

# FMW Newsletter, 4.2016

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## **Friends Meeting of Washington**

### **Monthly Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business**

**March 2016**

#### **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.

- *BYM Faith and Practice*

All of us in the meeting have needs. Sometimes the need will be for patient understanding, sometimes for practical help, sometimes for challenge and encouragement; but we cannot be aware of each other's needs unless we know each other. Although we may be busy we must take time to hear about the absent daughter, the examination result, the worries over a lease renewal, the revelation of an uplifting holiday, the joy of a new love. Every conversation with another Friend, every business meeting, every discussion group, and every meeting for worship can increase our loving and caring and our knowledge of each other.

- *Quaker Faith and Practice*, Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain

## **Voices**

We are called to obedient love even though we may not be feeling very loving. Often it is through the performance of loving acts that loving feelings can be built up in us. We may start with small, perhaps very tiny steps. It is only as we begin to allow Christ's love to act in and through us that it can become a part of us.

- Sandra Cronk, 1983

## **Welcome of Visitors**

### **2016/3-1 Welcome of Visitors**

Meeting for Business opened at 12:30 pm with 23 persons present.

### **2016/3-2 Clerk's Report**

- A memorial meeting was held for member S. Clement Swisher on February 20, 2016. Clem was remembered for his quiet manner, humor, and all the practical fix-it projects he took care of for the Meeting.
- Ron Washington is back in the hospital.

- On March 22 from 7:00 to 8:30 pm and on April 10 from 1:30 to 3:30, Friends House, a Quaker retirement community in Sandy Spring, will hold teas to educate people about the organization and to interest them in joining the Board.
- Spiritual State of the Meeting focus groups will be held in the near future. Friends are encouraged to participate in the so that all voices can be heard.

## **Major items**

### **2016/3-3 Nominating Committee**

Todd Harvey, clerk of Nominating Committee, brought forward the following nomination:

Ken Orvis as co-clerk of Healing and Reconciliation Committee

**Friends APPROVED the nomination.**

Two nominations were held over since February:

- Kate Steger: Hospitality Committee Co-Clerk (through 2016); needed a waiver as she is not a member of the Meeting
- Betsy Bramon: Healing and Reconciliation (until Dec. 2018), needed a waiver as she is not a member of the Meeting. This is her 2<sup>nd</sup> standing committee appointment.

**Friends APPROVED the nominations.**

Todd encouraged Friends to consider who might be able to be part of the Capital Campaign Committee as there is a critical need.

## **2016/3-4 Personal Aid annual report**

Emilie Schmeidler, clerk of Personal Aid Committee, presented the committee's annual report, a copy of which is attached. The Personal Aid committee is asked by the meeting to provide for short-term aid to members of the community such as rides to meeting, assistance in grocery shopping, visits in hospitals, and so on. They also oversee meeting scholarship funds for Quaker events.

She noted that there is no committee that is charged with long-term aid in the community, something we should consider as so many members are aging. What responsibility do we have to those who can no longer stay connected on their own? This gap is something the Personal Aid committee has to face on a regular basis.

The Clerk suggested that we need a process to consider this as a meeting community. This aging of the community is a large challenge to us. A Friend remembered a message from years ago about the importance of Friends asking for help. The Friend wondered if Personal Aid only provides help if they are asked, or do they reach out? The committee reaches out or responds when asked; and especially when someone notices that a Friend has not been at Meeting for some time, the committee reaches out. It is especially a problem for Friends who are increasingly isolated from illness or age. It is our business to look out for them.

A Friend talked about the problems with her formerly socially active mother who has become a virtual hermit. It is difficult to resolve even when the person is your own family. She remembers the Senior Center group in which Clem was so active. Is it time to revive it and perhaps name it after Clem? She thanked the committee for their calls to her and the cards that people from the Meeting can sign and send out.

The clerk recognized the call to action in the report but feels the call needs to be clearer and sent out to the Meeting community.

A Friend noted that Friends respect everyone but worry that we may do the wrong thing out of arrogance or ignorance. We need to be sure that we respect people of all ages and not assume that we know what another person needs.

Friends noted that it is the responsibility of us all to reach out to other members of our community—to talk to them or take them to lunch or just a phone call.

**Friends ACCEPTED the report with thanks to the committee.**

### **2016/3-5 Property Committee**

Ken Orvis, on behalf of the Property Committee, brought a request that at a future date the Meeting consider whether the no-alcohol policy should remain in place. As many Friends now drink in their own homes, an altered policy might more accurately reflect who we are, and support members, attenders and others, in celebrating important life events. It might permit us to support like-minded non-profit groups and causes who share and promote our values. Have we come to hold the Meeting House as a Steeple House that early Friends would reject? Do I do my share to support the Meeting? Relaxing the policy might increase the Meeting's rental income, as many want to serve wine at events held here. They asked that the Meeting consider a trial period of six to 12 months allowing soft alcohol to be served with discrete groups and in discrete locations.

A Friend asked how much business we are losing by not allowing alcohol. The meeting secretary said she gets four or five calls a year asking for fundraisers. Every wedding says never mind about a reception. The no-alcohol policy is posted on our social media sites so others may not ever approach us. A Friend asked if outside people want to use just the Meeting room for their weddings. Generally, people go elsewhere for their receptions.

A Friend says since we rent, when we rent our property as a public space, we have no right to say no alcohol. We should distinguish between our own use and the public use and should consider having a two-tier policy. A Friend said she had no clearness on this. She didn't hold a wedding reception here or a memorial meeting here because of the no alcohol policy. What do other Quaker meetings do that rent out their meeting properties?

A Friend stated she was not in unity with the two-tier system. She was married here and she did not have her reception here for that reason. She was reminded that the first miracle of Jesus was where he turned water into wine, and at the Last Supper he turned

wine into his blood. He also performed the miracle of loaves and fishes, which was about celebration and community. And she does not say this because of financial gain.

A Friend recalled she attended France Yearly Meeting where there was a bottle of wine at every table at meals. It is not religious. It is cultural.

A Friend referenced his long-term tenure on the property committee and noted that he was always concerned about turning Friends and others away because of this policy. In terms of the revenue that might come, there are other organizations that make more money by allowing alcohol. He noted that some in the Meeting are against it. Some Friends are troubled by turning away from a nationwide tradition of Friends. They feel we should hesitate. There are some alcoholics in our meeting and they care about the safe place we provide for them that is alcohol free. He noted that anyone who wants to serve alcohol in the Meetinghouse requires a liquor license or a caterer who has one.

A Friend rose in support of the change of the alcohol policy even though as a birthright Friend he has been infused with the anti-alcohol position. He noted that the Meeting at 4<sup>th</sup> and Arch Street in Philadelphia allows alcohol at outside events.

The Clerk reminded friends that the intention was to start a broad conversation in the Meeting rather than make any decision today. A memo from Property Committee will be posted on the listserv. It was suggested that we have a survey. A Friend noted that we do not come to unity through surveys. A Friend asked if Ministry and Worship had weighed in on this. They have not.

A Friend noted that giving the arguments of your opponent is often an effective tactic but that she chose to give her own argument. She noted she had been previously lobbied and even bullied on this issue and she resented it. She admitted that Friends who were alcoholics have approached her to thank her for being their voice in maintaining a safe place when they felt they could not speak out for themselves. She noted that the Meeting is not a public space and that we can make our own choices as to how use it such as we did with the prohibition of smoking long before it was a law. She has spent most of her life in church communities that did not allow alcohol. It was also suggested to her that that there is hypocrisy in drinking at home and opposing drinking here. She noted she masturbated at home but would not do so at FMW. There are perfectly reasonable time, place, manner restrictions on things. But her biggest concern is that although some Friends were clear that they supported the change without regard to money issues,

money was nevertheless the driving force. The alcohol policy was raised before Meeting for Business in the discussion about the renovation very clearly: If we keep the alcohol policy you will have to contribute this much but if we do not keep the policy you will have to donate so much less. She said to make no mistake, that money is driving this issue. She said if the Meeting chooses to change the policy she may well stand aside as she has done on other issues about which she has felt passionate. But her biggest concern was why we were making the change. Would allowing alcohol make our community stronger and better or would it diminish it?

A Friend said that it is within our responsibility and rights to control how this building is used.

A Friend said she was not sure how she felt but she does feel sad that others do not feel that they can celebrate here. But she was extremely discouraged that the Friend was lobbied in a way that is outside our process. We are supposed to come together with open ears and open hearts not just on this issue but all of them.

A Friend spoke about being a property manager for the past several years. When he started here as the property manager, it was in the context that this Meeting is a small footprint on the world and we were reaching out to likeminded people and to bring in some revenue and to better use the resource during the week. Over time he has changed his view of the campus and the people. We have become a resource in the finest sense of the word, bringing in many organizations which would not be able to do what they do anywhere else. We are the accidental stewards of a wonderful resource for ourselves and others. We have created a community of organizations for whom this resource helps provide value and energy beyond us. He wants us to think of ourselves as more than just *ourselves*.

The Meeting Secretary (and events coordinator) noted that last week we had the Solidarity Center (AFL-CIO) who felt comfortable working through difficult issues and loved our space. The EPA came here to discuss Flint Michigan. Yesterday we had the Showing up for Racial Justice group, a baby shower, and the DC Eco-Women. We support the poor non-profits. We are an old Meeting house and the people who love us are the nonprofits. If we want to be a money-making operation we need to slick up and will need a new events coordinator. We came to this by accident. The thing that attracts people is the peacefulness of our campus. We are well used. If we change this policy for the money it is for the wrong reason.

A Friend noted that as a facility we embrace joyful celebrations but we know that alcohol is not part of joy. When some celebrate a marriage with champagne and wine, it doesn't mean that we are promoting alcoholism. Excluding alcohol wouldn't stop alcoholics from bringing it. In fact, it appears we are proselytizing temperance, which is not our mission. We can have rooms in which no alcohol is allowed.

A Friend suggested we don't need to slick up. We are the right place at the right time. Our simplicity is highly desirable. We should provide those who come with our idea of a welcoming space. We are generally advocates here in the Washington area. But where is the line of "under the care of the Meeting"? It is not always a distinct line. Where does it begin and end?

A Friend noted that Friends have a long history with the temperance movement, which was the wrong solution to a real problem. Whom are we trying to serve: people who want a safe place or those who feel that alcohol is part of a celebration? Substances that alter conscientiousness can interfere with relationships but alcohol and other altering substances are a part of other spiritual traditions for the purposes of opening a way. Can we, without raising rent, ask the guests of groups if they will contribute?

A Friend appreciated the messages today and reiterated the question of why we are doing this. He fears that it will lead us to more of an emphasis on rental income. We know that the renovation is going to be expensive and rental income is a way to do this. He fears that we may have to make a choice between the simple community that was described and better-paying tenants. He worried that we may be going in a direction that we cannot know and he feels he cannot unite with a change in policy at this time.

A Friend mentioned a Pendle Hill pamphlet on Quaker Money that noted that there is a different way to look at where you gain money and where you spend it. This is not a 12-step program. We should know about the Quaker history of alcohol.

## **2016/3-6 Other business**

Molly Tully and Michael Cronin have agreed to draft the Meeting's memorial minute for Bill Lee.



Marsha Holliday and David Etheridge gave an update on pastoral care activities for the Meeting. Ministry and Worship is looking for a process to help with pastoral care. They have interviewed four different persons in regard to this. The committee wants this to be more than a project but a change in the Meeting's culture and therefore want continuing exploration. Jenn Fredette, a Baptist with Quaker connections, discussed different trainings with the committee. It was discerned that she might give a talk about: How do we create boundaries for ourselves? They also met with Joy and Michael Newhart from Adelphi Meeting and Ron Hopson, a professor at Howard University. They discussed organizing a pastoral care training program. The program will be open to Friends in the area. This will cost money.

Marsha Holliday gave a report on Interim Meeting. They heard about the Diverse Leadership program and the new outreach program. Meg Meyer will help those who wish to travel among Friends. A record number of campers are expected this year. It was felt that we need more guidelines about appropriate behavior among the youth and adults. The FMW Healing and Reconciliation Committee was held out as a new way to meet the needs of our communities. Marsha noted that there was great benefit to practicing being Friends with others.

**The Meeting APPROVED the minutes as improved.**

The Meeting closed with a period of silence at 2:15 p.m. with 13 in attendance, to reconvene as way opens on April 10, 2016.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

### **Personal Aid Committee's Annual Report for 2015**

*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*

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.

**Current Committee Members:** Steve Brooks, Pam Callard, Tom Libbert, Patty Murphy, Lydia Pecker, and Emilie Schmeidler (Clerk); during 2015, Alex Matthews and Malachy Kilbride also served on the committee.

The Personal Aid Committee is asked by the Meeting to provide "caring concern" through practical assistance to meet short-term needs of members and attenders, e.g., transportation, shopping, or meals for those who are injured or ill; compassionate support; limited financial assistance; and contacting community members we have not seen for a while. In the process, we listen, identify expert resources, visit, make telephone calls, track down absent friends and family, and serve on support groups. This year we also picked up an earlier custom of having cards to sign or to write a little note to members of the FMW community who are ill, suffering a loss, or celebrating a life event such as a baby or marriage; and offering to hold in the Light anyone who requests it for whatever reason.

Beyond providing short-term personal assistance to individuals, the Committee administers two scholarships to enrich the spiritual life of individuals and contribute to the Meeting's corporate life.

FMW scholarships – Several years ago the Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business approved the Finance and Stewardship Committee's proposal to establish a small scholarship fund, and assigned responsibility to the Personal Aid Committee. This year PAC awarded two scholarships to two young adult Friends to attend conferences at Pendle Hill, one to attend the Young Adult Friends Conference retreat in the spring; the other to attend the "Beyond Diversity" conference in the fall.

BYM certificates – BYM provides each monthly meeting with certificates to encourage those who have not attended the Annual Session to go by proving two days free. Four BYM certificates were issued in 2015.

Traditionally, PAC responsibilities have been defined in terms of short-term needs. This year, the committee has struggled to find ways to respond to longer-term needs of members and attenders.

We've responded to several people who are homeless (or in danger of becoming homeless), and have financial, mental health, and other needs. PAC has worked with members of the Hunger and Homelessness Taskforce to try to address these needs. We also developed links with people in Meeting who have extensive experience with social service agencies; they help us link to agencies that may be able to help people with housing, financial, mental health, or other needs.

In the course of keeping in touch with long-term community members we have not seen for a while, sometimes they tell us that they want to stay in contact with FMW, but find that increasingly difficult or impossible. PAC is limited in the amount of assistance it can offer. Fortunately, in several instances PAC has been able to find people to respond: members of the person's spiritual formations or "friendly eights" group, people living in the vicinity, etc. But much of this need in FMW remains unmet.

Currently, there is no committee that FMW has asked to take on responsibility for meeting these longer-term needs. The Meeting as a whole needs to consider what relationship it wants to have to members of the community. The issue is urgent because our meeting is large, diverse, and spread throughout the metropolitan area; many members have demanding responsibilities that limit their availability. At the same time, as some long-term members age and are no longer able to serve the community in ways they have previously, they find themselves in need of assistance if they are to remain part of the meeting community.

Just as the personal needs of FMW community members are far greater than one small committee can meet, PAC relies on members of the Meeting community beyond its formal membership. For years, sale from Bob Meehan's Treasure Bread has provided the funds for the Personal Aid budget. The Committee is tremendously grateful to Bob for this longstanding and significant contribution to the welfare of our community! We rely on the invaluable informal assistance of past members, especially past clerks Jim Steen, Marcia Reecer, Merry Pearlstein, and Janet Dinsmore. Debby Churchman, as Administrative Secretary, helps us in a multitude of ways, especially in identifying and reaching out to FMW members and attenders in need.

We also depend heavily on non-Committee members who help us respond to members of our community who are in need. **We are looking for volunteers** whom we might contact occasionally to see if they would be available to respond to a specific need:

- driving to a medical appointment or shopping
- preparing and delivering a meal
- phoning or visiting an isolated member
- participating in Meeting for Worship with someone who cannot come to Meeting

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" ([http://quakersdc.org/personal\\_aid](http://quakersdc.org/personal_aid)) that describes in greater detail possible volunteer services. If anyone is considering joining Personal Aid, please get in touch with any of the current or past members, or with the Nominating Committee.

Respectfully submitted, Emilie Schmeidler, clerk

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(Here ends the Minutes & Documents for the March 2016 Meeting for Business)

#### UPCOMING EVENTS

April 2: Come to So Others Might Eat at 6:15 a.m. and make breakfast for our vulnerable neighbors. 70 "O" St. NW. For more information, contact [Betsy.Bramon@gmail.com](mailto:Betsy.Bramon@gmail.com)

April 2: **Peace & Social Concerns Networking Day** The Baltimore Yearly Meeting's Peace & Social Concerns committee will hold its networking day from 9:30 am to 2:00 p.m. at Sandy Spring Friends School, 16923 Norwood Rd., Sandy Spring, MD. Colman McCarthy will give the keynote address, and then there will be four workshops (on climate change, mass incarceration, immigration, and starting service programs). To RSVP and for more information, contact [pcaroom@gmail.com](mailto:pcaroom@gmail.com)

April 5-6: **Undoing Racism** The People's Institute for Survival and Beyond is holding a training from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm both days, at N Street Village, 1333 N St. NW. The training is perfect for those who are just learning about structural injustice and how it shows up in social services. It also serves as a useful tool for people who work together to gain a shared language for pushing forward transformative work within your organization. Participants will explore how system social injustice creates the issues organizations work to address, and how it impedes organizations' effectiveness. They will begin to build ideas about how to work toward social justice directly and collaboratively. To register, go to: <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1UlhQvD2GmWyFbug4HotxgLU63-84ltEr9Qxi9QLdgYo/viewform#start=embed> For further details, contact [david.etheridge@verizon.net](mailto:david.etheridge@verizon.net)

April 6: **Grate Patrol** Help prepare sandwiches to take out on the Salvation Army truck to feed our vulnerable neighbors. Come to the Meeting House at 5:30 pm. For more information, contact [sbrooks@uab.edu](mailto:sbrooks@uab.edu)

April 8 to 10: **Out Life is Love: The Quaker Spiritual Journey** Come to Pendle Hill (in Wallingford, PA, just outside Philadelphia) for a weekend workshop led by Quaker educator and author Marcelle Martin. Explore the 10 essential elements in Quaker spiritual formation. For more information, see [www.pendlehill.org](http://www.pendlehill.org)

April 9: **Poetry Workshop, Friends Wilderness Center** Published poet and local radio personality, Janet Harrison, will lead this workshop using a variety of simple, effective, and thoroughly entertaining techniques to allow you and your inner Muses to create personal poetry. No prior poetry experience necessary. RSVP to Sheila

Bach, [snbach@earthlink.net](mailto:snbach@earthlink.net), 304-728-4820. The Center is located in West Virginia, 1.5 hours from D.C.

**April 10: Friends House Board of Trustees Open House** The trustees are looking for new members. They are holding an informational tea from 1:30 to 3:30 at 17340 Quaker Lane in Sandy Spring. All are welcome.

**April 14 to 17: 2015 White Privilege Conference** All Friends are encouraged to join FGC's Ministry on Racism and the Quaker group at WPC17 at this conference at the Philadelphia Marriott Downtown. The conference strives to empower and equip a variety of attenders to work for equity and justice through self and social transformation. FGC is sponsoring a group discount. Friends interested in learning more about that discount should go to this website: <https://www.fgcquaker.org/interested-2016-white-privilege-conference>. Questions? Email [richies@fgcquaker.org](mailto:richies@fgcquaker.org) or [ministryonracismsupportspecialist@fgcquaker.org](mailto:ministryonracismsupportspecialist@fgcquaker.org)

**April 18 – 30: We're redoing the Meeting Room floor!** The Property Committee has contracted with a firm with special knowledge of cork floors to clean and repair the one in the Meeting Room. On Sunday, April 24 we will get creative about where to hold Meeting for Worship. Please start praying to the weather gods now to let us hold it in the back garden.

**April 23: Spring Wildflower Hike at Friends Wilderness Center** Board member and wilflower enthusiast, Nancy James, will lead you on a relaxed hike around the ponds by the Niles Cabin and nearby trails to observe the bounty of forest wildflowers. 10:00 am to 2:00 pm. For more details, please contact Sheila Bach ([snbach@earthlink.net](mailto:snbach@earthlink.net), 304-728-4820). The website is [www.friendswilderness.org](http://www.friendswilderness.org)

**July 3 to 9: Friends General Conference Gathering** is meeting this year in St. Joseph, Minnesota. The theme is: "be humble, Be Faithful, BE BOLD." Early registration opens April 1. For details, see: [www.fgcquaker.org](http://www.fgcquaker.org)

**August 1 to 7: Baltimore Yearly Meeting Annual Session** They are gathering at a new venue this year—Hood College in Frederick, MD. The theme is "Discernment and Action in Spiritual Community." Plenary speakers include Nancy Bieber (author of Decision Making and Spiritual Discernment), Christina Repoley (founding executive director of Quaker Voluntary Service), Lauren Brownlee (Director of Social Action at Stone Ridge), Jen Cort (of Sandy Spring Friends School), and George Lakey (co-fonder of the Movement for a New Society). For more information, go to [www.bym-rsf.org/events/annualsession](http://www.bym-rsf.org/events/annualsession)

**THINKING ABOUT RACE** (April 2016) – One Black Friend's Experience

*his month's "Thinking About Race" item is from our own home territory. An African-American woman, a member of Friends Meeting of Washington, sent to the BYM Working Group on Racism her story of a recent episode with the police.*

"I got pulled over by a white state policeman on I-66 yesterday. I have rarely been so terrified in my life. I was simply tooling along my 5-mile stretch, doing nothing that should have caused me to be pulled over. I was so upset I could hardly speak. I cracked my window, and when he said I should lower it more, I said, 'Why, so you can shoot me through the window? I don't think so.' So then he said he couldn't hear me, so I said, 'I'll shout.' I told him I was afraid for my life and he asked why. I said because you white policemen are murdering us. He told me a video and audiotape were being made of the stop, to which I responded, 'Why, so you can lose it later?' He finally explained he pulled me over because my registration had expired - which turned out to be true. I thought it was February but it's January. I've never been pulled over for that. How would he know? He couldn't have read those little stickers on my license plate from that far away. I figure he ran my plates because I was black - in other words, he was profiling. Anyway, he recited some prepared lines you could tell were for the video - like, have I done anything to frighten you? and did I tell you why I pulled you over? and so on - and eventually gave me my citation and a number to call if I wanted to lodge a complaint about how he handled himself, and he kept on going until I told him to leave me alone before I had a heart attack from fear - upon which he wanted to know if I needed him to call for assistance - at which point I'm practically crying and yelling, 'Just go away.' I felt utterly helpless. I couldn't think of anything to do to help myself. I kept thinking Sandra Bland was pulled over for a signal light and a few days later she was dead. I have an only child. I'm all he has. What if they killed me?"

"Ten, twenty, even thirty years ago, I would not have feared for my life. Being arrested for nothing maybe, but not being murdered outright. According to the United Nations Human Rights Commission Working Group report, my son and I would be safer in my home country of Nigeria (provided we stayed out of Boko Haram's territory) than in the USA."

White Friends are, of course, also sometimes stopped by the police. Unlike African-American Friends, however, white Friends can be pretty sure they were not stopped because of their race. They also do not need to wonder whether their race will make the officer so fearful or antagonistic that their lives are at risk.

This column is prepared by the BYM Working Group on Racism (WGR) and sent to the designated liaison 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. Locations vary to allow access to more Friends. If you would like to attend, on a regular or a drop-in basis, contact clerk David Etheridge, [david.etheridge@verizon.net](mailto:david.etheridge@verizon.net).

RANDOM HAPPENINGS



Things are spiffing up around Friends Meeting of Washington, you might notice. I took a call the other night from **Gene Throwe**, wanting to know if he should be concerned that parts of our front fence are missing—the part that had previously contained our Black Lives Matter sign. Never fear—the fence is being cleaned up, de-rusted, and repaired by a local company, and will soon find its shiny way back to us.

Meanwhile, Property Clerk and skilled amateur decorator **Merry Pearlstein** and I have been trying to outfit the little pass-through room next to Quaker House Living Room. We ordered a couple of upholstered chairs from Wayfair. The first set came damaged, and the company volunteered to send us a second set. I asked what we should do with the broken set, and they said to trash them.

Um, no thank you. Our inner Quaker frugality reared up and rebelled. I called **Jim Bell**, woodworker extraordinaire, and he figured out a way to repair the broken chairs and make them usable. We put those back in the North Room, where Friends and Others are already enjoying them.

Jim also looked at the little bentwood chairs in the Decatur Place Room and made them sturdier, but pointed out that the seat cushions need recovering. **J.E. McNeil** is coming to the rescue. She bought some cloth, and now she and I just need to find a day to go at them with scissors and staplers. Stay tuned.



Meanwhile, **Ken Orvis** found a local floor specialist who had repaired and spiffed up an **historic cork floor** at the Department of the Interior which is very much like ours. After only 85 years, we finally made the decision to clean and repair our wonderful, thick floor. It's essentially priceless—you can't find cork flooring that thick anymore, and we certainly couldn't afford it if we could. We expect this to be an investment for the next 50 years. Work will take place for two weeks in April. On **Sunday, April 24**, the Meeting Room won't be available for worship, so the Clerks are exploring other creative options. My favorite so far: Hold it in the back garden. If you have any influence with the weather gods, please pray.

On another topic—in March, we were treated to the annual **School for Friends** lunch. There is apparently some confusion about this event, which is designed to bring together the school families and staff with Friends Meeting of Washington. As the school's director, **Jim Clay**, describes it: Every year School for Friends parents make and serve a Simple Meal as an act of appreciation to the members of the Friends Meeting of Washington (FMW) for their association with School for Friends. This is a great opportunity to not only thank the Meeting for its support, but also for parents and Meeting members to get to know each other, interact, and share a meal together. Many parents find that this is a nice opportunity to attend a Quaker Meeting for the first time and gain some insight into the basis of the School for Friends philosophy. All families are encouraged to attend both the Meeting for Worship and the Simple Meal afterwards. School for Friends was founded at FMW in 1981 and prepared a simple meal for the Meeting that very first year, with the children acting out "Stone Soup."

The soup was hardly stony, the desserts were fabulous (did you have one of those brownies? A spiritual experience), and it was such a pleasure to be with SfF folks again. Grateful for all of them.

- Debby