

November 2013 Newsletter

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FRIENDS MEETING OF WASHINGTON

MONTHLY MEETING FOR WORSHIP WITH A CONCERN FOR BUSINESS

October 13, 2013

Advices

Our testimonies are not the heart of our faith but are the fruits of our religious convictions. Assure that your actions in the world arise from your love of the Light in every person. Regard no person as your enemy. When opposing specific actions and abuses of power, seek to address the goodness and truth in each individual. For example, prison ministry has been a long-standing social outreach among Friends. Our guiding doctrine of the Inward Light holds that the presence of God resides in all humanity, including those incarcerated. Therefore, we accept all people as children of God and believe that everyone, even those who have committed crimes, can transform their lives.

Friends are aware that our tasks are founded on witness, not results; that our testimony to the world is the substance of our truth. Assert the transforming power of love and nonviolence as a challenge to injustice and aggression and as an instrument for reconciliation. While faith without works is dead, works without faith are hollow. Because we understand that activism is often spawned from an egocentric center, Friends are urged to test their leadings that their outward works are grounded in the Spirit.

Queries

How do I express my faith in action? How are my actions grounded in my faith?

Is my sense of justice based in love?

Do I endeavor to face the pain of the world and respond to it with forgiveness and compassion?

Are you concerned for those in our society who are disadvantaged?

Do I make an idol of that which I am led to defend?

How do I avoid demonizing those who march against my concern?

Do I take my full share of civic responsibility?

Do I avoid partisan assumptions and rhetoric?

Voices

Meister Eckhart says that we can only spend in good works what we earn in contemplation, and that is undoubtedly a valuable admonition to those of us serving Quaker institutions, but it is probably equally the case that what is earned in contemplation cannot be saved up indefinitely but must be spent regularly in service to others. –Paul Lacey

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. –1 Cor. 13:1-2

Service is the rent we pay for the privilege of living on this earth. It is the very purpose of life, not something you do in your spare time. –Shirley Chisholm

The great social movements of our time may well be part of our calling. The ideals of peace and justice and equality which are part of our religious tradition are often the focus of debate. But we cannot simply immerse ourselves in these activities. We need to develop our own unique social witness, in obedience to God. We need to listen to the gentle whispers which will tell us how we can bring our lives into greater harmony with heaven. –Deborah Haines

It is said that one should never attempt the works of charity unless the motion springs from love in the heart. But God can lead us by more ways than one. Some he makes ready before he sends them out; others he sends out that they may be made ready. –Mildred Binns Young, 1961

2013/10-1 Opening The meeting opened with silent worship at 12:00 PM. David Etheridge served as Presiding Clerk and Hayden Wetzel as Recording Clerk. The clerks read a Query from Baltimore Yearly Meeting's draft Faith and Practice, and appropriate advices and other readings. 27 Friends and visitors were present, including Takenya LaViscount.

2013/10-2 Personal Announcements The Clerk announced that our member Beth Cogswell is receiving chemotherapy treatment. Friend Maurice Boyd has celebrated his 80th birthday. Many

upcoming activities were announced.

2013/10-3 Child Safety Policy Revisions Giovanni Sella, co-clerk of the Child Safety Committee, presented proposed revisions to the Meeting's Child Safety Policy after many months' discussion with the Meeting membership, pointing out changes made from the earlier text. Friends **approved** the policy with slight revisions. Friends expressed their thanks to the committee for its work.

2013/10-4 Memorial Minute for Samuel John Atlee Friends **approved** the memorial minute written by Hayden Wetzel for our deceased member Samuel John Atlee (attached)

2013/10-5 Oversight Committees for Approved Marriages Liz Pomerleau, clerk of the Marriage and Family Relations Committee, reported the oversight committee for the recently accomplished marriage under care of this Meeting of Caleb Brown and Angela Erickson as comprising: Hayden Wetzel (clerk), Ann Herzog, William Thompson, Thomas Goodhue, and Mohammed Olabi. She also presented the names of the proposed oversight committee for the marriage under care of this Meeting of EunSung Kim and Jocelyn Burls: Jane Edgerton (clerk), Will and Jennifer Grover, and G. T. Hunt. Friends **approved** this committee.

2013/10-6 Termination of Membership of Peggy Goodwin Rice Jean Meyer Capps, co-clerk of the Membership Committee, reported the committee's recommendation to terminate the membership of Peggy Goodwin Rice, who has been out of touch with this meeting for at least five years and whom we are unable to contact. Friends **approved** this termination.

2013/10-7 Change of Procedure Regarding Associate Memberships Jean Meyer Capps also presented a proposal of the Membership Committee under which associate membership would automatically expire at age 25, by which time the associate Friend is welcome to apply for full membership, transfer to another meeting or resign his or her membership, as is presently our procedure. The committee will send reminders of this upcoming expiration to each associate member a year before this occurs. Young Friends will be fully apprised of their membership status and options in the years prior to this decision. This discussion lies over to be resumed as Way opens.

2013/910-8 Request to Spend Money from Property Reserve Fund for Repairs Steve Brooks, co-clerk of the Property Committee, requested approval for the committee to spend up to \$5,000 from the Property Reserve Fund to repair the Quaker House roof. Friends **approved** the expenditure.

2013/10-9 Nominations to Trustees Merry Pearlstein, of the Nominating Committee, presented the nominations of (for second terms) Mary Campbell, Susan Lepper, Jim Bell and (for a first term)

Maurice Boyd to the Trustees for terms ending in October 2019. Friends **approved** these appointments.

2013/10-10 Nominations to Capital Campaign Committee Merry Pearlstein also presented the nominations of Mark Haskell and Martha Solt to the Capital Campaign Committee for open-ended terms. Friends **approved** the nominations.

2013/10-11 Finance and Stewardship Committee Annual Report Olivia James, of the Finance and Stewardship Committee, presented the annual report of that committee (attached). Donations to this meeting fell from \$240,000 in 2009 to \$214,000 in 2012. The committee reported results of a recent survey of FMW members. The committee will use the results of this survey to develop its upcoming outreach efforts and budget. A recent audit found that Meeting's financial statements in order. The report also summarizes projects and accomplishments of the committee in the previous year, and singled out our new administrative secretary Debby Churchman for praise. Several Friends expressed concern over the concept of "liberal Quakers" used in the report.

2013/10-12 Hospitality Committee Annual Report Tom Libbert, of the Hospitality Committee, urged Friends to read the committee's annual report, which is attached.

2013/10-13 Report from FUM Youth Retreat Shannon Zimmerman and Gene Throwe, of the Young Adult Friends, discussed the recent Friends United Meeting Youth-Focused Quaker Retreat which they attended (written report attached). Issues discussed included: disconnect between young and longer-established Friends; the relationship of young Friends to the Religious Society as a whole; ways to bring young Friends into the communities of individual meetings; and the guidance young Friends seek in their spiritual lives. The full report, with its discussions and conclusions, and a summary will be circulated throughout the Meeting.

2013/10-14 Committee of Clerks Meeting The Clerk presented minutes from the Committee of Clerks meeting convened on 29 September (attached). Issues discussed were committee minutes-taking and eldering.

2013/10-15 Capital Improvements Task Force Update Neil Froemming, clerk of the Capital Improvements Task Force, reported that the design/development of the proposed Meeting campus expansion project continues on track.

2013/10-16 Minutes Friends **approved** the minutes.

2013/10-17 Closing The meeting ended at 2:30 PM with 15 Friends present, with silent worship.

Attachments: Samuel John Atlee memorial minute; Finance and Stewardship Committee annual report; Hospitality Committee annual report; Committee of Clerks minutes; report of the FUM Youth-Focused Quaker Retreat

Samuel John Atlee

(1 November 1918 - 20 February 2013)

John Atlee came into the Religious Society of Friends as a college student and conscientious objector in 1940. He had just moved to Washington from his mother's home in Florida, where he was a member of an Episcopal church, and in the same year he moved again, this time to Chicago for further study. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor he enlisted in the army, writing afterward: "I overrode my pacifist feelings and spent four years . . . fighting an evil that I felt intellectually could never be defeated by Gandhian pacifism." He married fellow-student Elinore Rosenbaum in 1944 and fathered two sons (Thomas and Richard).

On leaving the army Friend John seldom lived in Washington. Later addresses included Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, Vermont, Michigan, Pennsylvania and Ohio. During these years he taught and researched his chosen field of economics and worked continuously to end war and social injustice. In 1967-73 he held sojourning status from this Meeting while living in New York City working with the draft resistance movement.

He returned to Washington in 1973 to establish the Institute for Economic Analysis, dedicated to promoting his somewhat unorthodox economic theories regarding means to attain full employment. The IEA continues to function. He actively opposed all U.S. war efforts and helped produce a film (In the Year of the Pig) regarding the Vietnam conflict. He served on this Meeting's Peace Committee during that time. In 1998 the couple moved to Brattleboro, Vermont, where his wife Ellie died a few years later. As his son Richard wrote: "In the end, the world became a far more militarized and dangerous place, but not through his lack of trying."

Finance and Stewardship Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2013

A major issue facing FMW has been a sharp drop off in donations in recent years. Donations dropped from \$240,000 in fiscal year 2009 to \$214,000 in 2012.

The Committee conducted an extensive review of the donations and found that the main reason for the decline in contributions was that there are fewer new donors each year. There were 84 new donors in 2009 but only 59 in 2012.

One outcome of the review was a tailored letter sent in the spring of 2013 to people who had not donated in the last few years. There was a good response to these letters with total contributions

reaching \$4,700 from seven new donors.

In the fall of 2012 the committee sent out approximately 650 letters to members and attenders to request contributions. The results from this mailing did not produce significant results in additional contributions.

The Committee conducted a Stewardship Survey to help determine the views of F&S members and those involved in stewardship view. The most important findings from the survey are listed below:

One-third of those responding felt that our collective spiritual health as concerns stewardship is leaning toward healthy, 2/3rds felt that it is leaning toward unhealthy.

F&S is not getting the information out about what everyone's role is in achieving the annual budget - or we're not getting it out in such a way that most in our community are aware of it (there is little or no educating or establishing guidelines about shared responsibilities to meet financial needs).

Giving is not being tied to the spiritual.

Liberal Quaker is our current intended audience.

Our financial stewardship role needs to focus on educating/communicating (95% of those responding recommended this). Responses could include more than one priority focus (and the total responses then could total more than 100%), so we also found that about 40% of those responding advocate each of the following: a) developing a financial stewardship plan, b) cultivating relationships as a basis for working with the meeting's finances, and c) cultivating the Spiritual.

F&S will use the results of the survey to determine how best to involve all Friends at FMW in the stewardship process.

HOSPITALITY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2013

Co Clerks

Alex Mathews

Frank Weiss

The Hospitality Committee's responsibility is primarily setting up and cleaning up for the weekly after Meeting social gathering. We have also volunteered, on an individual basis, for other functions such as memorial services and weddings.

The Committee members thank all those who have contributed food and drink for the after Meeting social gathering. As in the past, there are certain stalwarts who contribute with great regularity - Bob Meehan whose Quaker Treasure Chest Bread has been a Meeting favorite and Faith Williams who regularly provides wonderful munchies, crackers, fruit, etc. We are grateful to all who make contributions to the nourishing of the flesh after attendees have nourished the spirit. This year we have seen a bit of an increase in foods contributed thanks to Beth Cogswell whomade an announcement during the Committee Fair last year. Biweekly, Michael Smith, an ex-officio member of

our Committee, receives from an agency uncooked vegetables, breads, and fruit. We have begun to redirect the vegetables for the feeding program at the Church of the Pilgrims.

While we are recognizing the various contributions people have made, Debby Churchman and Ken Orvis must be cited as being especially helpful to the good operation of the kitchen and to the needs of the Hospitality Committee. Debby insures that staples are provided and Ken keeps the various appliances (dishwasher, refrigerator, stove, etc.) in good working order. Merry Pearlstein donated the matching cups and dishes we now use and she has recently brought us 12 matching blue tablecloths which are greatly appreciated. Gene Throwe works at an office that was divesting of hot plates and coffee urns as well as a quantity of coffee which he kindly donated to the Meeting and we have pressed into use.

Our Committee members enjoy preparing the Assembly Room for the after Meeting social gathering. On recent Sundays, the number of members, attenders, and visitors coming to the gathering has increased and they tend to stay longer (that may be because there are now so many activities planned for Sundays). Hospitality Committee members are scheduled to work on a rotating basis. Last year we reported that each of us would ideally work once per month given that two members would work each Sunday. Unfortunately, our membership numbers are lower than necessary for that schedule so we have had to work more frequent shifts. We will need more people to join the Committee as the clerks Frank Weiss and Alex Mathews are leaving the Committee in December. Bill Strein and Susan Griffin have improved our scheduling efficiency by coordinating and posting Committee member duty assignments on-line. Happily, Bill and Susan have each accepted the position of co-clerk beginning in 2014.

Submitted respectfully,

Alex Mathews and Frank Weiss

COMMITTEE OF CLERKS MEETING

September 29, 2013

Present: Steve Brooks, David Etheridge, Meg Greene, Beth Cogswell, David Etheridge, Gray Handley, Kevin Camp

Unable to join: Dan Dozier, Liz Pomerleau, Todd Harvey, Jim Bell, Hayden Wetzell, Merry Pearlstein, Frank Weiss, Liz Pomerleau, Alex Mathews, Michael North, Jean Capps, Janet Dinsmore, Michael Cronin, Steve Coleman, Justin Connor, and Jim Steen

The meeting began with a moment of silence.

Minute-taking in committee meetings

Our first topic of discussion was expectations regarding minutes in committee meetings, an important conversation to have among all of us Committee Clerks. We discussed shared expectations for Clerks' responsibilities regarding the minutes:

- Identifying someone to take minutes during a given meeting and helping that person capture the sense of the meeting;
- Ensuring they fall between complete document and simple summary of the outcome of the discussion, and that they reflect the outcomes of the meeting but also capture key elements of the discussion and how it progressed;
- Preserving confidentiality, by generally using terms like, "a Friend noted" rather than citing specific names, unless there is some reason that a name should be used;
- Committee minutes become a formal part of the Meeting's records, and should be submitted to the Administrative Secretary and the Clerk of the Committee of Clerks shortly after the meeting takes place. In this way the minutes from previous meetings are available as a running record of the work of the Committee and of the Meeting.
- The minutes should be approved at the time of the meeting or at the next meeting and sent on promptly thereafter.

Eldering and its contributions to community

The second topic we discussed was Eldering, a discussion that followed from a fruitful joint meeting of the Ministry and Worship and the Healing and Reconciliation Committees (please see minutes from their meeting). Their sense was that Eldering is a concept that we would do well to understand better and to make better use of.

- What is Eldering? The general sense was that it is mentoring rather than scolding, and indeed, some people find themselves using the word "mentoring" given misunderstandings about the concept of "Eldering." Another important feature is that to be positive, it must involve respect from the individual Eldering another.
- Those present agreed that there needs to be a broad understanding of how eldering not to exclude an individual, but to draw them in more closely to our community.
- We discussed whether Eldering is an individual's or a committee's responsibility.
- The M&W and H&R committees suggested that this discussion of Eldering take place across the Meeting community, starting with the committees.
- A number of excellent resources exist on Eldering in the pages of *Friends Journal* (link here: <http://www.friendsjournal.org/eldering-archive/>), see in particular Marge Larrabee's piece.

We ended our meeting with a moment of silence.

Ministry and Worship Committee

JOINT MEETING ON SPIRIT-LED ELDERING

August 20, 2013

Present: Gray Handley, Diane McDougall, Marcia Reecer, Virginia Avanesyan, Kevin Camp, Marsha Holliday, David Etheridge, Neil Froemming, Debby Churchman, Merry Pearlstein. Regrets: Blair Forlaw, Jean Harman and Ann Harper.

We began at 7:00 p.m. with a period of silent worship. David Etheridge clerked the meeting, and led us through a discussion of Margery Mears Larrabee's pamphlet "Spirit-Led Eldering, Integral to Our Faith and Practice." He shaped the discussion by dividing the booklet into five sections:

- What is Spirit-Led Eldering?
- Early examples of Eldering
- Eldering Today
- Special Opportunities for Eldering
- How to Elder

In each section, we addressed the following questions:

- What are Marge's main points in this section?
- What new light do I find in this particular section?
- Is this section true to my experience?
- What are the implications of this section for me?
- What problems do I have with this section?

We began by voicing our hopes/expectations for the discussion. We puzzled over what the term eldering means and what people think it means; is it a form of scolding, or a more positive act of guiding and mentoring? Both committees are occasionally asked why we don't do more eldering, and members wonder about appropriate ways to respond. How can one elder without causing hurt? We hoped to come away feeling that people who are listening to the Spirit can come to unity on an approach to eldering that feels right, useful, and effective.

What is Spirit-led eldering? *What are the main points in this section?* Friends were impressed by the phrase "spirit-led eldering," which one said really shaped the meaning of eldering. Its purpose is "not to prove one right and another wrong, but to move toward greater faithfulness together." A Friend was impressed by the term "grace filled;" he found the most meaning in the first page, which described eldering as offering spiritual leadership and being almost like listening to as opposed to speaking to someone. It is well-grounded intention and attitude, led by the Spirit, that makes eldering acceptable. Being spirit-led presents a real challenge to both parties and requires spiritual maturity, groundedness and compassion. A Friend observed that preparation of the person doing the eldering was essential. The process can be spontaneous or intentional, or simply a state of being prayerfully present; Spirit-

led truth telling and plain speaking. Effective eldering is based on *knowing* one another. Another Friend noted that Marge's example of the eldering that occurred in the plenary session of Yearly Meeting involved two-way or mutual eldering.

What new light did I find? Eldering is a function we perform; not an office we hold. It is not scolding. A mutuality – moving into the Light together. People sometimes talk about eldering as a policing function. It is not defined in Quaker doctrine. Eldering is a corporate function, done -- or at least previously discussed -- by a group of persons, rather than being a unilateral act. If someone is "elderred" and he is hurt and leaves the meeting, true eldering has not occurred. Friends have tended to be fearful of loving one another. Note the distinction between loving and correcting. True eldering requires love, preparation, humility. Marsha told a story of Turkish/Armenian conflict at Sidwell; each party wrote and exchanged a series of explanations of his or her position, and then they met together to discuss the issue in the presence of a faculty delegation careful not to judge, but to listen and guide. Ultimately the parties were able to see one another's points of view and reached an amicable understanding which was described as "magical." The purpose of eldering is to help one another; the person being elderred should feel he has been understood and supported.

Is this true to my experience? A Friend observed that this kind of eldering is a form of loving, not being fearful to connect, and being trusting of the work of the Spirit. Tough love is a scary concept. Sometimes eldering as practiced in our meeting has involved one person striking out against another with the process ending there; it has been a policing function. A person who had been elderred recently said "This person knew I was suffering and he was enjoying it." Sometimes we are not prepared or not in the right place. Someone wondered whether standing in meeting for worship when an inappropriate message is being delivered is a form of eldering. We talked about spontaneous vs. intentional eldering. Marge cited the woman at an FMW Meeting for Worship with Concern for who told a person who had opposed same-sex marriage for 7 years, "the Meeting has passed you by." In that example, a group of people had labored together for a long time. We may need to set aside a personal point of view in order to arrive at the sense of the Meeting. A friend said she often felt the reason eldering isn't terribly successful in our Meeting is that we *don't know one another well enough*. A member of the Healing and Reconciliation Committee said that people who are elderred often view the committee as mommy and daddy; they come seeking to have their hurts assuaged and corrected.

What are the implications for us? A connection to the Spirit and to one another is essential. We spoke to the importance of corporate discernment. A Friend noted the tendency to go after the squeakiest wheel.

Early Examples of Eldering. *What were Marge's main points?* Mentoring..., evoking gifts..., zealous eldering. Does Marge indicate on page ten that forceful eldering is appropriate? She cites a mutual desire to be accountable. "Friends are called to be a faith community, seeking to know each other 'in that which is Eternal' as we journey together. Ideally we acknowledge that our primary relationship is to God and to that of God in each other." A Friend said she was moved by the story of one neighbor washing another's feet. Sometimes more is required. We are called upon to build community. Another Friend related a story of a man who freed his slaves after long-term eldering by other Friends in his Meeting community. Another Friend said he did not find some of the early examples of eldering to be true to his experiences; he hasn't known anyone with enough presence to go and wash someone else's feet. We know by our faith that we all have the Light within; remembering that and putting that first is the challenge.

What are the implications for us? Do we look first to changing ourselves, especially when we feel we are being hurt? It can be hard to discern whether it's your own bias/hurt/experience speaking rather than the Light. When do you know? Marge makes a strong argument for corporate discernment. Can the issue wait, or must it be addressed promptly? If you aren't sure, look to another Friend for

guidance. There are times when eldering doesn't require bravery. A Friend cited Sara Satterthwaite's practice of trying to find out what we have in common as an essential part of trying to resolve differences. We talked about Sara's openness and the meaning of Rumi's poem "The Guest House."

Eldering Today. *Main points.* Having a reflective space between perception of need and trying to address it leaves time for discernment. "The eldering function *in depth* requires, minimally, a deep and intimate exchange that includes finding out what the situation is like for the person being elderd, accepting and understanding that person's condition, and having time for exploratory questions and comments, as well as presenting a perspective that reflects a seasoned concern of the meeting community. The process would provide participants with an opportunity to engage each other, in person and in the Spirit." It requires a time commitment and a place apart. Modern eldering reflects the cultural change toward individualism and privacy. We talked about creative responses to trying situations. Marge observed that in extreme situations, caring persons might escort a person behaving inappropriately from the room; a meeting might even be brought to a close -- a useful tool to be used as a last resort. A Friend said he had observed that clear guidelines presented at the beginning of a meeting for worship were effective in reducing the likelihood of popcorn meetings.

On page 21 of the pamphlet, Marge said, "I recognize the possibility of being misled or overzealous in our eldering, and I share the concerns of many Friends about how to discern when it is appropriate to speak so strongly to another." We found her questions surrounding that issue to be very powerful. Virginia asked for about David's reactions to the 4th question concerning the clerk's responsibility. David noted that much of his ability to act as clerk had to do with his view that it was a shared responsibility; he expects to be supported by other members of the Meeting. (He also noted an earlier position that he would never serve on nominating (a gross violation of the Golden Rule) or be clerk of the meeting.) A Friend shared his understanding that a clerk's job is really identical to that of any other committee member except for process; a clerk has no responsibility to carry out an action on behalf of the committee. Sometimes people view the clerk as a parent, just as they may the H&R committee. A clerk should create a safe place for discussion. Clerking can be difficult because you're often under tremendous time pressure.

Special opportunities for eldering. Marge's suggestion that Membership, Nominating and other committees view part of their work as eldering put all committee service in a new light. Implicit in the suggestion is a definition of eldering as showing love and nurturing spiritual growth. Do we respect the persons involved as much as the business to be accomplished? Can we find the energy and time required to put this into practice? Can we afford not to do it? "Have we learned to practice deep listening, acceptance, and understanding?" (p. 26) We have a tendency to marginalize, even though a lot of creativity happens on the margins. Eldering as an integral part of committee function is a luxurious concept, especially for Nominating. It is really essential to the functioning of the meeting. Are we ready to trust the Spirit?

Where do we go from here? Friends felt a need to expand the discussion beyond our two committees, possibly through a series of workshops or meeting-wide discussions on one or more Sundays after Meeting. A Friend recalled that there had been a Spirit-led ministry session at FMW a few years ago. Another Friend suggested circulating some queries to consider in one or more of these sessions. M&W and H&R will come up with queries based on our reading of the pamphlet, possibly drawing also from "Faith and Practice." Someone else suggested workshops might involve role-playing. We raised the possibility of discussing the topic at a Committee of Clerks meeting. Merry will discuss that with Meg and ask her to put it on the agenda for the September meeting of the CofC, with a suggestion that clerks carry the discussion back to their individual committees to be considered as an additional tool/way of looking at their roles in a more meaningful light. We mentioned the possibility of sharing notes from this meeting with other committees, along with a suggestion that they also read Marge's

pamphlet and/or one or more of the articles on eldering published in the “Friends Journal” over the past few years.

YOUTH FOCUSED QUAKER RETREAT

September 20-22, 2013

From September 20-22, Gene Throwe and Shannon Zimmerman attended the Friends United Meeting sponsored conference entitled ‘Bridging Gaps: For those who care for Youth and Young Adults’ held in Richmond, Indiana. This conference brought together both programmed and unprogrammed Friends from locations stretching from California, Iowa, and Ohio to Boston, New York, and Washington DC. This mixed group of Friends discussed the issues facing the Religious Society of Friends with regards to attracting and retaining youth and young adults. Both challenges and successes were shared, along with the rich experiences of several Friends who have been working on this issue for years. With this report, we hope to share what we have learned and combine it with our experience here at the Friends Meeting of Washington to identify challenges facing our meeting and propose solutions.

The challenges that we are experiencing here at FMW are not unique; in fact, both programmed and unprogrammed Friends meetings in all locations are facing difficulties in keeping current Young Friends and attracting new young members. While this has led some Friends to despair that Quakers are ‘dying’, there are, in fact, several things that can be done to ensure that young people see the value in joining and becoming active members in their Quaker Meeting.

The problem of diminishing youth membership appears to have several causes that can all be addressed with small discrete steps. The challenges identified in this conference that also appear to affect FMW are:

- A disconnect between Young Adult Friends and the Meeting at large. This may be due to several factors including poor communication between the two groups, unclear expectations, and simple lack of information shared between groups.
- There appears to be an excessive looseness of community, lack of ownership, and perceptions of lack of support both within the Young Friends groups as well as the Meeting as a whole. Also, there seems to be a lack of continuation between First Day School to Young Adult Friends and the Meeting at large. Again, communication and lack of information seem to play a major role.
- The loss of Young Friends as they transition from teenager to Adult.
- Ad hoc efforts to educate outside populations about Friends and ensure that those who do come to visit Meeting feel welcome.
- Spiritual guidance and education for new and evolving Friends is difficult to find and Friends, especially new/younger friends, may be afraid to ask for help.

It is clear that the meeting has already identified some of these problems and has taken some steps in trying to remedy them (including sending both of us to this conference focused on Young Adult

Friends). Here are some further ideas we gleaned from the conference itself as well as with our conversations with other conference participants, and young adult Friends to address these challenges.

Bridge the Disconnect

There appears to be a disconnect between Young Adult Friends and the Meeting at large. Limited interaction between Young friends and other members of the meeting has led to some misperceptions between the two groups and growing resentment. This may be due to several factors including poor communication, unclear expectations, and simple lack of information shared between groups. To address this, we suggest individual connections and small insights would be the most effective.

- Have events focused on combining older friends with younger friends in settings that facilitate deep conversations. For example, discussion groups (Buddha's Brain is a good example), coffee hours, etc.
- Have some sort of official 'welcome' for people as they become members of the meeting or as they transition from adolescent to 'adult.'
- Make sure that the process of becoming a member is explained to young adult friends and newcomers who have been attending regularly. Often, people don't even know it is an option. We may want to examine membership practices to ensure they are relevant and efficient.
- Avoid making assumptions about Friends based on age (older or younger). Each individual has unique perspectives to contribute.
- Have young adult friends and older friends meet for coffee/dinner in smaller settings – perhaps rotating around people's houses.
- Have mentorships where an older friend pairs with a younger friend to offer guidance on matters both inside and outside of the Meeting house.
- Make space for contributions from the youth and new members. Work and leadership opportunities in the Meeting are infinite.
- Question generational double standards – are there things that older Friends are allowed to do that are frowned upon when younger Friends do them?

Build a Stronger Community and a Sense of Ownership

There appears to be an excessive looseness of community, lack of ownership, and perceptions of lack of support both within the Young Friends groups as well as the Meeting as a whole. Again, communication and lack of information seem to play a major role.

- Ensure that leaders in the Meeting are visible and accessible. Who is the Clerk? What is their role? Who are the Committee Clerks?
- Explain not just the theology/philosophy behind Quakers but how the meeting actually works and ensure that everyone has the same understanding. What committees are there and what do they do? How can you join/participate in committees.
- It may not be effective to send out blanket calls for participation but focus on individuals, and their skills. People are more likely to volunteer if they feel that they will be appreciated for their special

skills. It is important that Friends advocate for themselves and others (to join committees, do projects etc.) rather than waiting to be chosen.

- It is very important to avoid using guilt to encourage people to participate. This is not something that we have experienced here at FMW but it was mentioned by several other meetings as an issue.
- Appreciate and acknowledge the contribution that individuals make, even if it is small.
- It is important that we remind people of all ages they always have a place at meeting whether or not they are official/active members.
- Offer resources and support.

Keep Youth Engaged

One universal issue that was discussed regarded Young Friends transitioning to adulthood. Many youth are not prepared for adulthood in the Meeting. These suggestions will help further develop the spiritual lives of Young Friends and make them want to stay with the Meeting. Some of the suggestions for developing our Young Friends are:

- Adults should avoid telling youth that what the adults do in Meeting is boring. When they become adults, youth have no incentive to continue to attend Meeting.
- Teenaged Friends should be invited to sit in the Meeting with Young Adult Friends, with the parents' permission, so they develop a sense of maturity and independence.
- Young Adult Friends are willing invite the high schoolers to join them after Meeting for brunch or other activities, with parental permission.
- If a teenager has special gifts (as identified by their parents, FDS teachers, or other Friends), they should be invited to join committees.
- When teenage Friends turn 18, they should be asked by the Membership Committee if they wish to join the Meeting. Also, there should be some sort of welcoming process in the Meeting to welcome them into adulthood.
- When teenage Friends go off to college, a team of Friends can "adopt" them to send care packages and ensure they are put in contact with a local Quaker community.

Expand and Follow up on Outreach

Efforts to educate outside populations about Friends and ensuring that those who do come to visit meeting feel welcome could be stronger.

- Makes sure to follow up with a welcome e-mail if someone signs the guestbook or asks to be added to the YAF listserv.
- Conduct outreach to campuses and other forum, which welcome educational booths (The table at Capital Pride is a perfect example).

- Assign individuals be responsible for approaching newcomers to welcome them in person and ask them if they have questions about worship or Quakers in general. We could even ask the Meeting at large to make an effort to say hello to the new comers if there are several on a given day.
- Expand our presence online and in social media.
- Encourage and support Friends to write about and speak about their beliefs.
- Assume people come to Meeting with good intentions but may not know the best way to express their beliefs. Avoid censorship and instead foster open dialogue.
- Be careful not to smother newcomers or, inversely, ignore newcomers.
- Use nametags in meeting.

Foster Spiritual Growth

Spiritual guidance and education for new and evolving Friends is difficult to find and Friends, especially new/younger Friends, may be afraid to ask for help. However, this is one of the most important things that the Religious Society of Friends has to offer.

- Provide an adult education class where newcomers to Quakerism have the opportunity to do an in-depth study of the beliefs held by Quakers. This would also be a good review for those who have been Quaker for a longer time but have never thought critically about their faith.
- Provide a forum for sharing testimonies (in progress.)In addition to a formal setting, Friends should seek out opportunities to share spiritual experiences with other Friends on a one on one or small group setting.
- Theology on tap – This has been successful for other faiths, and involves bring people together to listen to guest speakers address a tough theological issue. It also provides a relaxed forum for deeper discussion of beliefs and how they interact with our experiences in the modern world.
- Have a reading group of Quaker and other great theologians that meet once a month and discuss the salient themes.
- Provide information on meeting basics. When do you speak? How do you know if a message is for you alone or the rest of the meeting? Who is making the decisions in this Meeting?
- Cultivate spiritual guides who are knowledgeable and approachable for all Quakers. Someone who can answer the pressing questions about faith and provide guidance and support when a Friends is facing doubt. Perhaps a derivative of a clearness committee consisting of Friends of different ages and with different gifts?
- Make a safe space for questioning, doubt, and fear and offer resources for those experiencing these things.
- Avoid de-spiritualizing interactions. Acknowledge when the spirit is present and share your experiences.

Additional insights

At the conference, Gene Throwe attended a session titled *Functioning as a Team*. This session provided several suggestions for making committees more effective and efficient, while at the same time avoiding overburdening one or two individuals. The session suggested that all committees need a Mission and Purpose that clearly identify what the committee does and how it will accomplish those goals. That would better communicate to members and attenders what the committees do and why they should become more involved. The mission and purpose of each committee can be listed on the website as a quick reference.

For those functions within committees or issues that only need an ad hoc group, teams might be a better approach. For example, Clearness Committees are actually ad hoc. Maybe they should be called teams and have a pool of people willing to serve on the clearness team when a Friend requests for clearness.

Some committees can have teams of committee members and non-members to work on specific tasks. The Membership Committee could have teams that work on campus outreach, one team to work on outreach to the general population, and a team that reaches out to visitors. This frees up the Membership Committee to work primarily on membership applications.

Another example of committee teams would be the Ministry and Worship Committee. There could be teams that create programming on Quaker history, a team that works on religious education, and a Spiritual Aid Team that is available when Friends have moments of spiritual unrest.

Conclusion

The conference was an intense learning experience that helped raise awareness of issues in faith communities and raise awareness of their place in the Friends Meeting of Washington. It is clear that the challenges that Friends Meeting of Washington face in regards to recruiting and retaining youth membership are not unique. They are also not insurmountable. We sincerely hope that the Meeting will take the time to read our report and think critically on ways that the Meeting as a whole can move forward to become a more unified, supportive environment for all Quakers, young and old. We are happy to devote our time and energy into making this happen.



UPCOMING EVENTS – NOVEMBER 2013

A Gathering for Friends of Color and their immediate family members is being sponsored by FGC's Ministry on Racism Program from **Friday, November 1 at noon to Sunday, November 3** at noon at William Penn House. This is an opportunity for Friends of Color and their families on the East Coast to build a multigenerational community through mutual support and sharing, worship, exploring our Faith, sharing what brought us to Friends, and identifying

ways to support each other. Go to /www.fgcquaker.org/events/2013-retreat-friends-color-and-their-families.

Come to **S.O.M.E.** on **Saturday, Nov. 2** at 6:15 AM and be prepared to flip pancakes and help prepare breakfast for our vulnerable neighbors. The kitchen is at 70 "o" St. NW, adjacent to a parking lot. For more information and to sign up, contact Betsy Bramon at betsy.bramon@gmail.com

There will be a **Meeting for Worship with a Concern for the Marriage of Danielle Spruance and James Sinclair** on **Saturday, Nov. 2** at 4:30 PM in the Meeting Room. All are welcome.

There will be a **Retreat for Clerks** on **Saturday, Nov. 2** at Amelia Court House, VA. This is a day for spiritual refreshment and sharing of collective wisdom for all Friends. You don't have to be, or have been, a Meeting Clerk to attend. Anyone interested in nurturing spirit-led servant leadership is invited. For more information, contact Denna Joy, dennajoy@comcast.net



Join us for an interesting talk/discussion on **Sunday, Nov. 3** in the Meeting Room about the **American Friends Service Committee Program in North Korea**. Quakers have been active there since 1980, offering humanitarian aid during times of crisis and famine; and later working with local farm groups to increase productivity of poor soils and improve sustainability practices. The overarching purpose is to keep a channel of communication open and build trust despite the repressive regime, as Linda Lewis, current AFSC Country Representative for China and North Korea (DPRK), will explain. Prof.

Lewis, an anthropologist, served in South Korea as a Peace Corp Volunteer and was director of the East Asian Studies Program at Wittenberg University in Ohio, where she taught for many years. She is currently based in Dalian, China. "When giving presentations at Friends' meetings, I describe AFSC's work in the DPRK," she said. "I am also happy to answer questions – as far as I am able – about the larger political, economic, and social context in which we work...I'm open to hearing expressions of concern American Friends may have about working in a place like the DPRK with its bad human rights record and its repressive government."

There will be **Singing** in the Meeting Room at 10:00 am on **Sunday, Nov. 3**. All voices are welcome.

The **Grate Patrol** will pack and deliver 120 bag lunches and soup to people living on the street on **Wednesday, Nov. 6**. Soup or chili is made in the afternoon. At 5:30 PM we start making sandwiches and packing the lunch bags. At 7 PM, we load the van and one or two people go out on delivery for about an hour. You're welcome to help out with any or all of these things. Call Steve Brooks 240-328-5439 or email sbrooks@uab.edu for more information.

The Baltimore Yearly Meeting Religious Education Committee is hosting an opportunity for First Day School teachers, religious educators, and Local Meeting RE Committee members to reflect, inspire, and educate one another in a **retreat** setting on **Nov. 9 and 10** at William Penn House. The cost of the weekend will be \$90.00; Friends may come during the day, not as an overnight guest at William Penn House, for \$55. Register for the event by on the BYM website: http://www.bym-rsf.org/event_calendar.html/event/2013/11/09/religious-education-retreat For more information, contact Marsha Holliday, hollidaymsd@yahoo.com

There will be a **vigil outside the C.I.A. to protest drones** in Langley, Virginia on **Saturday, Nov. 9** at 10:00 am. This is the one-year anniversary for these vigils. Please join us at the Vigil, and for light refreshments at the Langley Hill Meeting House afterwards. For more information, contact Walter Brown. (carolewalter@aol.com)

Come sing with Friends! The **BYM Fall Singing Day** will be at Adelphi Friends Meeting on **Saturday, Nov. 16**, beginning at 10:00 am to 3:00 pm. There will be hymns, rounds, and Christmas carols, ('tis almost the season), and some fun with rhythm and harmony. Kids are welcome, as are any other enthusiastic Friends who enjoy making a joyful noise. There'll be coffee and bagels at 9:30, and a main dish and salad for lunch, along with pot luck side dishes or snacks. Please RSVP to



Ann Marie Moriarty (oldhouse@aol.com) so the organizers may have enough food, songbooks, rhythm instruments, throat lozenges, and other necessities.

Have you ever been asked to take **minutes** at a Quaker meeting, and wondered what to do? Deborah Haines, for many years the Recording Clerk for Baltimore Yearly Meeting, will walk us through this practice on **Sunday, November 17** at noon in the Decatur Place Room. All are welcome.

Joan Gildemeister and Karen Grisez will present a **simple meal and talk about Right Sharing of World Resources** on **Sunday, Nov. 17** at noon. Karen writes, "We especially hope kids and families will participate. The talk will be an intro to RSWR for those who are unfamiliar and an update and new developments for those who already

know about it. So something for everyone!!"

Join the **Healing and Rebuilding Our Communities three-day Basic Training** from **Nov. 17 to 19**, which presents a group based experiential model of healing that focuses on recognizing and understanding extreme trauma and its effects. Enrollment is limited and the registration fee is \$130.00. For more information, including registration materials, contact Amy Rakusin (arrax@me.com) or Adrian Bishop. (srmeetcoord@stonyrunfriends.org)

More African Americans are under correctional control today than were enslaved in 1850. Come learn how the U.S. has simply replaced one caste system (Jim Crow) for another one (imprisonment, parole, detention) that keeps the majority of minorities in a permanent state of disenfranchisement. A group studying **The New Jim Crow** meets **Sunday, Nov. 24** in the Parlor at 12:30; all are welcome.

We will have **Thanksgiving Day** activities at FMW on **November 28** for those who are in town and would like to join! You are welcome to come yourself, or bring friends and family members with you. This is simply a "come as you are" Thanksgiving Day celebration. Based on last year's it was quite a thing to behold --- bring your own Spirit and see what you want to make of it! Meeting for Worship at Noon; potluck meal afterwards.

The FMWoffice will be closed on **Nov. 28 and 29**.

There will be a **Baltimore Yearly Meeting Young Friends Conference** at our **Meetinghouse** from **Nov. 29 to Dec. 1**. Young Friends should begin arriving at 7:00 pm on Friday. For information, check the Young Friends website or contact Alison Duncan. (301-774-7663).

FROM THE VAULT

A monthly series of edited extracts from the historical material of the Friends Meeting of Washington.

For some years a local branch of Friends for Lesbian and Gay Concerns worshiped at FMW and in fact this was the nucleus of the present Quaker House Worship Meeting. In time the group was laid down. Here is a sample of items from the March 1987 newsletter:

Calendar

3/1 FMW Community Open House: Program will include a reading by Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Henry Taylor . . .

3/8 FLGC Meeting for Worship with Concern for Business . . .

Important Change! The NEW deadline for this newsletter is now by close of business of the preceding month's FLGC Business Meeting. . .

Minutes from FLGC MfB, Feb 1987

1. The concept of a convener along with a committee of the whole was approved.
 2. Arrangements are being made for use of both Quaker House and the Senior Center [Decatur Place Room] for regularly-scheduled FLGC refreshment brunches after Rise of Meeting. [Worship had spread to both places at 10 AM on Sundays.] . . .
 3. Wade Parker agrees to serve in the newly-created role of FLGC convener . . .
- [Other topics discussed: FGC planning week-end; frequency of the newsletter; an upcoming sharing/pot luck event; Camp Catoctin spring retreat; a new sign for the door.

Best to all,
Hayden Wetzel
FMW Historian

RANDOM HAPPENINGS

Proud Uncle Maurice Boyd notes the following: "Our member **Kate Gould** helped mobilize **national opposition against US bombing of Syria** in her position as Legislative Associate for the Friends Committee on National Legislation. In this capacity she organized coalition letters to Obama administration officials, lobbied members of Congress and their staff, had an article published in Sojourners Magazine, spoke on MoveOn's virtual Syria town hall attracting thousands of participants and on FCNL's conference calls and in scores of media interviews, among other efforts. Kate has advocated on behalf of FCNL in support of diplomatic solutions for peace in Syria, calling on the US government to include Iran in a political settlement to end the killing. She participated in a meeting with President Rouhani of Iran on his visit to the U.N. in New York the last weekend in September. For further information about Kate Gould and FCNL's work in the Middle East, you may call her at FCNL, at 202-547-6000 or Maurice Boyd at 202-488-4312."

The **government shutdown** had many effects which rippled even into Friends Meeting of Washington. A couple who are getting married under our care went to the District to get their license, only to discover that DC, suffering from a lack of funds, had deemed new marriage licenses to be a nonessential service. "It's not essential to me!" declared the groom, **James Sinclair**. Fortunately, the government doors eventually reopened and the couple was able to get their license on time.

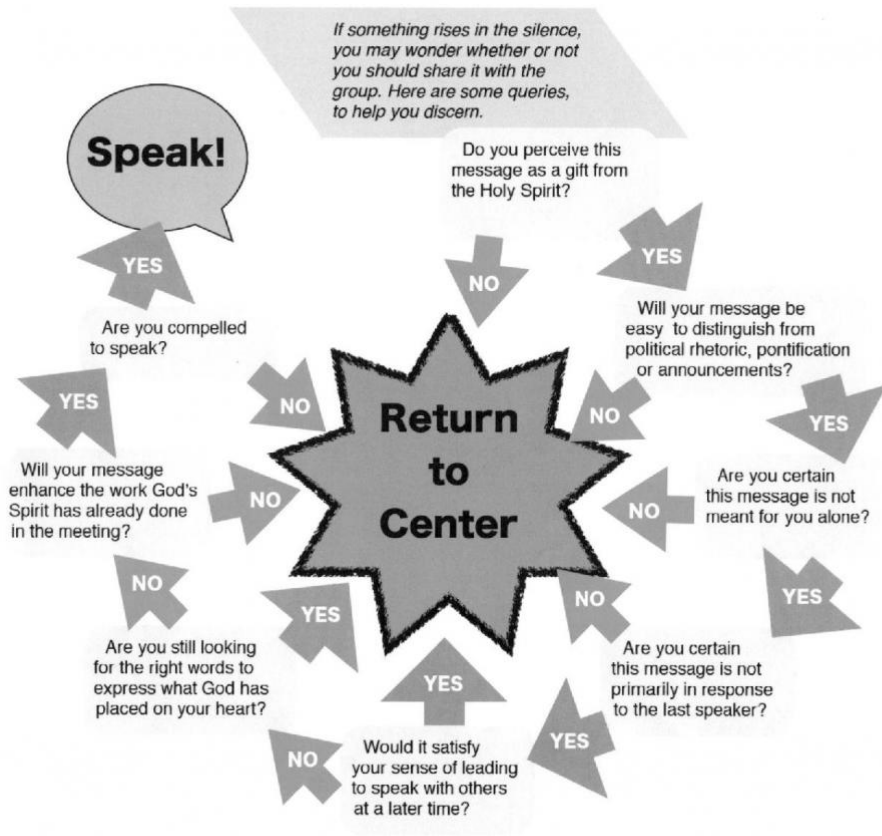


You may

have noticed from the beautiful flowers and the totally fabulous Sunday snacks that we are hosting a lot of **weddings** this Fall—**six of them in six weeks**, including one double weddings of two couples driving up from North Carolina in search of a state that will give them a license. I wish you could hear the words of praise and gratitude these couples give for FMW and the tremendous sense of peace they tell us they feel here on their wedding day. Makes me glad.

Special thanks this month to **Anne Lewis** for providing such good advice on how to arrange the newly painted office, to **Mark Haskell** for tending to the leftover wedding flowers (and cooking up the FMW pumpkins), to **Michael Cronin** for continuing to provide such a good introduction to Quakerism through his Inquirer's Classes, to **Hayden Wetzel** for his leading to gather a group that focuses on how Christianity is working in their lives *and* for his leading to bring **Deborah Haines** here to teach us how Quakers take minutes, to **Steve Brooks** for spending his furlough time with a paintbrush in the FMW office, to **Gene Throwe and Shannon Zimmerman**, for attending the FUM Youth-focused conference in Richmond, IN and bringing back such an exciting, thought-provoking report *and* a useful chart for discerning vocal ministry (**below**), to **Gray Handley** and other members of Ministry & Worship, for organizing a series of talks where Friends can share their spiritual journeys, to **Kevin Camp** and other Young Adult Friends for bringing us that funny film about the stand-up comedian and the Peaceable Kingdom, and to **Blair Forlaw**, for sharing her experiences traveling to Rwanda among Friends, as well as the queries she used in reflecting on that experience ([see attached](#)). Other thanks go to **FCNL and AFSC** for bringing their new, peace-based vision for foreign policy here to FMW for a national discussion, and to **Linda Lewis** of **AFSC** for coming to speak to us about her work in North Korea. Thank you, Friends!

- Debby



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