MEETING FOR WORSHIP WITH ATTENTION TO BUSINESS
VIRGINIA BEACH FRIENDS MEETING
10th Day of 5th Month 2020

Meeting opened at 10:30 am with a period of waiting worship, 17 persons virtually present through Zoom technology: Clerk Jeanne Crawford offered some guidelines for the Zooming of this Meeting.

Clerk read aloud Query #9 - Manner of Living: *Are we mindful of Friends testimonies against alcoholic beverages, tobacco, and other harmful drugs; and do we refrain from using them or dealing in them, realizing that abstinence is the clearest witness against overindulgence? Do we seek to avoid all kinds of gambling and places of diversion that tend to be demoralizing? Do we keep in mind how diverse and widespread are the temptations to grow richer at the expense of others? Are we faithful to our testimony against taking oaths?*

Approved: Meeting united in the following response to Query #9:

Each of us can only speak for herself in answering this query, but certain common threads can be discerned. We do try not to indulge in anything that locks us off from God. We are struck by the cautionary phrase "places of diversion that are demoralizing," suggesting the need to avoid anything that weakens our spirits or our enthusiasms or our capacities to hope and to serve. It is interesting to read this query in the new light of this precarious time of pandemic and social distancing. We are learning to avoid all manner of things that in other times might have been more acceptable. We are made aware that every choice we make these days is a gamble, a condition of simply living mindfully today, and that our every choice affects others, whether it be some form of over-consumption or laxity in wearing protective masks. We are reminded by Paul in Romans 14 that God accepts all of us as we are and that we should not put any stumbling block in our brother's or sister's way. Now we see freshly that certain places and activities may endanger others or ourselves in ways we never before anticipated. We receive testimony that in the course of our lives the spiritual influence of Meeting has played a major role in helping some of us to recover from dependencies and from family traumas and to deepen our connections to God. We are also struck by how many people these days are less buffered from hunger and despair than are we fortunate few. Sheltering safely in the comfort of our homes today, we are acutely aware of how insulated we are from stark realities that so many in the world are living.

Clerk then read aloud Query #10 - Manner of Living: *Do we endeavor to live in harmony with nature? Are we careful in our stewardship of the world's irreplaceable resources?*

Approved: Meeting united in the following response to Query #10:

Our meeting has had a long history of environmental activism. We recently renamed our Committee on Peace & Social Justice in order to highlight our commitment to Earthcare.

Because all the stores are so short of paper products these days, we have become much more sensitive and cautious in our use of those products. We contemplate wasteful habits every day now. Some of us have been recycling from our youth, but all of us are growing through peer pressure of observing the environmental care and activism of others. However, we see others in our Hampton Roads region who have not yet learned these practices. We are concerned about the impact of the closing of community recycling programs. We are reminded again of the larger picture of how close we are to the existential cliff. So we are called to recommit ourselves to educating others to the vital importance of caring for our earth.

Clerk's Corner

Our clerk asked: How will we transform ourselves in this crucial opportunity for mindfulness imposed on us by this pandemic? She observed that our sense of community seems to have grown exponentially in our isolation. She commended two wisdom teachers to our attention.

The first, Cynthia Bourgealt, speaks about the power of contemplative prayer, "knowledge impregnated by love," in her youtube video "Being Is Not Something You Are," Festival of Faith, #FOF2019 YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5ALAgUlzxX0. Also see *Crux,* "Prayer According to Cynthia Bourgealt", November 2, 2014, https://cruxnow.com/faith/2014/11/prayer-according-to-cynthia-bourgeault/

The second is Ram Dass in the documentary "Sunseed—The Journey," available at https://sunseed.org/pages/ramdass

Nancy Craft reported that Natalie Bray's application for membership is still in process. Natalie is sheltering confined at home.

Worship & Community Committee Reports

Linda Smith reported that the newly constituted Worship and Community Committee has been meeting twice a month via Zoom. The second meeting in 4th month attracted fifteen participants, all working together to craft a vision for how this new committee can attend to the work of nurturing the Meeting. This week Linda will provide Nominating Committee with a list of current Worship and Community members to assist during the Nominating Season. The Committee will redraft the MEO description on the website to reflect the roles and responsibilities the Worship and Community Committee. The mission statement will continue to be reviewed and tweaked by Gwynne Wells and Nancy Craft so as to reflect our concern for the spiritual life of the meeting. Gwynne, Pat Phelan Young and Nancy Nixon agreed to work on the draft section on "sufferings," Including considering an alternative name for this small but

important subcommittee. It was suggested each member of the committee read the Pendle Hill pamphlet "Spirit Led Eldering" by Marge Larrabee. Copies are in the Meetinghouse literature rack or can be ordered directly from Pendle Hill as well. Linda Smith agreed to draft a protocol for outreach to newcomers, including distribution of the directory, with the help of Nancy Craft and Whit Peace. We have received notice that Deborah Shaw of Friendship Meeting in Greensboro has agreed to be the new clerk of Yearly Meeting Ministry and Oversight. We are still in conversation with Brian Drayton about offering a spiritual retreat in the fall. The next Worship and Community meeting is scheduled for Fifth Month 18 at 4:00PM. You do not need to be a member to join these committee meetings. All are welcome.

Approved: Linda Smith will coordinate an effort this week to plan an appropriate appreciation for Galen Hamann before her departure for New England (Jeanne, Linda, Andy, Whit, Gwynne and Tom also volunteered to be part of this effort).

Approved: Linda Smith as current convenor of the Worship and Community Committee.

Approved: that the Meeting continue sharing responsibilities for clerking, through a standing Clerk Committee (Linda Smith, Gwynne Wells, and Elizabeth Waitekus) and a Clerking Support Committee (Jeanne Crawford, Nancy Nixon, Pat Phelan and Andy Young, and Kathie Garner).

<u>Peace, Earthcare & Social Justice Repot</u>

Mary Pelham White reported orally about the PESJ Committee's Zoom meeting on Fifth Month 3, during which Mary Pelham had diagrammed the concentric circles of concern and stress that impact individuals in our Meeting and community. Her report touched on the following reports made at that zoom meeting: Tom Bertrand shared the report submitted to Interim Body Meeting concerning the work of the Yearly Meeting's Support Committee for the Poor People's Campaign. Included in the action plan of that Yearly Meeting committee is a strong effort to encourage participation by our NCYMC monthly meetings in the "MASS POOR PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY & MORAL MARCH ON WASHINGTON," scheduled now as a digital rally for Sixth Month (June) 20, 2020. The Rev. Dr. William Barber envisions this as the " *largest digital and social media gathering of poor and low-wealth people, moral and religious leaders, advocates, and people of conscience in this nation's history."* Sally Gudas updated the committee on extensive local efforts to support Central American refugee families in our community (her detailed report and helpful list of volunteer needs will be posted and sent out to the Meeting). Identifying some of the many ways that our future will be changed as a result of the pandemic, Beth Bertrand reported on huge dislocations taking place in our economy, including extreme economic pressures on poor and middle-class people and small businesses. Nancy Craft reviewed major legislative accomplishments of the General Assembly Session recently ended, including these that had been championed by the Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy to help low-income and marginalized communities and make Virginia more welcoming and equitable: an increase in minimum wage (though delayed until May 2021), comprehensive

predatory lending reform, driver's licenses for all, and significant steps toward environmental justice. Mary Pelham White will serve as point person while the PESJ Committee experiments with shared leadership.

Finance Committee Report

Tom Kennedy briefed Business Meeting on two pending matters, as summarized in the posted Finance Committee report. The first matter involves ongoing conversations between Finance Committee and School Committee regarding the Meeting's loan to the School, the final details of which Meeting had delegated to the Finance Committee to work out with School Committee. The two committees have agreed that the loan document for the Meeting needs to be drafted by a different attorney than the one who prepared the loans from Friends of Friends, LLC. Finance Committee is pursuing discussions with a separate attorney. The second matter involves cost and payment for a proposed Zoom account intended to provide flexible opportunities for Meeting and its various committees to carry on their business virtually during the coronavirus pandemic and beyond. The minimal monthly costs of such Zoom services will be covered by the Meeting, eventually through a Debit Card from our Towne Bank checking account.

Approved: Meeting recorded appreciation to Communications Committee and those several individuals who, in the interim, have been facilitating Zoom committee and worship meetings through their personal Zoom accounts.

Treasurer's Report

David French presented the Treasurer's reports, as posted in Fourth and Fifth Months. There was discussion of alternative ways of encouraging financial contributions to the Meeting through the website. This matter was tabled until the next Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business in Sixth Month.

Approved: Meeting approved modifying the current budget to accommodate slight overspending in the budget lines for MEO and Building Cleaning.

Approved: Meeting approved transfer of a general MEO $500 budgeted item to support Yearly Meeting attendance, to support the work of the new Worship and Community Committee.

Approved: Meeting approved financial support for sending Gwynne Wells and Elizabeth Waitekus to a future Pendle Hill clerking workshop to supplement scholarship funds that may be available from Pendle Hill.

Trustee Report

Nancy Craft reported that all three of the Meeting's Trustees (Lewis White, Hank Guittino, and Nancy Craft) had visited and updated the Meeting's safe deposit box at the Wells Fargo Bank branch at Hilltop. All three trustees now have access to the box.

Report on Interim Body Meeting

Several persons reported on the excellent Interim Body Meeting hosted over Zoom on Fourth Month 25. Virginia Beach Friends Meeting was represented at the virtual meeting by a larger contingent than usual. We learned a lot from this about how to host a large business meeting over Zoom. Yearly Meeting, scheduled for Seventh Month 9-12, 2020, will also take place over zoom. Yearly Meeting needs our directory information by first of Six Month.

Notice: Our VBFM members and attenders need to review this directory information and send any updates to Nancy Craft as soon as possible.

Approved: we approved sending an expression of appreciation to Yearly Meeting Clerk Gwen Gosney Erickson for her excellent coordination of the first Interim Body Meeting over Zoom.

Buildings & Grounds Committee Reports

Posted reports from the Committee for Fourth and Fifth Month included Cleaning and Work Day lists as well as updates about (a) the new janitor for the Meetinghouse; (b) continuing exploration by Alcoholics Anonymous of installing an air conditioning unit for the basement; and (c) a still pending consideration of whether insurance for the Meetinghouse should continue be carried on the School's policy or in a separate policy, and for what amount.

Reports Concerning Friends School

Reports from Head and Assistant Head of School

Members of Meeting are encouraged to review posted reports from the Head of School for Fourth and Fifth Months and from the Assistant Head of School for Academic Affairs for Fourth Month. The reports contain thorough overviews of how the School faculty and staff have perfected their distance teaching platforms during the Coronavirus pandemic. The reports contain a parent survey of distance learning with impressive results. The campus has been closed under state mandate since March 13, with only Head of School Mike Barclay and Chief Financial Officer Candice Jarden making regular trips to their offices to keep an eye on the campus. Faculty and staff, working from home, have been maintaining the school's devotion to student development and are fully engaged in bringing this historically challenging school year

to a graceful close with virtual closing ceremonies. Graduating seniors are headed to Guilford College, James Madison University and Elon University. The School's weekly Meetings for Worship have continued through Zoom, and Galan Haman has been instrumental in gearing up Zoom worship and committee sessions for the Virginia Beach Friends Meeting and its various committees The school is planning on running a combination of in-person and online summer programs. Active discussions are underway about what next academic year will look like. The start of the 2020-21 academic year is currently planned for Wednesday, Eighth Month 26. During the summer months, all Friends teachers will be working and planning for an academic year that has the potential to phase in and phase out of distance learning depending on the ebb and flow of COVID-19. As always, Mike Barclay is hoping for the best and preparing for the worst-case scenario. As of Fifth Month 6, the school has 86 enrolled students for the 2020-21 academic year. Total Enrollment Goal for 2020-21 is 127.

Reports from School Committee

The Committee's posted Fourth Month report noted that School Committee and the Meeting's Finance Committee had met on March 19, 2020 to discuss terms for the Meeting's loan to the School. "After much discussion agreement was reached on terms for the loan agreement. Meeting's Finance committee will have an attorney draft this agreement for further consideration."

The Committee's Fifth Month report summarized important information from its Fifth Month 15, 2020 meeting via Zoom. The committee is losing two valuable members. Tim Craddock is stepping down after six years of service. Jim Metcalfe has reached the maximum service time of nine years but will remain as a volunteer on the Advancement Committee and will be available for legal consultations as needed. The committee has a slate of potential members who can bring valuable expertise to the committee. The School's Committee on Trustees will contact these potential members and begin the selection process for new members. Meeting's Nominating committee will be notified when new committee members have been selected. Considering the challenges facing independent schools in these times School Committee members have been taking part in various pertinent webinars provided by the Virginia Association of Independent Schools (VAIS).

Young Friends Committee Report

The Young Friends Committee report was posted, reporting on two Zoom Faith and Play lessons led by Galen Hamann, followed by breakout sessions for the children, led by Natalie Bray. These have been positive and caring experiences for the Meeting despite the challenges of keeping young children engaged via a virtual means. Our next Faith and Play program is scheduled for Fifth Month 17 on zoom. The committee is hoping to continue the Faith and Play program in

the future. Natalie Bray, Gwynne Wells and Linda Smith are interested in receiving Faith and Play training.

In the course of the afternoon, the following 19 persons were able to attend some or all of the Business Meeting: Andy Young, Beth Bertrand, Dave French, Debbie Reilly, Diane Fenton, Jeanne Crawford, Nancy Nixon, Nancy Craft, Nancy Delle Femine, Gillian Spencer, Gwynne Wells, Larry Herz, Linda Smith, Mary Pelham White, Pat Phelan-Young, Patrick Goold, Tom Bertrand, Tom Kennedy, and Whit Peace.

The Meeting ended with a period of silent worship, 14 persons still present.

Submitted by

Jean Crawford, Clerk

Tom Bertrand, Recording Clerk