

FRIENDS MEETING OF WASHINGTON

March 2010 Newsletter

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Winter Events

Memorial Minute, Barbara Grant Nnoka

February 2010 Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business

FRIENDS MEETING OF WASHINGTON MONTHLY MEETING FOR WORSHIP WITH A CONCERN FOR BUSINESS February 14, 2010 Minutes

02/10-1 Opening The Meeting opened at noon with a period of silent worship. David Etheridge was Presiding Clerk, 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 integrity as proposed by the Faith and Practice Revision Committee of Baltimore Yearly Meeting.

Advices

Integrity implies a harmony within, a music created through attentive listening to expressions of God in ourselves and each other. When we live with integrity, alone or as a faith community, our words and deeds ring true. We are able to hear when there is discord between our values and our words or actions, and we often sense when others in our community are “out of tune” with their own truth, or when, as a community, we do not seem to be following the same conductor.

When we live with integrity, our sense of self is lit from within by the same steady Light whether we are with our family, in meeting, or at work. When we live with integrity, we do not allow fear or desire for approval to shape the face we present to the world. We may express the truth we know differently so that different people can better hear it, or we may be silent because we feel it is not the time for certain words; but we are willing to allow the Inner Light to guide us in ways consistent with the truth as we understand it. Rooted in an awareness of God’s guiding presence in all times and places, each of us finds the strength and nourishment we need to be faithful – in the Psalmist’s words, “like a tree planted by the water.”

Community plays a critical role in discernment. Integrity calls us to recognize our gifts and our flaws alike with humility, helping each other to “let our lives speak,” lovingly, the truth as we know it. When we live with integrity, we hold the imperfections and dark places in ourselves and our communities to the Light, remembering that our mistakes and flaws may help us understand the pain and burdens of

others or even become a spring for ministry. Living with integrity requires that we not “outrun our guide.” Rather, as Carolyn Stephens wrote, we do our best to “live up to the Light we have,” knowing that “more will be given” when we are ready.

Queries

How do we seek truth by which to live? How do we know it when we find it?

In what ways does my life speak of my beliefs and values?

In what way is my life out of harmony with truth as I know it? Why?

Voices

The truthfulness which we owe to God must assume a concrete form in the world. Our speech must be truthful, not in principle but concretely. A truthfulness which is not concrete is not truthful before God. Bonhoeffer, *On Telling the Truth*

For a Quaker, religion is not an external activity, concerning a special “holy” part of the self. It is an openness to the world in the here and now with the whole of the self. If this is not simply a pious commonplace, it must take into account the whole of our humanity: our attitudes to other human beings in our most intimate as well as social and political relationships. It must also take account of our life in the world around us, the way we live, the way we treat animals and the environment. In short, to put it in traditional language, there is no part of ourselves and of our relationships where God is not present.

Harvey Gillman, 1988, Britain Yearly Meeting

A neighbor...desired me to write his will: I took notes, and, amongst other things, he told me to which of his children he gave his young negro: I considered the pain and distress he was in, and knew not how it would end, so I wrote his will, save only that part concerning his slave, and carrying it to his bedside, read it to him, and then told him in a friendly way, that I could not write any instruments by which my fellow-creatures were made slaves, without bringing trouble on my own mind. I let him know that I charged nothing for what I had done, and desired to be excused from doing the other part in the way he proposed. Then we had a serious conference on the subject, and at length, he agreeing to set her free, I finished his will.

John Woolman, 1756

Any great issue has transformative power, once we engage it. Slavery led John Woolman through a lifetime of spiritual transformation, of renewal in his own heart. Whether our own faith is centered on Christ or other core beliefs, our journey can be animated as Woolman’s was by compassion and a love of truth.

David Morse, *Testimony : John Woolman On Today's Global Economy*

We all need other people to invite, amplify, and help us to discern the inner teacher’s voice for at least three reasons:

- The journey toward inner truth is too taxing to be made solo; lacking support, the solitary traveler soon becomes weary or fearful and is likely to quit the road.
- The path is too deeply hidden to be traveled without company; finding our way involves clues that are subtle and sometimes misleading, requiring the kind of discernment that can happen only in dialogue.
- The destination is too daunting to be achieved alone: we need community to find the courage to venture into the alien lands to which the inner teacher may call us.

Parker Palmer, *A Hidden Wholeness*

Friends consider integrity a way of life. In the stillness of worship we come into the Divine Presence and open ourselves to the Light; we hide nothing of who we are. In keeping with that openness of spirit, Friends express themselves with honesty in their dealings with others. Plain truth needs no decorative flourishes. We speak with simple clarity to reflect in our words the reality of our perceptions and thoughts. Intermountain Yearly Meeting Faith and Practice

Dear Lord and Father of mankind

Forgive our foolish ways!

Reclothe us in our rightful mind,
In purer lives thy service find,
In deeper reverence, praise.

In simple trust like theirs who heard
Beside the Syrian sea
The gracious calling of the Lord,
Let us, like them, without a word,
Rise up and follow thee....

John Greenleaf Whittier, 1872

Sing and rejoice, ye children of the day and of the light; for the Lord is at work in this thick night of darkness that may be felt. And truth doth flourish as the rose, and the lilies do grow among the thorns, and the plants atop of the hills, and upon them the lambs do skip and play. And never heed the tempests nor the storms, floods nor rains, for the seed Christ is over all, and doth reign. And so be of good faith and valiant for the truth: for the truth can live in the jails.

George Fox, Epistle 227

02/10-2 Attendance Approximately 24 Friends were present. Presiding Clerk David Etheridge welcomed visitors David Sitomer of Washington, D.C. and Nathaniel Greenlee, newborn son of Margot Greenlee.

02/10-3 Clerks' Report David Etheridge announced that the Meeting's website, QuakersDC.org, is now operational, and that newsletters, announcements, committee information and other data can be found there. The website is a work in progress; constructive comments should be directed to the Meeting office.

David noted that the Ministry and Worship Committee is working with Friendship Preparative Meeting regarding its status in response to a proposal that it be laid down.

He also announced that the Ministry and Worship and the Healing and Reconciliation Committees are working diligently to address recent altercations in the Meetinghouse. The Healing and Reconciliation Committee and the Nominating Committee are reviewing the status of the Healing and Reconciliation Committee, which was originally a temporary, ad hoc committee, and seeking additional persons to be nominated to serve on that committee. David noted that there would be a pot luck luncheon in the Assembly Room at the rise of Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business.

Finally, he reminded Friends that they were participating in a meeting for worship, and that, to the extent possible, procedures would be like those of any other worship meeting with periods of silence being observed between messages.

02/10-4 Report from the Membership Committee David Etheridge made the second presentation of the requests for full membership in Friends Meeting of Washington for Basil Kiwan and Margot Greenlee. Friends APPROVED these requests.

02/10-5 Memorial Minute Debby Churchman read the attached Memorial Minute she had prepared for Barbara Grant Nnoka. Friends paused to reflect on the ways in which Barbara had enriched and continues to enrich our individual lives and the life of the Meeting.

02/10-6 Report from the Nominating Committee Marcia Reecer, Interim Clerk of the Nominating Committee, reported the nominations of Danny Hollinger to the Property Committee for a term ending in December 2012, and Lynsey Wood Jeffries to the Hospitality Committee, also for a term ending in December 2012. Friends APPROVED these nominations.

Marcia also reported the resignation of Kathleen Finn from the Religious Education Committee, which Friends accepted. Kathleen will continue as Coordinator of First Day School.

02/10-7 Planning Committee Update Susan Lepper reported for the Planning Committee that its financing group continues its work with Henry Freeman, who will soon be contacting a sampling of Friends regarding their willingness to contribute to a capital campaign. A report on this effort is expected in March.

Susan also noted that Bill Drewer has died and that Baird Smith has replaced him as the principal architect in charge of the plans for the renovation of Friends Meeting of Washington. The transition has somewhat delayed minor changes yet to be made to the floor plan that are related to the proposed acquisition of an external elevator and the preparation of a brochure describing the proposed renovations, which will be made available to the Meeting. Susan emphasized that a main objective of the building renovation is to enhance and facilitate the spiritual life of the Meeting.

02/10-8 Approval of Minutes The minutes were read and APPROVED.

02/10-9 Adjournment With approximately 25 Friends present, the Meeting closed with a period of silent worship at 1:00 p.m., to reconvene as way opens on Sunday, March 14, 2010 at 11:45 a.m.

ATTACHMENT: Memorial Minute for Barbara Grant Nnoka

Memorial Minute, Barbara Grant Nnoka

May 18, 1922 – September 4, 2009

Barbara Grant Nnoka, a member of Friends Meeting of Washington for more than 30 years, found Quakerism as a young adult and grew into it. Her spiritual roots deepened, while her sense of adventure moved her to boldly go where few women of her time had gone before.

Notes found in her Bible about the story of Mary and Martha (John 11:38-42), which Barbara apparently made as a young adult while taking a class at Pendle Hill, reveal some of the principles that informed her life. She wrote, "Ideally - as in the organization of AFSC - that work is "right" which grows from a compelling - shared - uniting feeling which dictates a Martha-like response - where the doing is an extension of the sensitive beings gathered primarily not for the purpose of doing, but gathered in order to be loving, sensitive, already in touch in God." Barbara 's life manifested this Martha-like activism grown from a Mary-like center. As she put it in a letter to a Friend in 1988, "I am a very nuts-and-bolts person; I prefer to do "Martha-work" around the Meeting, and I am by training and preferences, a one-on-one person."

Barbara was born in Hartford, Connecticut, to Edgar and Anna Grant. She attended a Christian Science Sunday school, and reported that she never missed a day of school to ill health, a fact she attributed to the prayers of her mother and uncle. She grew up in Wethersfield, Connecticut, with her parents and younger brother, Donald. From her Swedish relatives, she learned needlework, sewing, Swedish cooking, and a few words of the language. In high school, she was voted "most likely to succeed." She attended and graduated from Colby College in Waterville, Maine, in 1943. During her college summers she worked as a counselor at the *Hartford Times* Farm for underprivileged children. She credited this experience with allowing her to take her first steps toward her lifelong commitment to justice as an essential principle of socio-political organization.

It was at Haverford College where she first met and worked with Quakers. She received a master's degree in "relief and reconstruction" there in 1945—one of a few dozen women trained by Haverford to become social workers for postwar reconstruction in Europe. She often said that this year-long program made a crucial difference in how she perceived the world.

During the decade after graduating from Haverford, she worked for the Henry Street Settlement in New York City, the Annie Wright Seminary (an Episcopalian boarding school for girls in Tacoma, Washington), the Friends Committee on National Legislation in Washington, D.C., and the American Friends Service Committee. She met many of the major thinkers in Quakerism of the time, including Howard Brinton and Douglas Steere, and often said afterwards that she felt guided by them and by the experience of working with them. She worked with Raymond Wilson as he started the Friends Committee on National Legislation in what is now the Children's Library at Friends Meeting of Washington. Friend Wilson's belief in a peaceable future stood in front of Barbara for her whole life, and she remained committed to it and to the political activism he thought necessary to bring it into being.

In the early 1950s, she began to discern a leading to go to Africa to work. In 1954, she convinced both the Nigerian Embassy in Washington D.C. and the British Colonial Office in London to allow her to take up a teaching position in Uyo, Nigeria. Her first position was as an Adult Education Officer in a program organized by the British Colonial Government in Eastern Nigeria to promote community development and teach village women basic literacy and arithmetic, hygiene, and baby care. These might not have represented what Barbara considered the overriding priorities for the situation. Nevertheless, she saw the assignment as a learning experience and threw herself into it with her usual sense of adventure.

In November of that year, Nigeria held its first elections and she was asked to oversee a voting booth. The man she was to marry showed up as an observer for the National Council of Nigeria; his party won. She married Alphonsus Ethelbert Ifeanyi Nnoka, and her contract as a teacher was immediately terminated because married women were not allowed to teach. She then served as an aide to Nnamadi Azikiwe, who became the first Prime Minister of Nigeria. Later, when the marriage ended in divorce, she taught English in secondary schools for boys for six years, and for four years served as Principal of Yejide Girls Grammar School in Ibadan—the only American in that part of the world.

Her relationship with the Religious Society of Friends continued to deepen during this time. At Ibadan, she found enough Quaker families to gather a small Meeting for Worship every other weekend. She also received weekly letters of support and encouragement from Friends in the U.S. She said that she felt carried by those letters throughout the 12 years she spent in Nigeria. In turn, Barbara was an active correspondent for her entire life, writing perhaps thousands of letters; friends mentioned the care and nurture they received from her written hand.

In 1966, with Nigeria headed toward civil war, Barbara decided to return home with her twin children. She had spent the summer of 1964 in the U.S. to judge the effects of the newly minted Civil Rights laws. Now, she coped with the challenges of raising biracial children as a single white mother in the 1960s. She taught African studies at the State University of New York at New Paltz (eventually becoming chair of the department), joined the New Paltz Friends Meeting, and attended New York Yearly Meeting and Friends General Conference gatherings. In 1971, Barbara moved to West Chester, Pennsylvania, to run the Friends Shelter for Girls in Cheyney; while there, she joined the West Chester Friends Meeting. In 1975, the family moved again, this time to Arlington, Virginia, where Barbara worked for the Arlington County Chapter of the Red Cross. She ran programs for military families and directed the chapter's disaster response, often donning her Red Cross coat in the middle of the night to respond to some local crisis. An exceptionally good organizer, Barbara could turn well-meaning efforts

into an efficient, effective response. She also found time during these years to obtain a second Master's degree in legal studies from Antioch College.

In Arlington, Barbara was part of a tenant group that worked to save Colonial Village, a complex of more than a thousand garden apartments built in Arlington in the late 1930's. Mobil Corporation purchased the complex in 1977, proposing to replace much of it with high-rise buildings. After a tenant campaign that included getting federal, state, and local historic landmark designation, Mobil compromised, and most of the complex was preserved as a mixture of condos, long-term rentals, a low-income rental section, and a tenant cooperative, where Barbara lived for the rest of her life.

At the same time, Barbara was becoming active in the Friends Meeting of Washington, which she joined in 1979. There, she served as a stalwart member (and often as clerk) to many committees, was appointed to the Trustees, helped to write the meeting's history (including contributing to one chapter during the final weeks of her life), shepherded the Mary Jane Simpson Scholarship Committee that helped dozens of D.C. public school graduates attend college, and provided practical and loving support to generations of members and attenders. She gave firm guidance to the Meeting, helping its members and attenders to face and resolve differences of opinion over everything from same sex marriage to automatic dishwashers. Many Friends commented on Barbara's ability to deliver gentle, solid advice that was grounded in an acceptance and love for the whole person, "warts and all." She was caring and yet eminently pragmatic and no-nonsense. Her advice was sound, and sought by many. "What would Barbara think?" became a question on which many issues turned. She was also an exceptional recorder of minutes, able to discern both the content and the sense of a meeting and feed it back to the group in a way that allowed them to move forward.

Barbara's political activism continued after her tutelage under Raymond Wilson. She read the newspaper daily—especially any articles on Africa—and corresponded regularly with her elected officials, both by letter and, later, by email. She campaigned for a number of candidates, including Barack Obama, for whom she made calls in 2008. During the Iraq war, she visited her Senators and Congressman with groups of local Quakers, and even went to speak with the legal counsel of CACI, a contractor in Arlington responsible for staffing the interrogation team at Abu Ghraib in Iraq, which was accused of torture. She advised the counsel to get CACI to drop that contract, which it eventually did.

Upon retirement at age 65, Barbara turned in her practical way to consider how to best use the next stage of her life. "There are times," she wrote, "when one must face one's limitations, even one's mortality. I had to admit that at 65 I had a finite amount of time, probably even less possibility of continued good health, and I had quite limited financial resources. I had whatever ability I had been endowed with, plus some training and education which I had been given, and I had all the emotional warts and scars of white, middle-class, post World War II America. I had had some adventures that enhanced my private times and gave me my two children and grandchildren. An almost chance encounter with Quakers in a graduate study program at Haverford College gave me a comfortable religious affiliation—eventually.

"But that was it. No matter what I wanted to make of the rest of my life, what I have been and done up to now has given me whatever—and all—I have to work with. It does not deny me my dreams and hopes for a better future for those who follow me, including the possibility of a world without hunger...but it does shift the responsibility for some of the achievement to those who follow me."

She went on to give significant gifts of time and expertise to the Meeting, gently guiding its members and attenders through many difficulties, helping to write its history, and organizing its resources to benefit graduates of the D.C. Public Schools.

In her 80's, Barbara was diagnosed with breast cancer. She consented to surgery to remove a lump, but when the cancer returned four years later, decided to reject treatment. To avoid that treatment when she needed care, she spent a brief period at a Christian Science nursing home until entering into hospice care. When she returned from the nursing home, she pronounced herself well-satisfied with her adventure. She died the following week.

Barbara is survived by her daughter Catherine, her son Barrett and his wife Judith, her grandson Carl, her granddaughter Meredith, her sister-in-law Jayne Grant, her nieces, and multiple F/friends who knew and loved her.

WINTER EVENTS

Adult Religious Education

The Adult Religious Education group will meet on Sunday, **March 14** at 9:15 a.m. and Sunday, **March 28**, at 9:15 a.m. The group will meet in the Decatur Place Room and will continue to discuss the writings of Rufus Jones. For further information contact John Scales at johnkscales@aol.com.

William Penn House Potluck

William Penn House, a Quaker Center on Capitol Hill, invites all f/Friends and neighbors to their monthly potluck dinner and dialogue. On Sunday **March 7**, the program will be presented by Brad Olgilvie, a William Penn House staff member, Ryan Kuseki, and Troy Cline. The program this First Day is: ***The Bible, Homosexuality and The Clobber Passages***. At this potluck/dialogue Brad and two of his friends (who are gay, were raised in conservative faith communities, and maintain their deep Christian faiths), will lead an exploration of the Bible passages that are often used in the discussion GLBT rights. They will discuss why they matter, what are the “clobber passages”, and how our understanding and appreciation of these passages can help us to be a healing presence in the on-going efforts to support GLBT people in our Meetings, as well as to be effective spokespeople for GLBT rights among the wider circle of Friends. William Penn House presents many workshops, seminars and opportunities for growth in both the Quaker community and the wider community. William Penn House is located at 515 East Capitol St. SE, Washington, DC 20003. For more information see info@WilliamPennHouse.org or call 202-543-3814.

FMW's Senior Center in March

Programs of slides or talks are held on the second and fourth Wednesdays of each month. The program is: on Wednesday, **March 10**, Carol Coffee will present a slide show of **Australia**. On Wednesday, **March 24**, Maurice Boyd will discuss and present the music of **Duke Ellington** and **Billy Strayhorn**.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Work Days

In February, the Property Committee sponsored three days: on Saturday, February 6; Monday, February 15; and Sunday, Sunday, February 28. On Monday, February 15 - Presidents Day, sixteen Friends turned out for the workday: Steve and, Andrej Coleman, Debby Churchman, Meg Greene, Brian and Julian Greenberg, Susan Griffin, Danny Hollinger, Bruce Kellogg, Malachy Kilbride, Tom Libbert, Mackenzie Morgan, Bill Palmer, Byron Sandford, and Martha Solt.

Hardworking Friends have completed most of the cleaning, sanding, patching and prep work in the Quaker House stairwell entry, and in all six spaces of the Carriage House 2nd floor. A major “make over” is continuing in the Quaker House stairwell entry with cleaning, scrapping, patching plaster and painting. In addition, many arched windows had sash cords replaced. Progress has been made painting the three rooms of the Carriage House apartment, and the trim and windows in the Meeting Office have been painted. The benches in the Meeting Room have been cleaned, and repaired. A lot of snow has been shoveled.

FMW Friends are encouraged to join the Property Committee and their helpful Friends at upcoming work days. Workdays will periodically be announced on the FMW list serv, the weekly announcements and on the FMW website, quakersdc.org.

Quaker Camp Scholarships

As summer is “around the corner” it is time to apply for Quaker Camp Scholarships. BYM has camps and camping adventures for children ages 9 through 18 years old. Check the Baltimore Yearly Meeting website, bym-rsf, for detailed information about all the camping experiences available to Friends. Scholarships are available. For information, contact the Religious Education Clerk, Tracy Hart, before rise of Meeting on Sunday, March 7. Applicants need to provide: parents’ name(s), name(s) of children going to camp, what camp they are going to, and all contact information. For questions contact Tracy at thart@worldbank.org or 202-462-6442.