

**Report of Peace & Social Justice Committee
to Monthly Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business
January 10, 2016**

“We must all learn to live together as brothers or we will all perish together as fools. We are tied together in the single garment of destiny, caught in an inescapable network of mutuality. And whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly. For some strange reason I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be. And you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be. This is the way.” – Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-1968)

“It is not fair to ask others what you are not willing to do yourself.” – Eleanor Roosevelt (1884-1962)

“Let everything you do be done as if it makes a difference.” – William James (1842-1910)

Summary of P&SJ Activities since last Monthly Meeting for Business

1. **Meeting of P&SJ Committee, December 20.** Following rise of Meeting for Worship on First Day, Faye Bailey, Bob Clapp, Mark Connelly, Nancy Craft, Tom Elder, Michele Ewing, Paula Justice, Patrick Goold, Laley Lippard, Elizabeth Waitekus, Bob Young, Ramonda King, and Tom Bertrand met as a committee to reflect on a query and share their activities and concerns.

2. **Query: What should we do about the world today and the reactionary attitudes being expressed by certain politicians and certain media?** The committee agreed to explore ways of reaching out to fellow local citizens who are of the Islamic faith.

3. **Attention to old business: Lobbying local legislators.** Following up on last month’s Social Justice University meeting, Tom reported on a December 15 lobbying visit with Delegate (now Senator) Bill DeSteph by a delegation from the Legislative Collaborative Table of South Hampton Roads representing a coalition of 14 local activist organizations, including the Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy, Empower Hampton Roads, and Virginia Organizing in which VBFM participates. These organizations had united on four legislative priorities for the 2016 legislative session in Richmond: (1) Expanding Medicaid Coverage to close the health insurance gap for Virginians, (2) curbing predatory lending practices in Virginia, (3) passing the Virginia Coastal Protection Act, and (4) achieving a fair and transparent redistricting process. Tom had joined local activists Beatriz and George Amberman and Sister Margaret McCabe in pressing these four concerns on Delegate DeSteph.

4. **Sharing of our respective activities and concerns.**

- Reflecting on the effort to reach out to local Muslims, Patrick expresses his support for efforts to meet others of different persuasions. He quotes from Simone Weil’s essay on the *Iliad*: “One cannot love and be just unless one knows the empire of force and knows how not to respect it.” Patrick seeks a way to get together with people to fashion a way of talking about a different kind of world. Can we fashion a “yes” together?
- Elizabeth reports that she is reading a biography of John Adams, which traces his involvement with trying to build a nation dedicated to that very proposition.

- Ramonda expresses her joy in having her daughter return safely from Japan. She wants to be “out there working for the better” and demonstrating for peace and justice.
- Paula has been thinking about the importance of listening. She was always aware in her classroom of how her listening affected what her students said to her. “It is in listening that we understand.”
- Laley has recently returned from Chicago where she accepted the role of executive organizer of the Chicago Home Theater Festival devoted to a broadly participatory vision of social justice. She recounts recent phone conversations in which conflicts in the organization had been forthrightly addressed and worked out to help ensure continuity for the festival. She also speaks of recent work at Hampshire College and of the play, *Grounded*, which she will direct for the Virginia Stage Company.
- Bob C is very busy in his life and his gathering of contributions to Feeding America. He is grateful for special places like the Meetinghouse and gatherings like this one.
- Bob Y says that communities like VBFM are the most important things in his life. His son and grandson are visiting from Miami. He shares a the story of a rich recent conversation with them. “My actions come out of such silences and connectedness.” Real change, he notes, comes about through sharing experiences not agendas.
- Mark reflects on a recent presidential debate’s constructive focus on achieving a more socially just society, in contrast to the rancorous tenor of the recent debate of the other party. He is amazed at the vastly different languages employed in the two debates and wonders which language will end up winning out in 2016.
- Faye is reminded of the expression “when my wife says ‘we ought to talk’ it really means ‘we need to listen.’” She is busy baking fruitcakes for the holiday season.
- Michele reports that she has been invited to join a list of resource persons in diversity training for the Friends Council on Education. She has recently completed a diversity training at Friends School and participated in a spiritual learning seminar on Islam.
- Tom E reports on his daughter’s recent graduation from college. He finds himself caught in arguments and debates characterized by polarizing language which is neither healing nor redemptive nor effective. He repeats a quotation variously attributed to Aquinas or St. Francis of Assisi. “Go into the world and preach. If necessary use words.”
- Tom B is looking forward to visits with his daughter and various step-children and grandchildren over the holidays as well as an upcoming retreat of the School Committee of Friends School. He continues work as a member of the General Committee of FCNL and to be involved in providing legal assistance to individuals and families caught in the byzantine complexity and frequent injustice experienced in our nation by refugees from violence and injustice in other parts of the world.

5. Upcoming Events sponsored by other organizations:

- **The “2016 Day for All People” sponsored by the Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy (VICPP)** will be held in Richmond on Wednesday, January 20, from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Keynote speaker will be Presiding Bishop Michel Curry of the Episcopal Church. Registration will take place from 8-830 a.m. at Virginia Union University’s Claude G. Perkins Living and Learning Center. Virginia Union University is located at 1500 N. Lombardy Street, Richmond, VA 23220. Tickets to attend are \$30 for the day-long advocacy event and includes breakfast and lunch. Tickets are only \$15 for students. We may be taking a bus from Norfolk for this event.
- **Vigil to Close Guantanamo/Stop the Torture and No Police Brutality/No Mass Incarceration**, coordinated by Norfolk Catholic Worker, Friday, January 15, noon-1 pm, at the

corner of Granby St. and City Hall Ave. Expanding our Close Guantanamo/Stop the Torture vigil to include its domestic equivalents.

Contact Information for our representatives to 2016 Virginia General Assembly can be found at following links:

<http://viriniageneralassembly.gov/house/members/members.php?ses=2016>

<http://apps.senate.virginia.gov/Senator/index.php>

<http://apps.senate.virginia.gov/Senator/newmemberpage.php>

Submitted by Tom Bertrand on behalf of the Committee