

FMW Newsletter, March 2017

 [Printer-friendly version](#)

[Worship Sharing](#)

[Minutes](#)

[Expanded Discussion Notes](#)

[Upcoming Events](#)

[Thinking About Race](#)

[Renovation--Yes? No?](#)

[Sanctuary Congregation](#)

[Comics](#)

Friends Meeting of Washington

Minutes

Monthly Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business

February 2017

Query for Worship Sharing:

How do we stay spiritually grounded and live out our Quaker values as we labor for peace and social justice?

- *The query prompted several Friends to reflect on the legacy of Quaker social justice work, including historical and modern milestones for peace and justice led by Quakers and supported by Quaker communities. Friends remarked how the presence of Quakers in these past movements was often steadying in contrast to others.*
- *Friend's also reflected how Quaker values- simplicity, integrity, community, equality- are not what we are but what we aspire to be. We have inherited the injustices, burdens and prejudices of our greater society and culture which, if unexamined, will limit us. As such, our spiritual discipline requires application not only with external social justice pursuits, but also internally within our own quaker communities.*
- *A friend shared the following quote from Isaac Pennington:*

“Give over thine own willing, give over thine own running, give over thine own desiring to know or be anything, and sink down to the seed which God sows in thy heart and let that be in thee, and grow in thee, and breathe in thee, and act in thee.”

Welcome of Visitors

Meeting for Business opened at 12:20 pm with 41 Friends present. Friends welcomed Dante Bucci, Chris Zubowicz, Suzie Remold, Kelly Singer, Andrej Coleman, and Allison Johnson.

Clerk’s Report

a) Announcements and Accolades

- The **Women's March** event went splendidly, with all kind of effusive thank-yous from the various participants. It was, as Steve Coleman put it, Quaker hospitality at its best. Many thanks to the nearly 40 volunteers who made it happen.
- **Passing of Lenore Congdon and Philip Holman:** We have received word that our long-absent members have died. We will need to write memorial minutes for these Friends. If you knew them, or know someone who knew, please let the Clerk know.
- **Molly Tully's** surgery for her hip is scheduled for later this month. She enjoys visitors and phone calls. We are holding her in the Light. Contact the Personal Aid Committee if you'd like to be in touch with her.
- **Charmaine Gilbreath**, who has been struggling with cancer, has been declared cancer-free!

b) Upcoming

- **(2/19) LAST Focus Group for the Spiritual State of the Meeting:** Ministry & Worship is still gathering answers to the questions they are posing for this year’s survey. Please give your answers to Greg Robb, clerk of Ministry & Worship at gregquake17@gmail.com, or come to our final focus group on 2/19 at noon. The questions are:
 1. *What brought you to Quakerism?*
 2. *What more do you hope for in the Religious Society of Friends/ Friends Meeting of Washington?*
 3. *Are there barriers to you becoming more involved within the Religious Society of Friends/ Friends Meeting of Washington?*
- **Sanctuary Church Discernment:** A group of about 20 Friends have started meeting to consider the question of whether or not FMW should become a Sanctuary church. Some of us recently attended a training at All Souls Unitarian, which was attended by 250 people from 97 different congregations. We are mindful that this decision (of whether or not to declare ourselves

a Sanctuary Congregation) will need to be made by Meeting for Business, and to that end, we are gathering information that would help us in that discernment. If you are interested in getting involved, please contact Rebecca Harris reb.c.harris@gmail.com.

- **NEW task force to review committee structures:** Contact Todd Harvey if interested, FMWNominating@gmail.com
- The upcoming **Active Bystander Training** led by J.E. McNeil's is already sold out, but she hopes to do another one soon at William Penn House. To find out more about these trainings, check out [this website](#).

Major Items

Membership

Janet Dinsmore offered the second presentation of Greg Robb's membership, which was accepted by the meeting. The request for associate membership for Mary Melchior's children, Preston Bernard Melchior-Fisher, Gregory Montfort Melchior-Fisher and Charles Xavier Melchior-Fisher was also accepted.

Trustees- Dan Dozier

**For expanded notes on the discussion, please see the attachment, below.*

- The Meeting approved the trustees to start the mortgage application process, and to pay the necessary associated fees.
- The meeting recommends that the Property Committee currently consider the low cost accessibility needs of the meeting.
- The Meeting has a concern that we should continue to assess the spiritual and community impact of relying upon increased rentals to pay our mortgage. It was suggested that members and/or clerks of some of the following committees consider next steps, including a consultation with staff: Capital improvement task force, Trustees, Peace and Social Concerns, Ministry and Worship Property Committee, and Ministry and Worship.

Nominating- Todd Harvey

- Marsha Holliday (M), Personnel committee, 3-year term ending 2019
- Byron Sanford (M), Capital Campaign committee, unspecified term

Property- Ken Orvis

- The Meeting approved timely repairs needed for the Decatur Place Room, to be paid with funding from the Capital Reserve Fund. The renovation approval will be for up to \$30,000 to repair the wall and for mold remediation which affects our nursery.

Friends APPROVED the minutes as improved.

The Meeting closed at 2:25 PM with approximately 32 persons in attendance to reconvene as Way opens on March 12, 2017.

Attachments

Expanded Discussion Notes: Trustees presentation to the Meeting with a Concern for Business on 2/11/2017

- The Trustees sought approval for the next step in the Capital renovation improvements to apply for the mortgage to fund the renovation. The application will require about \$70,000-80,000 with associated fees. The mortgage application will lock in the current rate of 4.35%. This rate is only available for this week; it may well rise after that. The mortgage itself is expected to be approximately \$2.8 million. Approval to apply for the mortgage is the current next step, and there will be additional steps for approval in the renovation process to come.
- Based on over 10 years dedicated work of the Meeting, and thorough analysis of past fundraising, current assets and expectations of future growth and rental revenue, the Meeting expects it will be able to pay for the mortgage. The worst-case scenario, if the meeting were unable to pay the loan, would be for the bank to foreclose on the loan and this property. However, this is not expected, and even if this did occur, we expect that the Bank would get its money, as our property is worth much more than the amount we seek to borrow.
- A friend rises out of respect for the process and love of the meeting to share a concern the meeting is rushing into the process. Are we prepared to add over \$1 million expansion of the budget of this renovation? How do we expand the ownership of this project throughout the meeting. Are we prepared to pay the increased income tax? Have we considered low-threshold ways to make our community more accessible? The friend shared that the meeting has not made necessary preliminary steps for a basic level of accessibility in ways that are no cost or low cost. The friend shared some of these suggestions for basic improvements. The key question is how are we honoring the many different voices within the meeting?
- Several friends supported these valid suggestions for improving accessibility now. Several friends suggested that we move forward with addressing the renovations and these low barrier

accessibility needs together simultaneously. A friend shares appreciation for these small, practical suggestions for improving access, and invites the property committee to move forward with them.

- A friend supports the mortgage and renovation. With that, the friend shared concerns that as a Quaker community we may lose our grounding due to the reliance on external rentals in order to pay both the new mortgage and our current expenses to run the meeting. How will commercialization affect our community? A friend shares that the burden of managing rentals could be tremendous, and potentially come at a cost to our values or accessibility to community groups that pursue justice and peace (such as Showing Up for Racial Justice-- SURJ). The Administrative Secretary expressed reservations about the toll of management of the rentals, which would require significant human resources.
- To respond to the deep concerns of the Administrative Secretary, a friend suggests a set of criteria for rentals be developed to ensure we can both pay our mortgage and be accessible to our community.. This is part of our stewardship of inheritance.
- Several friends deeply involved in the process asks the meeting to honor and respect the prayerful, thorough consideration, and deep discernment by many people over several years to lead us up to this decision. Gratitude to the friends who have done this over the years with great stewardship, care and spiritual grounding. The friends invoke trust to make this leap of faith together. The time to move forward is now.
- Several friends shared the thought that throughout the history of this project, delays have consistently brought the cost of the project up. A friend focused on the costs and risks of inaction over the last year has cost us money (unrelated to interest rates), inaction over the last 3 months has cost the meeting at least \$100,000. We need to trust each other's work and consider that there have been opportunities to weigh in with concerns throughout the full process thus far.
- A friend welcomes a deadline as a divine forcing function to help our meeting come to unity and move forward to make good on the decade of discerning and work on this issue. With this renovation, our meeting will be enabled to better serve the growing needs of our community.
- A friend shared about their personal journey with Parkinson's and that because of the realities of declining mobility, at some point in the near future, they will have to consider moving to another meeting that is accessible. The friend's experience is illustrative of many members of our meeting, and the costs that can have to our spiritual community.
- A friend is prepared to trust that these questions, which have been raised before and will be raised again, will be continued to be faithfully tended to in a way that exhibits our Quaker values and integrity of process. The Friend expresses gratitude to all the people who have dedicated themselves to laboring in this process over the years. Friends have taken these questions to our committees to discern answers to consider them and find answers to them. The friends notes that they detect a level of fear in these questions, which may be the root of our caution to move forward.
- A friend shares that Quaker process is about finding unity and gathering the sense of the meeting, not to gain consensus.
- The meeting paused to hold its decision in the light, and to hold the clerks in the light.

Seven Steps to Improve Accessibility at FMW: Suggestions for low-cost or no-cost ways for our Meeting to be more accessible to people with disabilities

1. Instruct all Friendly Office Presence (FOP's) to always unlock the Phelps gate first thing on Sunday morning, to prop open both exterior doors to the accessible north entry to the Meeting Room, and make sure that benches are left so that wheelchair access is easy. Additionally, before locking the Phelps gate and north entry, first check to make sure that everyone in a wheelchair has left the entire second floor, including restrooms, Parlor/Library, Terrace Room, and Terrace.
2. Make entry to the main floor of the Meeting House safer with accessible railing (farther from the wall) up the short stair inside the Decatur entry. The current railings are very narrow and close to the wall, which makes it especially difficult and unsafe for people with disabilities to transfer down the stairs, as they are forced to bunch their hands and feet up next to the wall. The existing ramp does not help people who are not wheelchair-bound, and waiting for the ramp to be brought out is not something that most people in wheelchairs want, as it causes disruption and undermines their independence and dignity.
3. Shore up the main stair railing and add extra holds on the wall.
4. Relocate accessibility obstacles such as the main hall literature rack.
5. Fix trip hazard obstacle where the Terrace stone ramp meets the front lawn. This was a problem during the March weekend, when one person ended up falling into the lawn and unable to get back up the ramp without assistance.
6. Remove enough benches so that people in wheelchairs can sit in most parts of the main Meeting Room. Shifting just four benches to the Assembly Room and North Room would add to the capacities of those rooms, keep the benches available for those extremely rare occasions when the Meeting Room has insufficient seating, and dramatically improve access for all inside the Meeting Room.
7. Enable the hard-of-hearing to hear more messages in Meeting by using our wonderful sound system, which has now been well tested in other settings. We value messages enough to use this practice for Meeting for Business, called meetings, and memorial meetings. But we have not yet offered a similar solution for the messages in our regular Meeting for Worship, which many Friends are unable to hear. This would require volunteers to bring the mic to people as they rise to speak, which seems to have worked smoothly.

UPCOMING EVENTS – MARCH 2017

March 1: Help make sandwiches for the **Grate Patrol** to take to our vulnerable neighbors, starting at 5:30 pm. For more information, contact Steve Brooks at sbrooks@uab.edu

March 4: Help make breakfast for our vulnerable neighbors. Convene at 6:15 am at **So Others Might Eat**. For more information, contact Betsy Bramon at betsy.bramon@gmail.com

March 4 – 5 – **Junior Young Friends Conference, Langley Hill Friends Meeting (McLean, VA)** Please arrive at 10am with sleeping bag, pad, pillow, change of clothes and toiletries. Please

remember that the deadline to register and be guaranteed a slot is one week before the conference (February 24). Any one registering after that date will be placed on a waiting list and may not be able to attend. For more information, contact Jocelyn Dowling, Youth Programs Manager. To register, go to the JYF Registration page on the Yearly Meeting website.

March 6 – Climate Change in the Trump Era, Bethesda Public Library (Bethesda, MD)

Bethesda Friends Meeting (Quakers) is sponsoring a free movie and panel discussion at 6:30pm, in the Bethesda Library meeting room (7400 Arlington Road). The award-winning documentary, *Before the Flood*, features Leonard DiCaprio, former President Obama and many notables, followed by a panel discussion on global climate change: what we can do collectively and individually? The film begins at 6:35pm sharp. Speakers include Joelle Novey, Director, Interfaith Power and Light, and Emiy Wirzba, Policy Associate, Friends Committee on National Legislation. There also will be information on personal energy efficiency. Snacks and beverages provided. All welcome. For more details, contact Alex Bell (240-314-0378) or Peter Jenkins (301-500-4383).

March 11: Active Bystander Training Ever witnessed someone being harassed and wondered, “What can I do?” This training will teach you specific, concrete, nonviolent steps to take to protect the targeted person and stop the abuse. Training provided by Friends Meeting of Washington member and peace and social justice lawyer J.E. McNeil, 2:00 to 5:00 pm

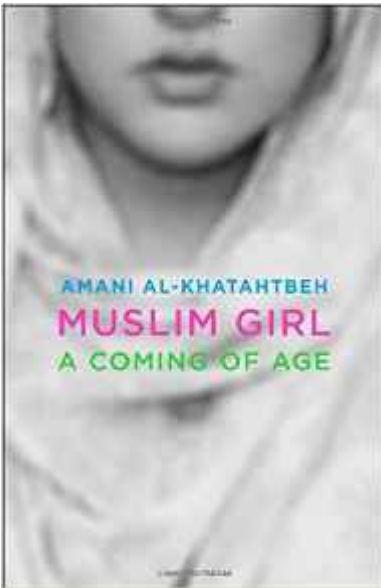
Free Register here: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/friends-bystander-intervention-training-march-11-tickets-32215489396>

March 11 – Saturday – Poems in the Cabin, Friends Wilderness Center (Harpers Ferry, WV) Published poet, Tom Donlon, and FWC Board Member, Hayden Mathews will co-facilitate this program that will explore the power of poems to enrich our lives with their power to enlighten, challenge, and expand us. Drawing from poems that resonate strongly with them and poems that participants bring that are their particular favorites, the group will weave a warm mid-winter blanket of words to warm the soul. Absolutely NO prior experience in reading or writing poetry is necessary - only a desire to explore our inner reaches using the magic carpet of poetry. Please RSVP to Sheila Bach (snbach@earthlink.net) and when doing so indicate whether you would like to have a home-cooked lunch (a \$10 cost).

March 18 – Third Month Interim Meeting, Richmond Friends Meeting (Richmond, MD)

Get to know Yearly Meeting Committees and Friends from other Meetings! Be a part of important decision making. Join Friends for morning committee meetings and the afternoon’s Interim Business Meeting. Richmond Friends Meeting will host the Third Month Interim Meeting. Friends will begin gathering at 10:00am. Committee meetings will begin at 10:30. [Check the Yearly Meeting website for more information.](#)

Thinking About Race (March 2017) – **Muslim Girl** by Amani Al-Khatahbeh



Amani Al-Khatahtbeh was nine years old on September 11, 2001, and could see the destruction of the World Trade Center towers from her home in New Jersey. **After that, experiencing anti-Muslim attitudes and behavior through her school years, she found her voice and founded www.MuslimGirl.com. It started as a blog in 2009 and turned into a highly popular, highly regarded website, thus giving voice to many others. Her book, Muslim Girl, A Coming of Age, describes her journey.**

“I feel that the horrible scapegoating we’ve had to endure has forced us into a corner of defensiveness, dissipating our energy in this endless game of pushing back against the misconceptions that ultimately victimize us. It makes me sad to think about all the resources the Muslim American community has been

forced to waste for the past decade on campaigns, events, and media efforts to prove that we, too, are Americans; that we, too, are *human*, begging and pleading the public not to believe the racist rhetoric being spewed about us. I can’t imagine the types of institutions, programs, and civic society we could have cultivated for our community—the type of *backbone* we could have had the opportunity to grow—had we not been forced into this position.” (pp. 44-45)

This column is prepared by the BYM Working Group on Racism (WGR) and sent to the designated liaison at each Monthly and Preparative Meeting. The BYM 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.

The Renovation—Yes? No?

At the **March 12 Meeting for Business**, the Trustees will be presenting a request that the Meeting approve signing the construction contract (and the associated mortgage documents) to carry out the long-discussed renovation. There will be a document circulated in advance on the FMW listserv describing the decision and associated issues.

Should FMW be a Sanctuary Congregation?

The Sanctuary Taskforce is trying to discern whether Friends Meeting of Washington should join with a regional network of Sanctuary congregations in the MD/DC/VA area. To do so, we would have to be in unity with the following statement:

We are a network of congregations in the DC/MD/VA region that are providing support and sanctuary to our neighbors, friends, and family who fear being detained and deported, or profiled because of their religion, race or political beliefs. Our faith will not allow us to permit the criminalization and scapegoating of immigrants and people of color. In the face of hate and discrimination, we are committed to showing love, compassion and hospitality.

This taskforce will be meeting on **Sunday, March 5** at noon to discuss this question. All are welcome. For more information, contact Rebecca Harris at reb.c.harris@gmail.com