

Fort Myers Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends Minutes of 2nd Month 9, 2020

The Fort Myers Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends met in Iona House on 2nd month 9th day with 15 Friends present. The Meeting opened with a period of silent centering.

Queries and Advices: Clerk Joan Culver read selections from the 2nd month Queries & Advices regarding meeting for worship with a concern for business:

- *Do we maintain respect for others, however strongly our opinions may differ?*
- *Are meetings for business seen as positive opportunities for testing and practicing our spiritual life?*

In response, friends noted struggles with maintaining respect for acquaintances who have strong political beliefs that differ from them. Meeting for business is a place to practice this sense of respect that can carry out into the outside world. Another Friend identified the irony that our founder George Fox was noted for his confrontational approach to other churches.

Clerk's Report:

- We have received a request from the Friends Center in McIntosh Alabama for financial help with the restoration of the former Mowa Choctaw Friends Center. The Clerk read the letter and will post it for Friends to review and to consider weather to make individual contributions or have a corporate response.
- We received a thank-you note from the CNCP for our contribution of \$150 towards promoting the summer camp program.
- Joan conferred with the CNCP Board about our desire to have a permanent posting of our relationship with our native American predecessors. CNCP has expressed satisfaction with the idea, but has some concerns about wording. The Clerk will continue in dialogue with the CNCP Board, and we will consider other forms of expressing our recognition of our predecessors. We do not have plans to rewrite the paragraph.

Treasurer's report. Our Treasurer, Paul Davis, was not able to attend this session, but provided the report for the period ended 1/31/2019. He noted that he paid some of our budgeted 2020 commitments earlier in the year than in the past, as we had the resources to do it in our checking account.

General Funds

Checking	4,103
Gen Fund Savings	40,348
Gen Fund Fr Fiduciary	25,393

Total General Fund \$69,844

Meeting House Funds

Savings	84,044
MH Funds Fr Fiduciary	11,816

Total Meeting House Funds \$95,860

FMMM Total Funds \$165,704

January 2020 Income vs Expense

Income	1,053
Expenses	8,556

Commitments Paid

• SEYM	5,400
• Friends General Conf	1,200
• ECHO	200
• FCNL	600
• Quaker Voluntary Svc	200

Ministry & Counsel: On behalf of the Ministry & Counsel Committee, Nancy Howell reported that the Committee named Richard Frechette to serve as it's Clerk for 2020. M&C has recruited Nancy Fennell to serve on the Committee's class of 2022, and asks for the Meeting's approval.

❖ **2020-MM02: Friends approve the appointment of Nancy Fennell to Ministry & Counsel Committee, Class of 2022**

Duneland Friends Meeting (Illinois YM) has written our Meeting that they approve Roxy Jacob's being a dual member of their Meeting and ours. M&C recommends that our Meeting similarly welcomes Roxy in membership at Fort Myers Meeting.

❖ **2020-MM03: Friends approve with joy the membership of Roxy Jacobs, recognizing that she will have dual membership with the Duneland Friends Meeting.**

A Clearness Committee has met with Priscilla DeOliveira and Dylan Goldey concerning their request to be married under the care of the Meeting. The report notes that the relationship of the Meeting and the couple may be short-lived, as the couple intends to move to another area of Florida before the end of the year, and that they may connect with the Orlando Meeting in the future. The Clearness Committee noted precedence, given that the Meeting has in the past approved membership for individuals in spite of their likelihood to move in the near future. M&C unites with the Clearness Committee's report and recommends the Meeting approve the marriage under its care. The couple and the clearness committee plan to meet in six months following the wedding and are likely to continue that relationship.

❖ **2020-MM04: Friends are pleased that Priscilla DeOliveira and Dylan Goldie have gone through a clearness process in this Meeting. We take this marriage under the care of the Meeting in tenderness, joy and love. The Meeting for Worship for Marriage is to occur under our witness on April 25, 2020 at 3pm at Iona House.**

Ministry & Counsel presented for approval of the Meeting the Spiritual State of the Meeting Report, noting that – once approved – the report will be forwarded to Southeast Yearly Meeting. Friends considered the report and made a few modifications.

❖ **2020-MM05: Friends approve the following Spiritual State of our Meeting Report:**

After worship and a pot-luck lunch recently, some of the Meeting family met in worship-sharing mode to consider the Spiritual State of the Meeting through a series of queries. What follows are responses from those attending, as well as Ministry and Counsel Committee's observations from the past year.

Are we a loving community?

Friends agreed that we have a loving and accepting community of regular members and attenders. Hugs are common among Friends, and people seem genuinely glad to greet one another, whether the separation has been for a week or for many months. Visitors to the meeting often comment on the friendliness of the meeting. We work to be aware of each other's needs and to find ways to support

those needs. Some of our community have formed “prayer groups” where concerns and needs of the group and others are shared prior to the prayer time.

Is the meeting welcoming to visitors and accepting of diversity of beliefs? Are we a disciplined community?

Visitors to the meeting often comment on the friendliness of the meeting. We try to be accepting and welcoming of all visitors. We seem to do well in greeting and speaking to visitors, getting them to sign our visitors’ book and showing them our pamphlets and our library. At times we struggle to help others understand our ways of worship and conducting business (Quaker process) but we think that sometimes newcomers feel criticized when we try to mentor them on Quaker ways. Formally, we have tried to address those concerns by having a periodic Quakerism 101 or Quaker Process Retreat. We continue to explore avenues to maintain the depth of our spirituality and the integrity of our Quaker Life while accepting and welcoming a diversity of beliefs.

We acknowledge that we are challenged to welcome families with young and school-age children in ways that are supportive to the families. We are trying to formulate policies that work for all of us, and to make plans for First Day School and Young Adult Friends that are supportive and respectful to the younger participants in our meeting. The Meeting has formed a planning committee to start the task of forming a First Day program that will meet the needs of young people for discussion and questioning, while respecting the need of the volunteer resource Friends to experience worship most of the time.

Our community remains challenged by limitations of our physical facility, especially relating to the lack of space for caring for children outside of the meeting room. The Meeting has established an ad hoc committee to consider the issues, and to present to Friends in 2020 queries that may help us to separate needs from desires, and to fully appreciate the various costs of change.

Are we a spiritual community?

Is worship generally spirit-led and satisfying?

Our length of worship is generally governed by the clock, more so than some Friends would wish. However, the meeting for worship overseer is usually sensitive to dynamics of any particular meeting for worship, especially allowing time for further reflection on the heel of a message spoken late in the meeting.

We recognize the healing and transformative power to the individual and the group through the weighted silence as well as the spoken spiritual messages that come out of the weighted silence. However, we recognize that there are sometimes messages that do not seem to be spirit-led, and that sometimes an individual may speak too quickly following the prior speaker, thus not providing sufficient time for us to reflect and reconnect to the silence.

Afterthoughts are invited at the conclusion of meeting, to extend time for sharing thoughts that did not rise to the level of vocal ministry during the formal period of worship. Some people use the opportunity to share concerns that are more secular and political, while others may use the time to reveal something about themselves to the group. Shy people, or people who are uncomfortable claiming the authority of Spirit for their statements, seem to find the afterthoughts period a more welcoming time to speak.

Are we a community committed to peace?

We have a strong commitment to peace in the broader community. The Peace and Social Concerns Committee is thriving and busy, and we noted that it includes not only peace work, but also many social justice concerns, both in our community and beyond. Another group has been forming over the past year focused on the environmental issues and concerns of our local area.

We recognize that peace must always begin at home. There is sometimes tension when we conduct meetings for business, and we can be challenged while invigorated by intensity of convictions. We need to continually focus on trust and Quaker process.

We hope to remain faithful to that still small voice that urges us to take part in God's work, both as individuals and as a community of faith

Hospitality Committee: On behalf of the Committee Suzanne Frechette informed Friends that, in an effort to cut down on waste, (and being earth-friendly) the Committee will be trying the use of ceramic dishes. This will entail cleaning, as we do with eating utensils and napkins. They are working on plans to address storage and sanitizing. Friends discussed the challenges, but generally welcome this idea.

The committee thanks Friends for stepping in as needed for the weekly set-up and take down of tables, chairs and literature.

Peace and Social Concerns Committee: Tom Miller reported that the Committee is asking the Meeting to approve a \$100 one-time contribution to the organization World BEYOND War. Friends discussed whether the allocation should come from the P&SC budget or from unallocated funds. The sense is that the former would be most appropriate, and that the P&SC may request additional funds later in the year as needed.

The minutes were reviewed and approved. Friends closed in silent worship.

Respectfully submitted,
Richard Frechette
Co-Recording Clerk