

FMW Newsletter, May 2017

 [Printer-friendly version](#)

[Query](#)

[Minutes](#)

[SSoM draft](#)

[Handbook changes](#)

[Ctte of Clerks minutes](#)

[Upcoming Events](#)

[Thinking About Race](#)

[Comics](#)

Friends Meeting of Washington

Order of Worship

Monthly Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business

9 April 2017

Query for Worship Sharing: How do we see the rhythms of birth and death in ourselves and our Meeting?

- Friends shared themes that resonated with both literal and figurative reflections on birth and death. Some shared personal experiences around the death of a loved one, and the rebirth of new parts of their lives after those experiences.
- Themes emerged around death as an opening for new life, and an opportunity to evolve and grow.
- Friends shared the meeting is an inflection point, with some of the careful work of many decades coalescing at this point and time now. What will we be as community moving forward? Since our founders built this building in the 1930's, in what ways have we changed? In what ways have we remained steady?

Welcome of Visitors

Meeting for Business opened at 12:25 pm with 25 Friends present. Friends welcomed first time business meeting attender, Tom Yonker.

Clerk's Report

1. Announcements and Accolades

- Renovation of Decatur Place Room is expected to begin next week.
- Young Friends from FMW were published in *Friends Journal*. Their letter, entitled "Dear Mister Trump" can be found online their website . Congratulations to Greyson Acquaviva, Anna Avenaysan, Charlie Melchior-Fisher, and Preston Mechoir-Fisher
- On Wednesday in the Parlour, we hosted an intimate, beautiful wedding of two Chinese citizens who came here so that their same-sex marriage could be legitimized by law. The officiant is a friend of Lib Segal, and the photographer's parents are Quakers who worked at Monteverde in Costa Rica.
- Pamela Boyce Simms, a keynote speaker at the upcoming FGC Gathering this July at Niagara Falls will speak at FMW on April 23 after rise of meeting. Boyce Simms, the 2016-2017 Pendle Hill Henry J. Cadbury Scholar, is traveling to meetings from now until July speaking on her ministry Quaker Pathways Forward: Rekindling the Fire of Fox. A Buddhist-Quaker, she says "the time has come again for Friends to stand in the epicenter of social transformation and model an evolutionary response to society's multi-tiered, existential challenges."

b) Upcoming

- Pastoral Counseling workshop on Grief will be on Saturday, May 6, from 1 to 4.
- Another Active Bystander Training, led by J.E., will be held on Saturday, May 13
- Would you consider accompanying an immigrant to either a routine interview with ICE or to court? Sanctuary DMV's training for how to support immigrants is May 18th, 6:00 to 8:00 pm in our Meeting Room. You may register here: <http://tinyurl.com/accompanimentTraining>
- **Friends United Meeting (FUM) Triennial** is offering the Stewards Program at the upcoming Triennial in Wichita, KS this July. Yearly Meetings are being asked to **nominate young adults (ages 18-27)** who are showing interest in the Friends movement, have leadership potential, and could gain significant benefit from participating in leadership opportunities during the conference. The program will be facilitated by Pat Byers, Assistant Superintendent at Indiana Yearly Meeting, and include significant time working alongside those leading the Youth / YAF program at the Triennial. Up to 10 Stewards will be selected. Applications can be found at FUM.org and are due by May 30, 2017

Major Items

Capital Campaign Status Update – Susan Griffin

- A significant gift was received this past month. We are now 94% of the pledges we needed for the \$900,000 goal we set for ourselves! This gift is a commitment for the next 5 years. This gift is helping to move our meeting towards rebirth.

- Susan further encouraged everyone to be inspired to give what they can to move us further to our goal.

Nominating Committee – Todd Harvey

- Resignation accepted with gratitude for his service for:

Justin Connor (M), Capital Campaign Committee

- Nominations accepted for:

Merry Pearlstein (M), Finance and Stewardship, 3 years ending 2019 (2nd standing committee)

Shannon Hughes (Q), Religious Education, 3 years ending 2019

Chris Wickham (M), co-Historian (no defined term)

- What is the role of the historian? See excerpt from the Handbook:

“4.1 Historians There are two Historians, whose duty it is to keep records of events of permanent interest that relate to the activities of the Meeting, particularly items not normally recorded in minutes of the Meeting for Business or in other official records. The Historians answer many inquiries on Meeting and Quaker history. Development of an oral history is also a function of the Meeting Historians. The Historians may request the assistance of others as needed. One or both Historians serve ex officio on the Records and Handbook Committee. They are appointed annually and are members of the Religious Society of Friends or attenders at Friends Meeting of Washington. Faith and Practice Monthly Meeting Records, sec. III, B, 8”

Membership – Janet Dinsmore

Approval of the second presentation of membership for Nicole Else-Quest, and for her children to be Associate Members:

- Raeka Zoraida Agostini-Quest
- Isador Camilo-Agostini-Quest

Marriage & Family – Gray Handley

Approval of the second presentation of the upcoming wedding of Sarah Radomsky and Sasha Rindisbacher, to be married under our care on September 9, 2017. Their Oversight Committee members will be Jim Bell, Debby Churchman, Chris Wickham, and Michael Cronin.

Ministry and Worship – Greg Robb

- Committee is hard at work to address deepening of the large 10:30 meeting. The committee will be trying some new things between now and the end of the year. Some of it may be considered trial and error-- the committee welcomes feedback and ideas as they roll out new things. We are rooted in a sense of kindness and nurturing within the large 10:30 meeting to help it to grow.
- First presentation of the Spiritual State of the Meeting Report (SSOM). New birth reflects our meeting in flux.
 - This year, the SSOM was developed through an intentional decision to primarily use in-person focus group meeting and emails. In the past, we have relied heavily on online surveys.
 - A friend rose in support of the good work of the committee and their in-person methodology to pursue the SSOM this year.
 - Greg closed his report by sharing a quote from one of the focus groups for Spiritual State of the Meeting, **“I know we will get to the right place.”**

Sexual Harassment Policy Task Force – Greg Robb

- Progress is being made as the policy is in the final stages of development. There has been great unity and cohesion around it, and the hard work is something we are proud of.

Personnel – Bill Strein

Proposed changes to the Meeting Handbook

- These changes are routine changes to the meeting handbook, mostly centered upon articulating the role of the administrative secretary as it is in practice.
- Friends APPROVED the proposed changes.

Committee of Clerks – Gene Throwe

Presentation of minutes from the 1.29.17 meeting

- A friend rose to express his deep appreciation for the work of the Personal Aid Committee, recognizing the key pastoral care work that its members provide. They have given very careful attention to members and their families, including spiritual solace. They deserve our appreciation.
 - All of the members of our meeting should consider what we can do to support the work of that committee.
 - Emilie Schmeidler and Grant Thompson will be considering new ways to support the committee. Contact Emilie if you would like to join the conversation.

- Todd Harvey, leading the effort to restructure committees, shared that the work is still in progress. Contact him to share your thoughts and concerns.
 - The late 1990s was the last time there was a major shift in committee structure.
 - A friend noted playfully that, “the boil is about ready to be lanced” :)

Looking Ahead

- Annual review of the Administrative Secretary

Friends APPROVED the minutes as improved.

The Meeting closed at 1:16 PM with approximately 19 persons in attendance to reconvene as Way opens on May 14, 2017 (Mother’s Day).

Attachments:

1. Spiritual State of the Meeting draft
2. Proposed Revisions to Meeting Handbook
3. Minutes Committee of Clerks, 1.29.2017

Spiritual State of the Meeting

April 2017

It is hard to ignore the impact of the presidential election on our meeting. It has at once raised hopes FMW can be a true Shining Light that will attract new members while reviving worries we may not be up to the task. Some are more engaged in political activities while Republicans wonder if there is a place for them at FMW.

We used this year’s Spiritual State of the Meeting to get a sense from members, attenders and sojourners about what brought them to Quakerism, their hopes for the meeting and the barriers they

face in getting more involved.

Here are a few observations from this year's survey:

Of course everyone's path to Quakerism and FMW was unique. One fact stood out. Many said they decided to investigate the Quaker faith after seeing or meeting a Quaker in action. That leads to a natural question: Are we at FMW being "seen" enough? Are we active in our community?

- Many members hope FMW can find a better balance between silence and vocal ministry.
- Some believe we should try to find better way to balance messages of social activism and needs of the spirit.
- There was agreement we must commit to "consistently and persistently" work to remove barriers that keep many people of color away.
- There was hope we would improve adult religious education to make sure everyone's spiritual needs are being addressed.
- There was hope of some volunteer to go help in the First Day school so that parents can attend meeting.
- There was hope the meeting could become better at welcoming.
- There were indications that some unduly aggressive messages have dissuaded newcomers from joining the Meeting.

The work ahead for Ministry and Worship is to share the findings with our fellow committees and go through some joint assessments. We must be open to try new approaches while holding onto what has worked in the past. We must find ways to unify our meeting. The way ahead is not clear. But as one attender said: "Quakers get to the right place in the end."

A recurrent concern is that the unprogrammed nature of the Meeting is put at risk by misbehaviors of some who insist on speaking every week. We doubt that weekly messages really come from the Spirit. We remind Members and Attenders that preparing messages is against Quaker practice. We are also concerned about the offensive nature of some of these messages. It is disrespectful to the Meeting to behave in such a way and the question becomes: to protect the special needs of a few but essentially one person, are we not putting the Meeting in crisis and sacrificing the spiritual needs of many others who long to have an unprogrammed Meeting and take refuge in the "smaller" Meetings or simply leave?

Page	Current Text from Meeting Handbook	Proposed Text and Comments Administrative Secretary and Event Manager
various	Administrative Secretary	<p><i>Comment:</i> Beginning with Debby’s hiring as an interim position and continuing in her regular position, the former “Administrative Secretary” position was restructured as the “Administrative Secretary and Event Manager”. So, the former title should be changed throughout.</p> <p>The Coordinator has joint responsibility with the Administrative Secretary to supervise[s] the work of the Bookkeeper and confers with the Administrative Secretary on issues of joint concern...</p>
9	<p>The Coordinator has joint responsibility with the Administrative Secretary to supervise the work of the Bookkeeper and confers with the Administrative Secretary on issues of joint concern...</p>	<p>The work of the Bookkeeper is overseen jointly by the Administrative Secretary and the Finance and Stewardship Committee, particularly the Financial Coordinator.</p>
11	<p>The work of the Bookkeeper is overseen jointly by the Administrative Secretary and the Finance and Stewardship Committee, particularly the Financial Coordinator.</p>	<p>The F & S Committee is responsible, together with the Administrative Secretary, for the oversight of the Bookkeeper, who attends Finance and Stewardship Committee meetings as requested by its Clerk.</p>
17	<p>Re: the F & S Committee:</p> <p>The Committee is responsible, together with the Administrative Secretary, for the oversight of the Bookkeeper, who attends Finance and Stewardship Committee meetings as requested by its Clerk.</p>	<p><i>Comment:</i> Neither Debby nor her immediate predecessor “supervised” or “oversees” the work of the Bookkeeper. It might be correct in both places to indicate joint supervision or “overseen by” the Financial Coordinator and the F & S Committee, but the Personnel Committee is not taking any position on that.</p>
10	<p>The Administrative Secretary is employed by the Meeting to oversee the maintenance of the property; manage the business activities of the Meeting; supervise the employees of the Meeting; schedule and make arrangements for the use of the buildings and facilities; provide advisory assistance in support of the activities of the Meeting for Business and Meeting for Worship; and facilitate the extension of</p>	<p>The Administrative Secretary is employed by the Meeting to oversee the maintenance of the property; manage the business activities of the Meeting; supervise the employees of the Meeting[, except where otherwise specified]; schedule and make arrangements for the use of the buildings and facilities; provide advisory assistance in support of the activities of the Meeting for Business and Meeting for Worship; and facilitate the extension of Meeting services</p>

Meeting services to members, attenders, visitors, and the wider community.

to members, attenders, visitors, and the wider community.

Comment:

(1) The Property Manager now oversees building maintenance. This is already listed in the current Handbook on a later page.

(2) The current wording about supervision here implies that Debby supervises all employees, but the current version of the Handbook later on the same page references “unless otherwise specified”, so the proposed wording change would simply make the wording internally consistent.

~~Assistant Administrative Secretary~~

Comment: The reorganization of the two former positions to the current (1) Administrative Secretary and Event Planner, and (2) Property Manager eliminated the former Assistant Administrative Secretary position. Should some future review reinstate such a position, presumably that position would be much different from the former version in the light of the current staffing structure. Other contractors may be hired by the ~~Administrative Secretary~~[Property Manager], as needed and budget funds are available, to assist in property maintenance. Committees also may budget for and hire consultants and contractors (or employees, in the case of child care, under the oversight of the Religious Education Committee) to facilitate their work; oversight of such consultants and contractors is coordinated with the Administrative Secretary[, Property Manager, or] ~~and~~ Bookkeeper.

Comment: These changes simply reflect current practice after the restructuring of the main staff positions.

~~and scheduling the Friendly Office Presence on First Days.~~

10 & elsewhere Assistant Administrative Secretary

Other contractors may be hired by the Administrative Secretary, as needed and budget funds are available, to assist in property maintenance. Committees also may budget for and hire consultants and contractors (or employees, in the case of child care, under the oversight of the Religious Education Committee) to facilitate their work; oversight of such consultants and contractors is coordinated with the Administrative Secretary and Bookkeeper.

10,11

Re: the Personnel Committee

23

... and scheduling the Friendly Office Presence on First Days.

In Attendance:

Records and Handbook - Todd Harvey
Ministry and Worship - Greg Robb
Property- Merry Pearlstein
CITF - Neil Froemming
Finance and Stewardship - Jim Bell
Library- Faith Williams
Clerk of Meeting - Gene Throwe
Child Safety - Virginia Avanesyan

Personal Aid- Emilie Schmeidler

The meeting opened with silent worship.

Todd Harvey is evaluating the committee structure to provide recommendations about ways we can streamline and simplify structure in order that it fit the Meeting.

Progress on construction:

- ready to get the mortgage, and the plan is we'll proceed within the year
- changes to the assembly room plan necessitate putting in updated renovation plans for permitting
- Getting mortgage before plan approval may seem out of order to some. Mortgage rates are going up rapidly, so there is deliberation about the precipitous moment to act.

Update on Personal Aid from the clerk

- Following up with people who need support of the meeting and whose needs for connection require more than PA is structured to provide.

In particular, for

- a. Elders who are in less contact with the meeting
- b. Those who cannot be in Meeting for mobility or reasons of other restrictions

We have a geographic issue-- distance, traffic and schedules make worshipping with and ministering to those not at the Meetinghouse complex. PA committee members sometimes feel that groups of members/attenders do not reach beyond their usual routine to help others, which can cause setbacks for pastoral care.

A friend expressed he is heartened by the discussion of pastoral care and the degree to which we are aware of and supporting members.

Requests for support for members often go out on the listserv. Suggestions were made for other ways to reach people who are willing to help, such as through announcements at all Meetings for Worship followed up by immediately writing down and transmitting the name to Personal Aid.

The Meeting closed in silent worship.

Respectfully submitted,

UPCOMING EVENTS

May 3: 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

May 5 – 6: **Spiritual Formation Retreat** Do you yearn for spiritual deepening? Are you longing for growth in a community of seekers who support one another on their individual journeys? Have you felt a nudge to greater intentionality in your spiritual practice? If so, the Baltimore Yearly Meeting Spiritual Formation Retreat on Living in Unity with Spirit is for you. It will be held at the Shepherd's Spring Outdoor Ministry & Retreat Center in Sharpsburg MD. The retreat is open to all regardless of prior or planned participation in an existing spiritual formation program. The cost is \$130. For details: <https://bym-rsf1-org.presencehost.net/events/spiritform/>

May 6: 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

May 5 to 7: **Junior Young Friends Weekend**, Catocin Quaker Camp. For details, contact Jossie Dowling (301.774.7663), youthprograms@bym-rsf.org

May 7: **William Penn House Potluck & Dialogue** F(f)riends are invited to William Penn House for potluck and Quaker dialogue, starting at 6:30 pm. Staff and members from DC Urban Greens will discuss the importance of accessible food and healthy communities. Bring a dish to share. 515 East Capitol St. SE, 202.543.5560 or info@WilliamPennHouse.org



May 7: **Friend, has thee examined thy carbon footprint?** How do Friends' lifestyles impact the sustainability of the earth's natural systems? For Friends, tracking our own carbon footprints can be a form of discipline to remind us of our responsibility to care for the earth. Baltimore Yearly Meeting has urged individual Friends and local meetings to examine their carbon footprints. An online "carbon footprint calculator" provides a step-by-step process for estimating one's carbon footprint. BYM's Unity with Nature Committee is offering a workshop on how to calculate your carbon footprint on-line,

at noon on Sunday, May 7. Rick Morgan of Bethesda Friends Meeting will explain how carbon calculators can serve as springboards for action by individual Friends and their meetings. Feel free to bring a portable computer and some recent energy/fuel bills. Here are links to three carbon calculators that we may explore:

<http://coolclimate.berkeley.edu/calculator>

<http://calculator.carbonfootprint.com/calculator.aspx>

<http://www.coolcongregations.org/calculator/>

More details about Friends' use of Carbon Footprint calculators: <https://nextstepsearch.wordpress.com/carbon-footprint-fact-sheet?iframe=true&preview=true>

May 11 to 14: Expanding Democracy in an Age of Polarization and Resistance, Pendle Hill. We face a polarized body politic with poor civic discourse. Embattled segments of the population confront greater harassment, fear, and violence. Dissenters are met with increasing surveillance and curtailment of civil liberties. Many who have stood on the sidelines and hoped for more progressive outcomes feel challenged to engage more actively in making social change happen. **How can we seize the opportunity of greater polarization to reach beyond our own circles to engage our neighbors in civil conversation to strengthen our democratic institutions?** Learning from experienced front-line experts, let us sharpen our analysis, hone our skills, and create ways to support each other in resisting further erosion of basic constitutional rights and expanding our nations' long-delayed promise of liberty and justice for all. For more information: <https://pendlehill.org/learn/expanding-democracy-conference/#.WPDe7PkrKBZ>



May 19-21: Join us for an unprogrammed weekend at **Catoctin Quaker Camp**. We share meals and fellowship in the lodge, enjoy canoeing and hiking, toast s'mores on Saturday night and worship outdoors on Sunday morning. Sign up at <https://tinyurl.com/ms3qolj>

May 20: Friends Couple Enrichment: Deepening Connections Joan and Rich Liversidge will lead a day-long opportunity for couples (regardless of marital status or sexual orientation) to deepen their relationship in a safe and sacred space. Child care will be provided. The cost is \$40 per couple;

bring your lunch. Beverages and snacks will be provided. At Sandy Spring Friends Meeting, 17715 Meeting House Road. To learn more, see www.friendscoupleenrichment.org

Coming Up:

June 30 to July 2: Silent Retreat for Friends at Dayspring We will keep the silence from Friday evening through worship on Sunday, enjoying the beauty of God's creation, reading, walking, resting, finding our own rhythms, and listening for the still small voice. The Dayspring Retreat Center is located in Montgomery County at 11301 Neelsville Church Rd., Germantown, MD. Cost is \$220. For more information: Jean Christianson (jschristianson@gmail.com, 410.544.1912).

July 2-8: FGC Gathering, Niagara, NY As water collects from the vast North American Great Lakes watershed to flow down the mighty Niagara River, we invite you to join the energy of a thousand Quakers converging from far and wide at Niagara University for a week of worship, socializing, learning, deepening, fun and more. Our proximity to Niagara Falls (4 miles | 6 km) offers numerous sightseeing options as well as the opportunity to reflect on whether your spiritual journey has you in the rapids above the falls, in the midst of great change, downriver from a significant transition or somewhere else on the river. Our theme, **Ripples Start Where Spirit Moves**, invites you to contemplate where spirit is moving in your life and those around you and what ripples you notice as a result. For more information: <http://www.fgcquaker.org/connect/gathering>

July 31 – Aug. 6: Annual Session 2017, Baltimore Yearly Meeting, Hood College - Frederick, Maryland. This year, the theme of our annual session is *Growing Towards Justice - Acting on Faith*. Through a truly exciting variety of plenaries, workshops, interest groups, Junior Yearly Meeting, through fellowship at meals, worship sharing, and other times, and also through our business sessions, we will have an opportunity to live out our faith. Registration will open in the spring. Go to www.bym-rsf.org/events/annualsession/ for updated information.

Thinking About Race – (May 2017) Mychal Denzel Smith

In his recent (2016) book, **Invisible Man, Got the Whole World Watching: A Young Black Man's Education**, writer Mychal Denzel Smith includes a chapter about his personal struggles with depression. He goes deeply into how difficult it is for black men, whose persona is generally supposed to be macho, to acknowledge mental health problems and any need for – or access to -- mental health treatment.

“What would happen if we reframed the way we understand black male life in a way that took mental health seriously? If we looked outside and didn't see ruthless gangbangers but teenage boys left hopeless and giving themselves suicide missions. If instead of chastising young men for fighting over sneakers we asked why they feel worthless and unseen without them. If we didn't label them junkies but rather recognized their need for affirmation. If we held our boys close when they cried instead of

turning them away to face the frustration, pain, and sadness 'like a man.' If we believed black boys were worthy of second chances that didn't involve prison cells. What if?"

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.