

**MINUTES**  
**MEETING FOR WORSHIP WITH A**  
**CONCERN FOR BUSINESS**

**Summary - November 8, 2009**

**Opening** The Meeting opened at noon with a period of silent worship. David Etheridge and Bill Cousins were Co-Clerks, Susan Lepper, Alternate Clerk, and

Merry Pearlstein, Recording Clerk.

Sabrina McCarthy joined the clerks on the facing bench holding the Meeting in the Light. The clerks read Advices, Queries and Voices related to meetings for worship with concern for business as proposed by Baltimore Yearly Meeting's Faith and Practice Revision Committee.

**Advices:**

Participation in the meeting for worship with a concern for business is the responsibility of all. Come with open minds, seeking the spirit, listening carefully, discerning the truth in what others have to offer. Proceed with forbearance and warm affection for each other. If you cannot attend, prayerfully uphold the meeting.

We do not seek a majority decision nor even consensus. As we wait patiently for God's guidance, our experience is that way will open and we shall be led into unity. Speak only when God gives you new insight into the matter at hand. Think it possible that you may be mistaken.

**Queries:**

Are our meetings for worship with a concern for business held in the spirit of worship, seeking the guidance of God?

In what ways do we each take our right share of responsibility in the service of the meeting?

**Voices:**

And that all may be careful to speak short and pertinent to matters in a Christian spirit, and dispatch business quickly, and keep out of long debates and heats; and with the spirit of God keep that down,

which is dotting about questions and strife of words, that tend to parties and contention: which in the church of God there is no such custom to be allowed. And likewise not to speak more than one at a time; nor any in a fierce way; for that is not to be allowed in any society, neither natural nor spiritual; but as the apostle saith, 'Be swift to hear, and slow to speak;' and let it be in the grace, which seasons all words....  
George Fox, 1690

The meeting for the transaction of church business is as distinctly a religious exercise as is the meeting for worship, but it has a different objective. The meeting for worship is focused upon the divine-human relationship and the meeting for business is mainly concerned with inter-human cooperation, the two being interdependent. From another point of view, the meeting for worship concerns being while the meeting for business concerns doing. What is implicit in worship becomes explicit in action.

The meeting for business should, therefore, be preceded by a period of worship in which the hard shell of ego-centricity is dissolved and the group united into a living whole. It is also well to conclude the business meeting with a period of silent devotion.  
Howard H. Brinton, 1952

Partly because of its rarity, sense of the meeting is a gift of enormous worth, more valuable, perhaps, than any other Quaker gift or practice. Quakers are not the only people who worship in silence. They are not alone in waiting for continuing revelation by attending to the Light within.... But where, except among Friends, has the practice of discovering the sense of the meeting become so entrenched?

Barry Morley, 1993

Our meetings for church affairs, in which we conduct our business, are also meetings for worship based on silence, and they carry the same expectation that God's guidance can be discerned if we are truly listening together and to each other, and are not blinkered by preconceived opinions. It is this belief that God's will can be recognized through the discipline of silent waiting which distinguishes our decision-making process from the secular idea of consensus. We have a common purpose in seeking God's will through waiting and listening, believing that every activity of life should be subject to divine guidance.

This does not mean that laughter and a sense of humor should be absent from our meetings for church affairs. It does mean that at all times there should be an inward recollection: out of this will spring a right dignity, flexible and free from pomp and formality.  
Britain Yearly Meeting, 3.02

Consensus is the product of willfulness. We will ourselves to a decision. Sense of the Meeting is a product of willingness in which we allow ourselves to be led. It is the difference between reason and faith.

Barry Morley, 1993

**Attendance** Approximately 25 Friends were present. Co-Clerk David Etheridge welcomed visitors Marsha Holliday and Danny Hollinger, both of Washington, DC

**Clerk's Report** Co-Clerk David Etheridge reported on behalf of the Personnel Committee that Laura Yeomans has been hired to fill the assistant administrative secretary position formerly held by Barbara Haught. Laura will begin work on November 16th.

David also relayed a report from the Finance and Stewardship Committee that the shortfall in contributions to meet budget through October has decreased from nearly \$12,000 on September 30 to \$2,100. However, much of the giving can be ascribed to seasonal forces, and income is still below budget. The committee plans to send out around Thanksgiving the calendar year-end appeal letter, which will target those who have contributed to the Meeting in the past three years. Prior appeals addressed to the wider newsletter mailing list have produced disappointing responses.

Friends were reminded that there would be a pot luck in the Assembly Room at the rise of Meeting for Worship with Concern for Business.

Finally, in harmony with today's Advices, Queries and Voices, David Etheridge reminded Friends that they were participating in a Meeting for Worship with Concern for Business whose procedures would be as similar as possible to those of any other Meeting for Worship. Periods of silence will be observed between discussions, and Friends are asked to rise and speak from the silence as they would if called to minister in other Meetings for Worship.

**Proposed Letter to Barack and Michelle Obama** Gray Handley presented for the Meeting's consideration the attached draft letter developed by the Ministry and Worship Committee which it proposes the Meeting send to Barack and Michelle Obama inviting them and their daughters to attend Friends Meeting of Washington. In preparing the letter -- the result of months of serious discussion -- Gray said the committee had considered several questions, including whether to issue the invitation; what the Meeting has to offer our new president; whether we as a Meeting are prepared to make this offer; and finally, whether the draft letter adequately expresses a sincere offer on behalf of the Meeting. He also noted that the letter was prompted by Barack Obama's characterization of his religious views as being closely aligned with those of Friends and by knowledge that the Obamas have not settled on a spiritual home in Washington.

Friends voiced a number of concerns regarding the letter. One questioned why similar invitations had not been issued to previous presidents. Another suggested that the invitation be extended to other members of the administration, the Congress, and the Supreme Court. One noted that our signs indicate that "all are welcome." Several questioned whether the Meeting was prepared for and could weather the changes that the Obama's attendance would necessitate, including intense security measures and the beam of the national spotlight, (all recall the attention given the Obama's former pastor, Jeremiah Wright). Would our open and honest expression fall victim to awareness of political considerations? Would we be even more vulnerable to the use of the Meeting as a sounding board for political/secular causes? Is the letter self-serving?

Other Friends stressed the value of this discussion as a growth opportunity which could help the Meeting define its identity and develop its strengths. A Friend expressed appreciation for the Ministry and Worship Committee's work on this issue. One opined that, as the Friends Meeting of Washington, we should not let our fears prevent us from extending a welcome to the Obamas but should trust that,

if they decided to attend, the logistics could be worked out. Another asked that we consider what our response might have been had the Obamas approached us.

Friends suggested that the letter might be strengthened by noting that Barack Obama is a war president (although the conflicts are ones he inherited), and suggesting that his desire and work for peace could be strengthened by our faith community. We could note our awareness of their being spiritual seekers and invite them to see whether our Meeting might meet their needs, either in the Meetinghouse or at another location of their choosing.

Recognizing that the Meeting, though not in unity on the proposed letter, is willing to explore the issue further, the letter was referred back to the Ministry and Worship committee for further seasoning. Friends who have additional considerations and suggestions should contact Gray Handley or other members of the committee.

**Payment of architect fees** Susan Lepper, representing the Planning Committee, reminded Friends that architectural firm of Quinn Evans had been engaged to develop plans to install an elevator, correct drainage problems and do necessary renovation of our main building and that the Meeting had approved an expenditure of \$50,000 for the preparation of those plans (10/08 - 9). The architects now expect their work will cost \$89,000, the overrun being largely due to the number of changes that have been necessary (the current plan is their fourth). The Planning Committee requested that the Meeting approve an additional expenditure for architectural work such that the total amount for development of the plans to the point of their adoption would not exceed \$89,000. Ted Green, Clerk of Trustees, confirmed that the Meeting had received an anonymous gift of \$40,000 specifically for this purpose. The Meeting APPROVED the expenditure of up to \$89,000 for architectural fees.

Responding to a Friend's question, Susan Lepper noted that the architects now expect to present the plans for the Meeting's consideration on Sunday, November 22. Friends will be invited to review and comment on the plans for a period of ten days to two weeks, during which time the architects will also be meeting informally with the staffs of various city review boards to get their preliminary feedback. Presentation of complete plans incorporating Meeting and community/government input is now anticipated on Sunday, December 20. Susan noted that the total cost of the work included in the plans is currently estimated to be around \$3,000,000.

**Report and Recommendations of Membership Committee** Harry Massey, Clerk of the Membership Committee, presented the attached report on the Committee's continuing efforts to contact members with whom there has been no interaction for a number of years. The original list included 35 persons; by June, the number had been pared to 11. The Committee now requests the Meeting consider canceling membership for the following four persons who have not responded to any of several overtures: Lacey Steen, Clark Wilcoxon, Ann Proctor and Roger Stone. This request will lie over for one month.

Harry also noted plans to contact adult associate members to determine their intent regarding continuing membership. He noted that the committee would appreciate receiving any information Friends might have regarding any of the persons listed on the attached report.

**Report from Nominating Committee** Marcia Reecer, Clerk of the Nominating Committee, reported the Nomination of Bill Strein as Clerk of the Personnel Committee through 2009. The

Meeting APPROVED this nomination and expressed appreciation for the work of Denny Hartzell, who recently resigned as Clerk of the Personnel Committee.

**Report from the Search Committee** David Etheridge reported the nominations of Lara James and Sara Satterthwaite to the Search Committee (whose sole purpose is to propose members of the Nominating Committee), both to serve through October 2010. The Meeting APPROVED these nominations.

**Report from the Marriage and Family Relations Committee** Joan Gildemeister, Co-Clerk of the Marriage and Family Relations Committee, presented the attached annual report of that committee and noted its willingness to support the Meeting's families in any way possible.

**Report from the Ministry and Worship Committee** Faith Williams, Clerk of the Ministry and Worship Committee, presented the Committee's annual report, attached.

**Approval of Minutes** The minutes were read and APPROVED.

**Adjournment** With approximately 18 Friends present, the meeting adjourned at 1:45 p.m., to reconvene as way opens on Sunday,

**December 13**, at noon in the Meeting Room.

Attachments:

Draft letter to Barack and Michele Obama

(Please note the letter is the last page of the newsletter)

Report from the Membership Committee

Annual Report of the Marriage and Family Relations Committee

**Report on Members We Have Not Heard From**  
**Membership Committee Report to Meeting for Worship**  
**with a Concern for Business**  
**November 2009**

At the June 14 Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business, the Membership Committee reported on its effort to contact members we have not heard from in a long while. At that meeting, we reported eleven members who have not been in contact with the Meeting or responded to our individual phone calls, emails, and letters encouraging them to come back to the Meeting.

This effort was undertaken in a spirit of outreach and does not affect the FMW contribution assessment to BYM.

Our last contact with them was a letter requesting that they contact us to confirm their wishes in regards to their membership and participation in the meeting. The following members did not respond to any of our contacts:

Lacey Steen

Clark Wilcoxon

Ann Procter

Roger Stone

At our committee meeting on November 1, we approved forwarding this list to the Meeting for Business with the recommendation that they be removed from our membership list.

We will continue to work with Friends who have been out of contact and may have additional names for forward to the Meeting for Business.

On a positive note, we are connecting with many Friends who appreciate our contacts and expressed their appreciation for their Meeting membership.

— Harry Massey, Clerk

### **Report on Associate Members Membership Committee Report to**

The Membership Committee is in the process of contacting Associate Members who are of age (24 years old and above) to determine if they would like to become regular members. First, we will be contacting the following associate members:

Mary Johnson-Washington, D.C.

Aladdine Joroff-Concord, MA

Deane Kern-Charles Town, WV

Asia Moore

Rebecca Newman-Takoma Park, MD

Samuel Newman-Takoma Park, MD

Jason O'Neill-Providence, RI

James Rouse

Alexander Warren-Chapel Hill, NC

Nicholas Warren-Chapel Hill, NC

Most of these associate members have been contacted in the past. If Friends know these members, please contact a member of the Membership Committee or the Associate member to inform them that a representative from the Committee will be in touch with them to encourage them to become regular members.

The Membership Committee

Jean Capps

Elise Storck

Harry Massey

Janet Dinsmore

Hayden Wetzel

Monica Jacobe

Molly Tully

## **Report of the Marriage and Family Relations Committee**

The Marriage and Family Relations Committee is charged with the clearness process for marriage as a religious call to a lifelong relationship. The meeting provides the context of a faith community in its willingness to take the wedding under its care.

Committee members Jane Edgerton, Meg Greene, Susan Griffin, Joan Gildemeister, Larry Jordan, Christine Lynn, and Martha Solt have lent energy and enthusiasm to clearness and oversight tasks. Our newest member, Erica Hurvitz, has rejoined us after some months devoted to the health and welfare of her twin infants born shortly after she joined the committee. Erica is a valuable resource to the Meeting through her expertise in early child development. She has offered to help meet the parenting needs of Meeting families with small children. Assessment of needs and planning will begin when her schedule permits.

In 2008 the Committee has overseen the wedding of Mary Campbell and Bill Strein on 11/01/08. The couple is well known to the entire community because of their service to the Meeting and Yearly Meeting. Kristina De Main and Zack Schaeffer were married on May 24, 2009. This couple is new to the Society of Friends but indicated their intention to become part of the Meeting community. In both cases the weddings were well attended and they had enthusiastic support for their celebration of unity. These weddings provided an opportunity for the larger community to participate as a supportive group of well wishers for the couple's spiritual journey together.

A third wedding was held, that of Desaray Smith and Lauren Evans, members who moved before their wedding to South Carolina to pursue their careers in elementary education and counseling. Although there were numerous obstacles to meeting expectations for a wedding under the care of the meeting, the wedding took place on August 1, 2009.

The committee has considered ways both to improve the effectiveness of oversight and increase Meeting interest and attendance at weddings.



The committee is in agreement that attendance at Meeting by those seeking to marry under its care is to our mutual benefit. Participation in worship and service in Meeting activities and committees reflects concern for the welfare of the Meeting.

The October Meeting for Business was informed of upcoming testimony before the DC Council regarding FMW 's experience with same sex marriage. Martha Solt's statement, which includes input from members of the Meeting and Marriage and Family Committee, is attached. The committee is grateful for her energy and initiative in this significant move toward marriage equality regardless of gender, a practice instituted over 15 years ago by Friends Meeting of Washington.

Plans for the coming year include:

Scheduling Meetings for Grieving twice a year--this prayerful time for those still with the memory of loss of loved ones were appreciated by those who participated in the past.

The committee has put notices in our newsletter of opportunities for couples enrichment sent by Joan and Rich Liversidge. These workshops and conferences provide ways to improve relationships, resolve conflicts, and establish an enduring spiritual basis for partnership on life's journey.

Offering opportunity for participation in the School for Friends early childhood parenting workshop.

The Committee welcomes suggestions from members and attenders for other ways to meet the challenges posed by contemporary life for valuing and sustaining family relationships. You are invited to join us for our committee meeting, the first First Day of the month at 9:15 in the Decatur Place room.

Joan Gildemeister and Martha Solt,

Co- Clerks

**Testimony before the Council of the District of Columbia**

**Committee on Public Safety and the Judiciary**

By Martha Solt, Co-Clerk Marriage and Family Relations Committee

Friends Meeting of Washington

The Friends Meeting of Washington is a religious organization and part of the

Religious Society of Friends, also known as Quakers. We have been located in the Dupont Circle area of DC since 1930, although Quakers have been in the area long before that. We believe that our experience supporting same gender couples has something to offer to the wider community.

For many years, we have been blessed to have within our Meeting community many good people who are gay men and lesbian women. We began the discussion of whether and how to support their relationships in the 1980s. Quaker Meetings make decisions by attempting to discern the will of God by praying and listening to others. A fundamental Quaker belief is that there is that of God in every person. We have no clergy. Our decision-making practice takes that into account and requires a high degree of unity and agreement among members. We engaged in a long and ultimately rewarding discussion of nearly seven years on the meaning and values of marriage. Many people participated, and the prayer and discussions were heartfelt and sometimes difficult. We began celebrating same gender relationships in the mid 1990s.

When any couple requests to be married in our community, they undergo deep thought, discussion, and prayer about whether this is the right step for them. We ask them to think through the commitment, joys, difficulties, and challenges of marriage. We work to discern whether the couple understands and is ready for marriage. If we believe the couple is ready, we move forward with a religious ceremony for marriage. Our community works to support the on-going relationship, even after the marriage ceremony. We do this for both heterosexual and same gender marriages.

What can we conclude having celebrated same gender relationships for over a decade? We believe that celebrating loving, committed same gender couples is a powerful expression of inclusion in our community. We have found few differences between the marriage experiences of same gender and heterosexual couples. Same gender couples live in the same world and face the same joys and challenges as the rest of us. Some marriages are successful, and others are not. Over the years, members of our community who originally had questions about same gender marriage have come to support and celebrate them.

At the Friends Meeting of Washington same gender marriages are no longer unusual. Our experience and our religious values have led us to support marriage equality. We ask this Council to pass marriage equality legislation so that all of our married couples are treated equally before the law.

### **Annual Report of the Ministry and Worship Committee November 2009**

This year the Ministry and Worship Committee focused on establishing spiritual community and making all feel welcome.

Spiritual State of the Meeting Report: As usual, we prepared this document.

Heads of Meeting: We arranged for these weekly and revised the guide for heads of meeting. We wanted to facilitate vocal ministry with respect for silence.

Workshops: This year the Ministry and Worship Committee continued its series with one on Quaker religious identity.

Those who had attended the Friends General Conference shared their experiences.

Committee members participated in a meeting wide workshop on what committees are doing for Quaker Education.

Our committee worked with the Planning Committee

Clearness Committees: We organized or completed four clearness committees.

Memorial Services: We helped with the memorial meetings for Willie Mae Etheridge and Barbara Nnoka.

New work this year: We planned and carried out an initial all-day workshop for Quaker Quest, attended by thirty people.

In our efforts to become more welcoming, we are making some physical changes in the entryway, and arranging for new signs. We have begun work on a newcomers packet.

We have created a list of Spiritual Growth Opportunities at FMW.

In closing, we would like each committee at FMW to ask itself:

What more could it do to welcome, include and nurture newcomers?

Could you sponsor an activity or an event which particularly welcomes newcomers and embraces their gifts?

— Faith Williams, Clerk

## **WINTER EVENTS**

### **Adult Religious Education**

The Adult Religious Education group will meet on **December 6** in the Terrace Room at 9:15 a.m. The topic to be discussed is *19th Century Quaker History*. For details, questions or materials contact John Scales at [Johnkscales@aol.com](mailto:Johnkscales@aol.com).

### **FDS Winter Celebration**

The Religious Education Committee and the Children of First Day School (FDS) wish to announce that our Winter Celebration will be held in **December 6**. We hope you will join us for some holiday singing at Meeting (singing at 11:20 a.m.) And festive snacks at the rise of meeting. Some of the projects the children have been working on -including holiday cards for Friends House residents- will be on display.

### **William Penn House Potluck**

The William Penn House, a Quaker Center on Capitol Hill, hosts monthly potluck dinners with a discussion afterwards, William Penn House also provides Friends with many programs and seminars. In December, a potluck dinner is scheduled for Sunday, **December 6**, at 6:30 p.m. For this potluck, William Penn House intern Kelli Mansure will share her experiences attending a workshop on *Weaving Sacred Wholeness* held in South Carolina in March, 2009. At this workshop, Quakers from the US and Canada came together to share the gifts and challenges of being in a Quaker community.

For more information about any of the William Penn House programs, go to [WilliamPennHouse.org](http://WilliamPennHouse.org) or 202-543-5560.

William Pen House is a smoke-free, alcohol-free facility and all F/friends and neighbors are welcome at any of their programs.

### **FMW's Senior Center in December**

Programs of slides or talks are held on second and forth Wednesday of each month. The program for the month is:

**Dec. 9** Carol Coffee Morocco

**Dec. 23** No program scheduled due to  
Christmas holidays

## **Inquirers Class**

You are invited to a weekly Inquirers class for Meeting newcomers and not-so-new-comers who are interested in knowing more about Quakers and the Religious Society of Friends. The next 5 week session begins on Monday, **January 25** and ends Monday **February 22**, 2010. The class will be held at 7:30 p.m. in the Decatur Place Room. Michael Cronin will lead the class. For further information contact the FMW Office at 202-483-3310 or Michael at [mcronin943@aol.com](mailto:mcronin943@aol.com).

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **Sandy Springs Friends School**

Sandy Springs Friends School invites potential students and parents to an Open House on Saturday, **December 5** from noon to 3 p.m.. Sandy Springs Friends School offers a co-educational Pre-K through grade 12 college preparatory curriculum, based on Quaker values. For more information contact Sarah Margolis at 301- 774-7455, ext. 115; or [sarah.margolis@ssfs.org](mailto:sarah.margolis@ssfs.org).

Sandy Springs Friends School will hold its annual Winterfest celebration on Saturday, **December 5**, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. This is a fun-filled community event which is fun for the entire family. Winterfest includes music, food, holiday greens, and artisans selling their crafts. Admission is free.

### **Sunday Morning Bible Study**

For quite some time now two Friends- (Don Weightman and Hayden Wetzel) have met before Sunday 9 a.m. worship to prayerfully read the gospels together. This occurs approximately every other week. We welcome interested Friends to join us in this activity. Given that our schedule is not quite regular (one of us can be out of town on the usual Sunday), we have decided that we will send an email on the Thursday before each meeting so that you don't show up and find no one there. We meet about 8:15 a.m. on Sunday in the Parlor.

The point of this program is to simply read and consider the gospels (currently up to Mark 10) as a source of religious enlightenment. We read alternately and allow some brief discussion as Way opens. It is not an exercise in historical scholarship or personal theories -- the idea is to see

what the books say to us, not what we say about them. Perhaps this can be developed sometime later to a reading/worship program at a later hour.

Please contact me (Hayden Wetzel at [Haydenwetzel@hotmail.com](mailto:Haydenwetzel@hotmail.com)) if you would like to be placed on the Sunday morning Bible reading email reminder list. We will remind you electronically in a timely, consistent manner. — Hayden Wetzel

### **Annual Shoebox Project**

You are invited to participate and volunteer in the Meeting wide activity of packing approximately 2000 shoebox gifts for homeless men, women and children that will be distributed throughout area homeless shelters. Your help is truly needed on Sunday, **December 20**, from 8:30 a.m. until 3 p.m. If you would like to participate - just show up. Please consider setting aside several hours or the day. A good time is had by all in the best spirit of the season. In addition to assembling, filling boxes with sets of necessities, and wrapping in the Assembly Room, volunteers are also needed to drive to shelters and clean up. All are invited - family, friends, and for children this is a wonderful introduction to community service. Also, on Saturday, **December 19**, from 9:30 a.m. until 2 p.m. (including a Pizza break) we will be folding boxes to be ready for the next day (for Saturday please contact Kate Decker at [kaitlindecker@gmail.com](mailto:kaitlindecker@gmail.com)). The shoe boxes are filled with gender specific items, warm hat and gloves, and special additions for homeless children. If you have questions or would like to volunteer to drive please contact C.J Lewis at 202-704-4430 or [cjlewis2@yahoo.com](mailto:cjlewis2@yahoo.com) (subject: Shoebox Project); also Eric Nothman, at 301-469-0173, [ericnothman@gmail.com](mailto:ericnothman@gmail.com). Hope to see you there!

### **FMW Holiday Office Hours**

Please note during the holidays, the FMW Office will be closed on Thursday, **December 24**, 2009 and Friday, **December 25**, 2009. We will be closed again on Thursday, **December 31**, 2009 and Friday, **January 1**, 2010. The office staff hopes all Friends have an enjoyable, safe and fun holiday season.