

ATLANTA FRIENDS MEETING NEWSLETTER



January 2017

How We Build our Beloved Community in Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business

Submitted by Mary Ann Downey

In the book, Quaker Faith and Practice for Friends in Britain, this query and advice is offered for conducting business meetings: "Are your meetings for church affairs held in a spirit of worship and in dependence on the guidance of God? Remember that we do not seek a majority decision nor even consensus. As we wait patiently for divine guidance our experience is that the right way will open and we shall be led into unity."

Early Quaker communities in England were dedicated to living in community, and making decisions together that translated their beliefs into practice. They wanted to be led by God not only to find God's will for any decision the meeting made, but also to practice the right process of being led into spiritual unity, making decisions that were not bound by majority rule or consensus. From the beginning, many practical issues on a range of concerns challenged them including where and how to build a meeting house, how to care for friends in prison, where to bury Friends who died, how to hold marriages, and decide membership, and how to recognize and support Friends in ministry. Some Friends traveled in the ministry with the support of their local meeting to help establish other meetings, while others, visiting Friends in prison, became active in working for prison reform, getting the mentally ill out of prison, establishing treatment facilities, abolishing slavery and other concerns. These decisions were made in meetings for church affairs when the community discerned that this path was God's will. William Penn was one of many who led efforts to carry Quaker faith and practice into the larger society of England, and later in the what is now called Pennsylvania. He wrote, "True godliness does not turn men out of the world, but enables them to live better in it and excites their endeavors to mend it; not to hide their candle under a bushel but to set it upon a table in a candlestick."

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

Do you fulfill the responsibility of membership in our religious society by regular attendance and support of its meetings? What are you doing to strengthen the spiritual life of the meeting and to invite others to share in its fellowship? Do you recognize and encourage the development of the spiritual gifts of your members? Are you active in advancing the religious principles of our Society and in applying the social and political implications of those principles?

– Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting, Seventh query

Additional Resources:

What Are Queries? Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. www.pym.org/faith-and-practice/queries/

Approaches to God – worship and prayer Experience and nature of worship. Quaker faith & practice Fifth edition. Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain:

<http://qfp.quaker.org.uk/chapter/2/>

Meeting For Worship. Friends General Conference. <http://www.fgcquaker.org/resources/meeting-worship>

Beyond these practical issues, early Friends wanted to keep their focus on the spiritual health of their community and developed queries like the one above that are used to open the 'meeting for church affairs', also known as 'meeting for worship with attention to business'. By 1682 local meetings were organized into larger groups called Yearly Meetings. Each meeting met monthly for business, and reported annually to the larger Society of Friends on these queries. One of the earliest queries asked by the Yearly Meeting in Britain was, How does the Truth prosper among you...and are Friends in peace and unity?

The process depends on the difference between consensus and sense of the meeting. Consensus is a process in which we struggle with differences to find the most reasonable solution. It is an intellectual agreement representing our best thinking. Sense of the meeting is based on our belief in continuing revelation and a willingness to seek and be divinely guided to right action even when it may not be the most logical solution. A story about a decision made by Friends on the Board of the American Friends Service Committee illustrates the difference. After Hitler came to power there was a period of time in which Jewish children were allowed to leave and the Jewish Defense League of the US asked the AFSC for help transport children from Germany to the US. After a long meeting in which the Board struggled with this request, it was clear to all that that the organization did not have the experience or the capacity to undertake such an operation. The clerk asked Friends to settle back into silent worship. Out of the silence one Friend asked, "How can we not?" In this gathered worship, everyone present felt led to proceed on faith that this was God's will and way would open. As a result, AFSC brought 1200 children here on three ships.

Today in the US, meeting for worship with attention to business is held by meetings monthly and opens with a time of worship to reflect on a query like the one above. There may be a time of sharing and recording responses to the query before considering other business. It is easy for meetings to make decisions by settling for consensus, and harder to have the patience for the right way to be clear, to discern God's will.

The issues that are considered for decision are often like those that early Friends addressed, especially marriage, membership, and property within the meeting. In state and federal government, our work continues for prison reform, abolition of the death penalty, equality of opportunity, education, and alternatives to war. Recently, Friends have become active in addressing concerns for the environment.

In 1987, members of London Yearly Meeting wrote, "We are trustees of a long tradition which has sought to bring our religious convictions into the world...We are trying to live in the virtue of that life and power that takes away the occasion of all wars." This journey continues.

Findings on Crowdsourced Query on Inappropriate Messages at Meeting for Worship

At Meeting for Business, Ministry and Worship reported Ashley Wilcox had "crowdsourced" her larger Quaker community with the query :

- Does your meeting have an official process for responding to inappropriate messages in meeting for worship?
- Does your meeting have a process for responding to times of crisis (e.g. extra worship times, worship sharing, etc.)?

She received almost 30 responses. If you are interested in a link to her findings, please ask Ashley at ashleymwilcox@gmail.com or Sally Ferguson at sallyferguson@earthlink.net.

David Foster Exhibit "Nature's Essence" – Meet the Artist Event January 7th

David Foster will be having an exhibit of his nature photographs at the Atlanta Friends Meeting in January and February. This exhibit, "Nature's Essence," is a part of David's art and healing ministry held under the care of this Meeting. His work has been exhibited widely and earned a variety of awards.

There will be an opening Meet the Artist event on Saturday, January 7th, from 1:00 to 4:00 PM. Everyone is invited to see many beautiful new images that convey the essence of nature's wonder and beauty. A special feature will be the first Atlanta exhibiting of a selection of large Chromaluxe aluminum prints. They are an exciting new dimension in sharing his work. Please feel free to invite friends and family, all are welcome.

Also, there will be a closing Meet the Artist event on Saturday, February 25th, from 1:00 to 3:00 PM. In between, the exhibit will be available during normal Meetinghouse hours: M-F, 9 a.m. to Noon - or by appointment (call or email David: [404-941-7337](tel:404-941-7337) / dfoster45@gmail.com)

Why Punctuality Matters

Submitted by Mary Ann Downey

On a recent First Day, one member of Meeting counted 55 Friends who were in the room at 10 am to begin Meeting for Worship. During the hour of worship another 45 Friends entered the room. What effect does coming after 10:00 have on those who are already present, and on those who are late? What effect does it have on our ability to have a 'gathered meeting'? Balancing the needs, desires and preferences of individuals who are seated for Meeting for Worship before 10 am and those who arrive after the meeting room doors have closed is one of our recurring challenges.

The importance of punctuality for a gathered meeting is addressed by Thomas R. Bodine, in the Britain Yearly Meeting book of Quaker Faith and Practice. "It is not merely a question of disturbing the peace and quiet of those already assembled...In private meditation the worshippers could each 'settle' separately, training themselves not to be disturbed by latecomers. But if our goal is to achieve a group mystical experience, deepening and enriching our individual experience, then, it seems to me, we need to start the process at the same time.

A 'gathered' Quaker meeting is something more than a number of individuals sitting down together but meditating individually. So long as each sits in meditation in the way one does when worshipping by oneself, the worship will seldom reach that greater depth which a Quaker meeting at its best achieves. The goal of a truly 'gathered' meeting is to become fused into something bigger than the sum of the parts..."

I invite you to consider how to 'keep Sabbath', First Day as a special time and place for worship and a priority.

Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business – December 18th, 2016

Recorded pending approval

Attendance: Mike Aland, Micheal Allison, Steve Collins, Mary Ann Downey, Julia Ewen, Sally Ferguson, Susan Firestone, David Foster, Jenny Foster, Waman French, Clive Gordon, Roland Heath, Bill Holland, Bill Hooson, Kathy Johnson, Eunyong Kwon, Lynn Leuszler, Georgia Lord, Becky Lough, Hannah MacNorlin, John MacNorlin, Paul Mangelsdorf, Emmy Mathis, Susan May, Caroline Morris, Karen terHorst Morris,

Bethany Morrison, Ronald Nuse, Nan O'Connor, Lissa Place, Christina Repoley, Bert Skellie, Karen Skellie, Rebecca Sullivan, Elizabeth Tolmach, Jim Tolmach, Myrna Trapp, Sarah Walton, Ashley Wilcox, Pat Williams, Jean Wynn, Betsy Eggers (Clerk), Elizabeth Lamb (Recording Clerk) (43 Friends).

Query: Sally Ferguson presented the query: "Do we seek to transform the world with our loving spirit? What are we doing as individuals and as a Meeting to promote equal opportunities in social and economic life for those who experience discrimination for any reason whatsoever? Have we objectively considered the causes of discrimination and are we ready to abandon old prejudices and think anew? In our relationships, do we look for that of God in every person?"

Report

Ad Hoc Committee to Address Harassment: Mary Ann Downey reported that the Ad Hoc committee led a forum on October 30 as part of a process begun in June to address complaints of harassment. The women who brought the concerns requested that we educate the meeting about the issue. We posted an announcement and we approved a minute on nurturing trust and addressing harassment, along with a definition of harassment. During the forum, four women's stories about their experience of harassment were read followed by reflections of those gathered. During small group discussions, the 35 people present generated ideas for next steps. Among these ideas were: to send the definition of harassment and the women's stories to the newsletter, to establish a listening ear for concerns, and to revive the Quaker tradition of asking for an apology to the meeting from the person(s) for causing harm to the committee. At our November meeting, we agreed to follow through on some of these ideas. Thus today one of those persons causing harm stood before the meeting and presented his apology:

I had rather not be standing here, but I said I would. I had rather not have done the things that brought me to this point, but I did. When I read what these women experienced, I felt very embarrassed and pained. I never meant to cause any harm or discomfort. Obviously I did. And in the process I harmed the peace of the meeting. I have learned some painful lessons which I'd rather not repeat. And I sincerely apologize for these things I have done.

Following his apology the Meeting reflected on the situation and on whether the Meeting needed to make a response. The sense was that the Meeting cannot speak for the individuals harmed, but that Atlanta Friends Meeting acknowledges receipt of the apology from this individual as a next step in the process of healing and commits to continuing our work to achieve/restore unity and right relations for all in the meeting.

Discernment

Finance Committee: On behalf of the Finance Committee Paul Mangelsdorf presented the proposed budget for 2017, reflecting the corrections noted last month.

- **Minute 12-18-2016-01:** *Atlanta Friends Meeting approves the budget for 2017 as presented.*

Nominating Committee: On behalf of the Nominating Committee Ron Nuse brought forward the following names for approval:

- **Minute 12-18-2016-02:** *Atlanta Friends Meeting approves Rebecca Fiscal as appointed member of Care and Counsel Committee, 2017-2019.*
- **Minute 12-18-2016-03:** *Atlanta Friends Meeting approves Bill Hooson as clerk of Care and Counsel Committee, 2017-2019.*

- **Minute 12-18-2016-04:** *Atlanta Friends Meeting approves Dwight Harriman as co-clerk of Gathered Meeting Retreat Committee, 2017.*
- **Minute 12-18-2016-05:** *Atlanta Friends Meeting approves Carol Gray as clerk of Hospitality Committee, 2017.*
- **Minute 12-18-2016-06:** *Atlanta Friends Meeting approves Michael Kramer as member of Ministry and Worship Committee, 2017-2019.*
- **Minute 12-18-2016-07:** *Atlanta Friends Meeting approves Bethany Morrison as Recording Clerk, 2017-2018.*

Reports

Nominating Committee: On behalf of the Nominating Committee Ron Nuse brought forward the following:

Steve Collins, member of Ministry and Worship Committee
 Hannah MacNorlin, member of Ministry and Worship Committee
 Brent Wolff, directory editor

These names will be brought forward next month for final approval.

Ministry and Worship Committee: On behalf of the Ministry and Worship Committee Sally Ferguson formally introduced Bill Hooson to AFM. He is transferring his membership from Morgantown, WV, and has a long history of work within the Society of Friends. He will be clerking the C&C committee in 2017. She then reported that Ministry and Worship will gift new members with a year's subscription of Friends Journal.

Sally further reported that on November 18, 2016 there was a well-attended memorial service at the meetinghouse for Terry Boling, Beth Ensign's husband and Willamae's father. Friends and family celebrated his life and contribution to the community.

As part of her ministry in the meeting, Ashley Wilcox, with two other friends, is starting a weekly mid-week worship here at AFM. Ashley reported that it will initially take the form of a semi-programmed Quaker meeting with an ecumenical draw: music, singing, centering worship, open worship, prayer. The worship will be held Wednesdays from 7:00 to 8:30 pm beginning in January, 2017.

Sally then reported that Paul Baker has a leading to design our monthly queries with a link to Quaker history and beliefs. Ashley Wilcox and Rebecca Sullivan will help with this project.

Ministry and Worship has talked about how we and other meetings respond to what seems to be inappropriate ministry. Ashley Wilcox crowdsourced this question and received helpful feedback. If you are interested in these findings please follow the link in the newsletter.

Suchitoto Fund Committee: On behalf of the Sochitoto Fund Committee Bert Skellie presented the Annual Report: *The Suchitoto Fund Committee was established in July 2016 for stewardship of a fund established by a gift from Frank Cummings. The purpose of the fund is to support youth development in the Suchitoto, El Salvador, area. A further goal is to turn over the funds to an El Salvador-based entity before 2021.*

This year the Committee approved donating \$10,000 to INSU (Instituto Nacional de Suchitoto), the public high school of Suchitoto. It also approved establishing a new scholarship, with an obligation of about \$4000 until the student completes university studies. Finally, Andrew Cummings has been working with students and former students to establish a youth organization in Suchitoto. He is also arranging for a

nonprofit to take responsibility for supervision of the work of the youth organization and other youth development work.

A joy during the year was appreciating being able to continue the work started by Frank and Carol Cummings. Another joy was the ease of finding volunteer members for this committee. The Spirit has led us to be patient as we move toward full implementation of the work.

As of December 11, 2016, the Suchitoto Fund has approximately \$130,000, of which \$4000 is pledged for a scholarship, as noted above. Current members of the committee include Don Bender, Andrew Cummings, Lynn Leuszler, Judy Lumb, Paul Mangelsdorf and Bert Skellie (clerk).

Friends Committee on National Legislation: On behalf of the FCNL, Sue May reported on the annual gathering held November 9-13, 2016 in Washington, DC. She began by thanking the meeting for our financial support which enabled her and Liz Nicholson to attend the meeting. The meeting was attended by 300 seasoned and new activists from 40 states who reflected on past accomplishments and future challenges, especially considering the recent election. Attenders were reminded that FCNL is committed for the long haul, that “This is not a sprint, but a marathon.” They sought to focus on “where the light gets in,” reflecting on a quote from Leonard Cohen: “There’s a crack in everything. That’s where the light gets in.” Attenders also fanned out over Capitol Hill visiting the offices of their members of Congress. The Executive Secretary, Diane Randall, in her closing message said “Let’s get to work.” For a more complete report, please see Sue May.

Minutes of November 2016:

- **Minute 12-18-2016-08:** *Atlanta Friends Meeting approves the minutes of the November, 2016 business meeting with correction to the spelling of Bill Hooson’s name.*

Announcements

- Lynn Leuszler announced that the annual Corporation meeting will be held at rise of meeting of the January Meeting for Business.
- Betsy Eggers is trying to get annual reports (such as Suchitoto Fund, Ferguson Cabin, the Young Friends Program, FCNL) on a schedule so that we do not overlook any of these important reports.
- Steve Collins clarified that he submitted the newsletter article about Britt Pendergrast, but that he did not write it.
- Bert Skellie reminded people of the march and rally for Create Community 4 Decatur: Black Lives Matter this afternoon.
- David Foster announced that his art exhibition will be at AFM beginning with an opening reception January 7, 2017 from 1 – 4 pm.

Meeting closed with Silent Worship.

Respectfully submitted by:
Elizabeth Lamb, Recording Clerk
Betsy Eggers, Clerk



Please Hold in The Light:

Our country and our new administration.

Those wishing to have requests for Holding included in this monthly newsletter may give the names to a member of Care & Counsel.



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Calendar for First Month (January) 2017

Area Meetings for Worship

Every First Day (Sunday)	10:00 a.m. – Meetinghouse, with a smaller group in the Library.
Every Third First Day	12:30 p.m. – Carrollton Friends Worship Group. St. Andrew's UMC Youth Center, 1106 Maple St.; contact Jean Hudson, judson30116@yahoo.com or 678-378-3368; carrolltonfriends.org .
Every Second First Day	10:30 a.m. – Macon Friends Worship Group. Contact Diana Day, 478-227-8892; maconquakers.org
Every Fifth Day (Thursday)	12:10 p.m. – East Lake Commons, Decatur. 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.

Regular Events at the Meetinghouse

Every First Day (Sunday)	9:00 - Adult Religious Ed, Library 9:30 - Singing, Classroom A/B 10:00 - Meeting for Worship 5:00 - Atlanta Mennonite Fellowship, Meeting Room
Second Day (Monday)	Every other Monday at 6:30 - Spiritual Nurture Group, Library (contact Lewis Fuller for info on how to join)
Third Day (Tuesday)	6:00 - Alex Zinnes Yoga, Nursery Second and fourth Tuesdays at 7:00 - Deep Waters Center for Prayer & Exploration, Meeting Room
Fourth Day (Wednesday)	8:30 a.m. Morning Worship, Library First and third Wednesdays: 7:00 p.m. Worship at David & Freer Jarvis' home
Fifth Day (Thursday)	7:00 p.m. Bible Discussion, Library
Sixth Day (Friday)	Every third Friday, Meeting for Business, Meeting Room
18 th of Each Month	Newcomers Welcome Dinner, rotating location

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

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Office: MWF 9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.; 404-377-2474

Web: atlanta.quaker.org, atlantaquakers@gmail.com

Clerk: Betsy Eggers, afmclerk1@gmail.com

Treasurer: Lynn Leuszler, 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 Emily Lawson at elawson7@gmail.com or 404-200-8479. Please indicate if you want to be in the directory, receive the newsletter by mail, or both. Emily Lawson is also the contact to request mailing list removal.

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.

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