960 and brought their children to First Day School whenever they were in D.C. We hold the Hartman family in the Light.

This year’s Spiritual State of the Meeting survey uncovered a yearning on the part of many FMW Friends to deepen into Simplicity. Would Friends be interested in starting a **Simplicity group** to pursue this? If so, contact Blair Forlaw, clerk of Ministry & Worship, at bforlaw@aol.com

With the much-hoped-for **renovation** looming, it is time to start moving things about to make room. The **Library Committee** will be shifting a lot of books over to others parts of the Meeting campus, and could use some help in doing so. Got a little extra time? Please contact Faith Williams at faithmw@gmail.com Also, the **Garden Committee** will be taking out some plants and moving others from the back to the front gardens. This is a wonderful use of a spring day. To volunteer, contact Mark Haskell at mkhaskell@aol.com

Do you have an eye for beauty, and the talent to create it? We are desperately seeking someone with your talents to help us redesign several rooms in the Meeting House. We’re trying to figure out which furniture to recover, which to save as is, which to let go of, and where to put things to serve the many functions to which these rooms are put. Ken and I are willing workers, but sadly lacking in **interior design imaginations**. Can you help? Contact me at admin@quakersdc.org

Following Bayard Rustin’s statement that the best way to show our beliefs is in action, Friends have been pursuing a number of issues in support of the Meeting and the world. **Kathy Brandt** attended a workshop on social media convened at Langley Hill Friends Meeting for Baltimore Yearly Meeting participants; she is very pumped about **redoing our webpage**. Want to help? Contact her at kbrandtde@gmail.com



The Washington Peace Center convened a meeting of **white allies working for Black liberation** last month, which was exceptionally well attended. Many Friends came and found it rousing. For ideas on how you can help, go to <http://washingtonpeacecenter.org/whiteallies2015>

Finally, at last month's called Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Sustainability, which was convened at the direction of **BYM's Unity with Nature Committee**, a group of Friends at FMW mindfully considered a terrific set of queries about how we as individuals and as a corporate body are working towards sustainability in the face of Climate Change. We were especially

blessed by the presence of many young people from other Meetings, in town to attend a weekend lobbying workshop that the **Friends Committee on National Legislation** was convening to train Friends to speak with Congressional members about climate change. Against a background of especially alarming predictions regarding the impact of this change, one of our participants burst into tears, considering how all this will play out for her child and the many generations to follow. One of the young people from FCNL spoke up, saying that we can detect the present of Spirit in such tears, because our hearts are being broken open.

May our hearts break open and grow, Friends.

- Debby