

ATLANTA FRIENDS MEETING NEWSLETTER



April 2014

Atlanta Friends Meeting State of the Meeting Report 2013

We have felt a deepening in the quality of worship in our gathered body this year. We continue to struggle to find the right balance between the disciplines of preparation and promptness and the desire to be welcoming and sensitive to the many demands our members feel. We are encouraged that Friends are participating in a variety of small group activities during the week - spiritual nurture groups, Bible study, singing before worship, mid-week meetings and the Adult First Day program – which provide opportunities for us to “know each other in that which is eternal.” We provide opportunities monthly for Friends to share their spiritual journeys and have found both the delivery and the listening to be a rich and intimate experience. Clearness committees continue to flourish in our community and we anticipate continued education on their use an spiritual nature.

We have experienced great richness in the last year as leadings for new ministries have emerged in our community. We are experimenting with ways to support and recognize these ministries more formally so that they may deepen in faithfulness. We are encouraged both by Friends who take up new ministries as well as those who sensitively lay down those ministries for which the call has ebbed.

In seeking to treasure the spiritual richness, we have struggled as a community to balance the desire to share through announcements the many activities of our meeting with the desire to sustain the deep spiritual centeredness of our worship. We are experimenting with new practices to serve our community.

AFM was pleased to welcome three Friends into membership (one by transfer) in 2013. In addition, we approved two Friends’ requests to be sojourning members of AFM while they are away from their home meetings and worshipping with us. We were also blessed with the birth of two new babies into our community.

The Care and Counsel Committee (C&C) had 10 committed members, which made their tasks manageable. They greatly enjoyed a half-day retreat early in the year at which they shared personal journeys and set priorities for the year.

Recognizing those who have contributed to our Meeting was an important theme. C&C presented beautiful cards to persons who played significant roles in fostering the Meeting in its early years. These cards contained a

Atlanta Meeting of the Religious
Society of Friends (Quakers)
All are welcome

Meeting for Worship
Each First Day (Sunday)
10:00 – 11:00 a.m.
701 W. Howard Ave.
Decatur, GA 30030

QUERY

How can we make the meeting a community in which each person is accepted and nurtured, and strangers are welcome? Seek to know one another in the things which are eternal, bear the burden of each other's failings and pray for one another. As we enter with tender sympathy into the joys and sorrows of each other's lives, ready to give help and to receive it, our meeting can be a channel for God's love and forgiveness.

- Britain Yearly Meeting

beautifully designed text expressing appreciation for the role these “pioneers” played in creating the Meeting we share today. In addition, they contacted persons whom we had not seen for a while and one member promptly followed up with newcomers who signed our list. The Meeting also prepared and approved a “Minute of Recognition and Appreciation of Service,” to acknowledge all those who share their gifts with the Meeting in formal roles.

To better coordinate care concerns, C&C updated its list of care volunteers. They also designated a monthly point person to receive requests for assistance from the Meeting community, sometimes addressing the requests directly and other times with assistance from others on the committee or persons who expressed willingness to help.

C&C presented a forum on financial planning and elder law and began planning for future forums on other topics related to the elder years. The committee also managed “Friendly 8s” groups.

C&C, with the Ministry and Worship Committee, helped to arrange memorial services for long- time AFM member Janet Ferguson; for Don DeBra, husband of long term attender, Dee DeBra and father of Elizabeth DeBra; and for Elva Mae Stanley Moore, the mother of attender Kelli Moore.

Quaker Quest was a wonderful experience for our community in 2012, and from it we have further deepened our connections with one another and continued to be enriched by new attenders. As we seek to invite and encourage the participation of newcomers, we are keenly aware of our continuing need to help these new friends develop an understanding of our faith community and a deepening sense of belonging.

We completed the first year of Quaker Voluntary Service volunteers in our community. We actively nurtured the seven volunteers in the program and were enriched by their presence within the Meeting. Fortunately, many of them have stayed in Atlanta and continue to be active in the community. We are now enjoying the presence of the second year’s volunteers who are working in the larger community and participating in the life of the Meeting.

This year, the high school class noticeably increased in size, nearly exponentially at some points. We came to have a shortage of drivers to SAYF retreats, and all volunteers were lovingly accepted and appreciated. Their classes mostly had queries or discussion topics themed on sexuality, retreat planning, views on drugs/alcohol, and spirituality in relation to their friends, family and daily lives. Early in 2014, they will host a SAYF retreat at AFM, and begin to volunteer occasionally to do the First Day volunteer jobs for the Meeting.

In response to concerns for the wellbeing of all children who participate in the life of the Meeting and to assure compliance with new State laws on child protection, AFM approved Guidelines for Child Safety. The job responsibilities for the Young Friends Coordinator were revised to include clear leadership in protecting all our children.

The spiritual life of the Meeting was further enhanced through our annual Gathered Meeting Retreat. Fifty adults and 15 children attended; the theme was “Playing in the Spirit.” Further, we held a Couple Enrichment weekend retreat to nurture spiritually the bonds between committed couples in the Meeting.

To bridge differences in language and worship style, meeting attenders from the U.S. and Burundi prepared a 142-page spiral-bound booklet of hymns and carols in English and Kirundi, Burundian Friends’ first language. We find common ground and individual meaning in singing before meeting for worship or carol singing at Christmas when each person can sing the same hymn in his or her own language.

Living the testimony of equality remains an important spiritual concern for AFM. In 2013, the Meeting reinvigorated its efforts to undo racism through supporting personal change, making AFM a more welcoming spiritual home for all, and addressing racism in our society. Through our discernment, we formed Quakers for Racial Equality (QRE), which replaces Our Roles as Individuals in America’s Racial History (ORAIARH) and works in tandem with the Committee on Undoing Racism in Atlanta Friends Meeting (CURAFM). We held an "Understanding Racism through Understanding White Privilege" workshop and the Adult First Day group

discussed the pamphlet, *Living Our Testimony of Equality: A White Friend's Experience*. QRE also staffed a weekly literature table on issues related to racial equality, and once a month offered a Listening Ear for concerns about racism. QRE committee members gave a workshop at the Southern Appalachian Young Friends retreat and offered Religious Education classes on equality and justice for our middle school Friends. QRE also surveyed young friends to select listeners and developed guidelines for offering a Listening Ear for Youth.

In the area of societal change, racial discrimination in the criminal justice system has been the main focus. QRE and the AFM Prison Reform group co-sponsored a half-day introductory workshop on the Alternatives to Violence Project, which has been used successfully with prisoners and youth. Members of QRE also participated in the New Jim Crow Action Group. Our action goals are to end mass incarceration, racial bias in the justice system, and barriers to reintegrating into the community. We feel renewed by joining with others in striving to make racial equality a reality in our personal lives, faith community, and society.

On a larger scale, at the behest of Green Friends the Meeting approved signing on to the Kabarak Call for Peace and Eco-justice that emerged from the Sixth World Conference of Friends in Kenya. Green Friends continued significant involvement with like-minded community groups focused on urgent climate change issues. Four Friends went to Washington, DC to be part of the National Climate Rally protesting the XL Pipeline. A number of Green Friends worked monthly with Citizens Climate Lobby pressing for strong measures to promote clean energy rapidly with legislation enacting a revenue neutral carbon tax on fossil fuels. This strong concern has been shared with AFM Friends over several years.

A quest for spreading work among us has brought heartening results with new young activists joining the Committee. Though Green Friends wishes it could reach out to more Friends and others with Earthcare concerns, the feeling of the group continues positive and strong.

AFM continued to be challenged with finding sufficient Friends who felt led to serve in the many roles we have created to meet the needs of the Meeting. The Nominating Committee stayed busy throughout 2013. Its work also included writing or revising position descriptions where changes in roles and responsibilities had occurred.

An ad hoc committee brought to Social Concerns the Israeli-Palestine Minute from SAYMA (presented by Swannanoa Monthly Meeting) calling for the boycotting of goods produced by Israeli corporations on Palestinian lands. The ad hoc committee presented the Minute at a Meeting for Worship for Business, which asked for more deliberation by the whole community. The ad hoc committee worked to thoroughly consider and clarify the Minute and then approved it in committee. When the Minute was discussed again at an open forum, it was clear that there was not unity on the Minute. When this was reported back to the Meeting, an invitation was made for someone who felt led to facilitate further discussion and search for a way forward.

In October a group of nine SAYMA Ministry and Nurture Committee members met for a weekend at AFM. Hosts were found so that each had a bed for one or two nights. On Saturday, refreshments and lunch were provided by the Hospitality Committee. Some of the hosts joined the group for dinner at a nearby restaurant. The SAYMA Committee minuted its appreciation for being warmly welcomed and well cared for. We were also enriched as we hosted Rachel Bewley-Bateman, the FWCC clerk for the Europe and Middle East Section.

The Administration Committee focused on developing solutions to a more complex organization and addressing situations brought on by the larger number of attenders and the increased use of our physical space. We are increasingly a resource to our neighborhood and rent our space to a variety of organizations and educational programs. We are dedicated to equality and the nonjudgmental use of our space. In part, the expanded use has led to increased complexity in our finances, which in turn led to the decision to hire a part-time bookkeeper.

The Administration Committee is dealing with the maturity of the physical plant and grounds. The positive side of growth is that we have more resources to distribute, as we discern our stewardship of the existing physical plant. We remain mindful that the day-to-day maintenance of our space is also a spiritual journey. We need to be prepared to move promptly to care for our building, our renters' spaces and our own spaces, so that the spiritual and practical needs of all meetinghouse users can be met in an efficient and respectful manner.

The Ferguson Cabin Committee finished building the new Cabin with the hard work and financial support of many Friends. To this end the Committee conducted several successful fundraisers. After much deliberation, the addition was christened "Irene" in honor of Irene Ferguson. Once declared complete, an open house was held to introduce "Irene" to the Meeting. The new cabin was well received, and now having the relative luxury of an in-house half bathroom in addition to a full bathroom (with hot shower!) located in the ground floor and accessible from outside, the facility was rented by 77 people (individuals and groups) throughout the year. In addition, the other structures, land, and dock were maintained and improved through Friends' efforts and still more financial support.

The Atlanta Friends Meeting is blessed by the abundant gifts of its many members and attenders. These gifts give vibrancy to our Religious Education programs for children and adults, to the work of our various committees that attend to the life of the Meeting and meetinghouse, and to our work in the larger community. We are further blessed that AFM staff are skillful and dedicated in caring for their particular responsibilities, which helps the Meeting operate more effectively and lightens the load for many volunteers.

Even so, Friends continue to feel that they are stretched too thin, and as a result, there are insufficient members to fill many vacant committee positions. Additionally there are insufficient numbers of volunteers to help with weekly tasks, religious education, and hospitality. The Meeting may need to thoughtfully consider the long-term sustainability of the many obligations that have been undertaken. There is a sense that because there is so much going on simultaneously that our busyness reduces our spiritual center and reduces our genuine connections, particularly with newcomers.

We aspire to be a welcoming spiritual home for all and there is a deep desire to faithfully discern a spirit-led path toward making this an ever increasing reality.

Third Saturday Hike April 19

Join East End Neighbors & AFM for a three-mile hike at the Arabia Mtn loop around the lake and to the summit on April 19, at 9 AM. Parents & grandparents with children are welcome! Meet to carpool at Bethel Baptist Church at 1890 Second Avenue Decatur 30032. We should be back between noon and 1 PM. Contact bertskellie@gmail.com for information. Hikes are generally set on third Saturdays.

Easter Celebration for Children April 20

Our meeting's children enjoy the annual outdoor hunt for goodies! Please bring items that: (a) are ready-to-hide; (b) are marked if they are too small for toddlers; (c) are fair trade if chocolate (The blog post "Is There Child Slavery in Your Chocolate?" includes a long list of chocolate companies who are proudly Child Labor Free.) The older children will be hiding; the toddlers will hunt in the fenced in playground; older children will gather goodies surrounding the Meetinghouse. Questions? Contact Betsy Eggers [404-233-0086](tel:404-233-0086)

"Cracking the Codes: The System of Racial Identity" on April 27

On April 27 at 11:45 pm in the Library, Quakers for Racial Equality will be showing excerpts of a recent film by Shakti Butler, "Cracking the Codes," to facilitate a deep dialogue on bias, privilege, and interpersonal, institutional and structural racial inequity. Contact Bert Skellie at bertskellie@gmail.com or [404-378-5883](tel:404-378-5883) or Susan Firestone at sfirestone@gsu.edu or [404-377-0875](tel:404-377-0875).

AFM Ground Project Challenge Drive Through April 30

Finance Committee members Paul Mangelsdorf, Peter Sederberg, and Perry Treadwell have made a collective \$15,000 pledge to match each dollar given to the grounds project until the challenge is exhausted. The campaign ends April 30. To contribute, write a separate check to the AFM, writing "permanent improvements; grounds project" in the memo line. Contact Peter Sederberg (petersederberg@gmail.com) for information.

John Calvi's Weekend Retreat May 2-4

Friday May 2 from 7-9 pm, Friend John Calvi will speak about the work of Quakers Initiative to End Torture, QUIT, an organization he created with other Friends. Saturday morning, 10-4, we will focus on deep relaxation for better spiritual seeking and release from the noise of the world to receive spiritual guidance. Calvi will discuss his book, *The Dance of Hope and Fear* in the library for our religious education class Sunday morning before meeting and a discussion with him after meeting and potluck. Books will be available for sale and signing. Ministry and Worship is sponsoring his visit and more information is available from Mary Ann Downey.

Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business - March 16, 2014 (recorded pending approval)

Attendance: Micheal Allison, Paul Baker, Don Bender, Beth-Ann Buitekant, ,Alice Erickson, Sally Ferguson, David Foster, Jenny Foster, Eric Glenn, Carol Gray, Roland Heath, Julie Hliboki, Kathy Johnson, Chris Kohler, Chris Lahowitch, Justin Leverett, Alison Mawle, Kelsey McNicholas, Caroline Noyes, Ronald Nuse, Priscilla Padron, Beth Ruddiman, Erica Schoon, Erin Schroder, Bert Skellie, Karen Skellie, Rebecca Sullivan, Jim Tolmach, Myrna Trapp, Perry Treadwell, Sarah Walton, Austin Wattles, Lara Wik, Ashley Wilcox, Nan O'Connor (Clerk), Elizabeth Lamb (Recording Clerk) (36 Friends).

Query: Caroline Noyes presented the query: "Live adventurously. When choices arise, do you take the way that offers the fullest opportunity for the use of your gifts in the service of God and the community? Let your life speak. When decisions have to be made, are you ready to join with others in seeking clearness, asking for God's guidance and offering counsel to one another?"

Ministry and Worship Committee: On behalf of the Ministry and Worship Committee Caroline Noyes brought forth the following items for discernment:

1. Membership recommendation of Bob Lackey. In second month Ministry and Worship reported that Bob Lackey has applied for membership and met with a clearness committee. Ministry and Worship recommended his membership to meeting.

- **Minute 3-16-2014-01:** *On the recommendation of the Ministry and Worship Committee, we approve Bob Lackey for membership and welcome him to our community. We look forward to his continuing growth in the Spirit.*

2. Marriage Recommendation. In second month Ministry and Worship reported that we received a request from Elaine Ruschetta and Chad Gilmartin to be married under the care of the meeting. The couple met with a clearness committee and feels a deep sense of roots to this meeting. Ministry and Worship recommends we take their marriage under our care.

- **Minute 3-16-2014-02:** *On the recommendation of the Ministry and Worship Committee, AFM approves taking the marriage of Elaine Ruschetta and Chad Gilmartin under our care.*

The names for members of the marriage committee will be brought forward in the Fourth Month.

3. We have received a request from Megan Dowdy that we lay down her membership. She reports she has been led to other forms of worship and expressed her appreciation for the support the meeting provided her.

- **Minute 2-16-2014-03:** *On the recommendation of the Ministry and Worship Committee, we lay down the membership of Megan Dowdy on her request and wish her continued light as she continues her spiritual journey.*

4. Sojourning Member. We have received a letter from Putney Monthly Meeting introducing Sadie Forsythe. Sadie has asked to be recorded as a Sojourning member.

- **Minute 2-16-2014-04:** *We welcome Sadie Forsythe as a sojourning member of AFM and look forward to our growth together.*

5. Additional member of the Support Committee for Richard Allen.

- **Minute 2-16-2014-05:** *We approve Karen Morris to serve on the Support Committee for Richard Allen's ministry.*

Nominating Committee: Nominating Committee: On behalf of the Nominating Committee Beth Ruddiman brought forward the following for approval: Emily Lawson as Clerk of the Young Friends Support Committee

- **Minute 3-16-2014-03:** *AFM approves Emily Lawson as Clerk of the Young Friends Support Committee.*

Naming Committee: On behalf of the Naming Committee, Jim Tolmach brought forward for final approval the names of the members of the Nominating Committee. Mary Jahntz will serve as the Religious Education Recruitment Liaison, so she is someone to talk with if you are led to spend more time with our young Friends.

- **Minute 3-16-2014-04:** *On the recommendation of the Naming Committee, AFM approves Blake Williamson and Carol Gray as co-Clerks of the Nominating Committee with returning members Carolyn Coburn-Allen, Carol Gray and Blake Williamson, and new members Kofi Adams, Mary Bartlett and Mary Jahntz as members of the committee.*

Jim then requested that the Naming Committee be laid down.

- **Minute 3-16-2014-05:** *AFM approves the laying down of the Naming Committee for 2014.*

State of the Meeting Report: As outgoing Clerk of the AFM David Foster presented the revised State of the Meeting Report for approval.

- **Minute 3-16-2014-06:** *AFM approves the revised State of the Meeting Report as presented.*

Ministry and Worship Committee: On behalf of the Ministry and Worship Committee Caroline Noyes brought forward the following items for the meeting's discernment in Fourth Month:

1. Membership request of Julie Hliboki. We received a request for membership from Julie Hliboki. A clearness committee met with Julie and recommended her membership to Ministry and Worship Committee. Ministry and Worship unites with this recommendation. (Caroline read Julie's letter). We ask Friends to get to know Julie over the next month and will ask the meeting's discernment in Fourth Month.
2. We ask that AFM take the ministry of Ashley Wilcox under our care during the time she will be sojourning with us. Ashley will be working closely with the meeting in the next year as part of her contextual education program. We look forward to her many gifts and how we will explore them over the next year.

Social Concerns Committee: On behalf of the Social Concerns Committee Chris Kohler brought forward a letter from the ACLU to be sent to the Georgia Delegation requesting an investigation of the Stewart and Irwin County Immigration Detention Centers. The eight page letter cites examples of Due Process violations, inhumane treatment and conditions, substantial burdening of religious liberty and forced labor programs as reasons for the investigation. While the ACLU requested approval of the letter by March 18, 2014, AFM felt that our process should not be so rushed and that it would be better to allow the request to be seasoned in our traditions manner. AFM has thus not signed on to the letter, but will wait for the Social Concerns Committee to season the matters contained therein and bring them forward again as they are led.

Minutes of February 2013:

- **Minute 3-16-2014-07:** *The Minutes of the February 2014 Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business were approved as submitted.*

Meeting closed with Silent Worship.

Respectfully submitted by: Elizabeth Lamb, Recording Clerk; and Nan O'Connor, Clerk



Please Hold in The Light:

Pat Creel and family
Roland Heath
Chris Kohler's mom, Marian.

Those who desire to have requests for Holding included in this monthly newsletter may give the names to any member of Care & Counsel Committee.



Atlanta Friends Meeting Contacts

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Calendar for Fourth Month (April) 2014

Area Meetings for Worship

Every First Day (Sunday)	10:00 a.m. – Meetinghouse, with a smaller group in the Library.
Every First Day	12:30 p.m. – Carrollton Friends Worship Group. St. Andrew's UMC Youth Center, 1106 Maple St.; Margaret Bray, 770-830-8705.
Every Second and Fourth First Day	10:00 a.m. – Canton Friends Worship Group. 360 E. Marietta St.; 779-720-4669 or wrlldpeas@mindspring.com .
Every Second First Day	10:30 a.m. – Macon Friends Worship Group. Contact Diana Day, 478-227-8892; maconquakers.org .
First Fifth Day (Thursday)	12:10 p.m. – AFSC office, 60 Walton St. NW, Atlanta.
Every Fifth Day (Thursday)	12:10 p.m. – East Lake Commons, Decatur. For directions, contact Bert Skellie at bertskellie@gmail.com or 404-680-4799.
Sixth Day (Friday)	(Mid-August through May), 9:00 a.m. – Friends School of Atlanta. Community Meeting Room, 862 Columbia Dr., Decatur, 404-373-8746.

Weekly Events at the Meetinghouse

Every First Day (Sunday)	9:00 a.m. Adult Religious Education, Library 9:15 a.m. Singing, Classroom A/B 10:00 a.m. Meeting for Worship
Every Second-Fifth Day (Monday-Thursday)	8:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. Smart Toddlers, Nursery playground
Every Third Day (Tuesday)	7:00 p.m. Silent Meditation, Library
Every Fourth Day (Wednesday)	7:00 p.m. Mid-Week Worship, Library
Every Fifth Day (Thursday)	7:30 p.m. Bible Study, Library

ATLANTA FRIENDS MEETING
701 W. Howard Ave.
Decatur, GA 30030-2902

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Clerk: Nan O'Connor, afmclerk1@gmail.com

Treasurer: Peter Sederberg, afmtreasurer1@gmail.com

If you would like to have a permanent nametag made, leave a request in one of the baskets on the front table. Indicate whether you prefer one that hangs around the neck or that pins. When Carol Gray has made one for you, it will be placed in the black file box on the greeting table.

If you would like to be included in the AFM database and receive the Newsletter by mail and/or appear in future AFM Directories, please send your name and contact information to Nina Gooch at ninagooch@gmail.com or 404-371-9873. Please indicate if you want to be in the directory, receive the newsletter by mail, or both.

Contributions to the Atlanta Friends Meeting may be placed in the slot marked "Contributions" in the greeting area of the Meetinghouse or mailed to the Treasurer at the above address. Thank you!

This newsletter is a publication of the Atlanta Friends Meeting. Views expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Meeting.

Readers are encouraged to submit letters, articles, notices and anything else of interest to Friends. Items should be sent directly to atlquakerltr@gmail.com in plain text (Word, not PDF). Pictures should be in .jpg format. Submissions may be edited for length and format.

THE DEADLINE FOR MONTHLY NEWSLETTER SUBMISSIONS IS THE 20TH DAY OF EACH PRECEDING MONTH.

To receive the Newsletter via e-mail, send a blank e-mail to afmnewsletter-subscribe@yahoogroups.com from the address where you want to receive the newsletter. You will receive a note back from Yahoo asking you to confirm your subscription; hit reply and you will be added to the list at no charge. To receive general announcements and to participate in discussion, follow the same instructions, but address the note to afmdiscussion-subscribe@yahoogroups.com. To receive announcements relating directly to the life of the meeting, send the same note to afmannouncements-subscribe@yahoogroups.com.