

Virginia Beach Friends Meeting Newsletter First Month 2014

CURRENT ACTIVITIES	
2/6 JCOC Our turn to serve the shelter meal. Contact Tracy Paladini to assist tpaladini@yahoo.com	2/17 No School Presidents Day – Sports Tournament
2/14 School No students, faculty Work Day	2/19-20 School Sports Tournament
WEEKLY	MONTHLY
<p><u>EACH 1st DAY</u> (Sunday)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * <u>10:30 – 11:30 am Meeting for Worship with First Day School</u>- younger children join Meeting during or after Worship * <u>12:00-12:30 pm Silent Peace Vigil</u> - in front of the Meetinghouse <p><u>EACH 4th DAY</u> (Wednesday)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * <u>7 pm - Mid-Week Prayer</u> <p><u>EACH 6th DAY</u> (Friday)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * <u>9 – 9:30 am Meeting for Worship</u> All are welcome, with special invitation to School & Meeting Community (except when school is not in session) 	<p><u>1st First Days</u> –</p> <p>9 am – Buildings & Grounds Meeting</p> <p>12:15 pm - Peace & Social Justice Meeting</p> <p><u>2nd First Days</u> –</p> <p>8:30 am - Meeting for Worship with attention to Business (except Seventh Month)</p> <p><u>3rd First Days</u></p> <p>9 am - First Day School Discussion <u>The NCYM-C Book of Discipline</u></p> <p><u>4th First Days</u></p> <p>9 am Meeting of Ministry & Oversight</p>
SAVE THE DATES 2014	
To Be Determined	The River Cleanup Days. Contact Whit Peace, 613-2828 whitpeace.river@gmail.com For more information or to register, call our office at 757-962-5398, Trista@LRNow.org
2/6, 3/11, 4/10, 10/7, 11/6	JCOC dates for 2014 – Contact Tracey Paladini to assist and for details tpaladini@yahoo.com
4/13-16/2014	FWCC Regional Consultation, High Point NC
4/26/2014	Representative Body meeting, Durham Meeting, Durham NC
7/9-13/2014	Yearly Meeting, Guilford College, Greensboro NC

www.vbfriends.org, www.ncymc.org, Facebook Group: North Carolina Yearly Meeting Conservative

Query #7 to ponder for next month – *Do we endeavor to live in the life and power that takes away the occasion of all war, seeking to do our part in the work of reconciliation between individuals, groups, and nations? Do we faithfully maintain our testimony against nuclear and all other military preparations, the bearing of arms, and all participation in war?*

Query #6: Growth of Our Children: *Do we endeavor by example and precept to cultivate in our children a sense of openness and expectancy about life, and to aid them in their growth in spiritual understanding and moral discernment? Do we share with them the faith that guides the practice of Friends, while encouraging them to develop their religious insights as the Spirit of God may lead them?*

Response: We find ourselves pushing on the boundaries of this query. Reflecting on the generations of children that have been raised in the Meeting, we see many engaged in the work of the spirit, though few active in the Meeting now. Teaching openness and expectancy about life is a commitment at the heart of our school, an endeavor in which we participate in the care of over one hundred and fifty children. And we seek growth in openness and expectancy for ourselves and for all in the Meeting. Sometimes this desire for openness leads us to question the meaning of formulae like “the spirit of God.” A further openness is needed to hear this language anew. We see evidence the seed has been planted.

Virginia Beach Friends Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business First Month 12, 2014

Meeting began at 10:33 with a period of silent worship.

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Head of School report.

- * Plans are underway for Open House to be followed by an internal marketing campaign the week after Open House. The aim is to improve retention by building school spirit and pride in who we are as a school community. Events will include higher grades hosting the rising year group for breakfast. Older students will introduce the younger students to the “fun stuff” done in the new class/division.
- * Enrollment as of Tuesday, January 5 was 156 students.
- * The recent alum homecoming and past students’ reunion was a great night. Sixty past students as well as a few past parents attended. This number of attendees greatly exceeded the norm for these events.
- * Two Early School teachers are part of a panel training other teachers about becoming a Pearl School. This is being hosted by the Lynnhaven River Now organization and will be held at Cape Henry.

School Committee Report.

- * SC welcomed three new members at its last meeting.
- * A task force was created to formulate the school’s “marketing niche” in a way that unites the core identity of being a Friends School with the curricular emphasis on environmental sustainability.
- * SC continues to educate itself with developmental activities aimed at sharpening management and leadership practices and building trust and shared goals among the members.

Treasurer’s report

- * Treasurer reported the total income for the year just past at \$28,600 and expenses at \$29,100.
- * A budget for the 2014 was presented. Meeting united in approving the budget as presented. (See attached *Note not in newsletter)
- * Treasurer urged all those who gave money to the Meeting last year to pick up their tax receipts and to verify the figures.

Building and Grounds

- * A printed report of 2013 accomplishments was distributed.
- * A list of forthcoming projects included painting of trim and shutters, installation of new windows and drainage improvements.
- * Meeting united in approving \$12,000 specifically for new windows for the meetinghouse.
- * The next meeting of the committee is scheduled for 2/2/2014 at 9:00AM

A Concern

A concern was brought before meeting about quiet during meeting for worship. There is writing and reading going on during the meeting that is attended by a noisy flipping of pages and other bustle and this distracts from the silence. Meeting united in referring concern for the quality of the silence to Ministers, Elders and Overseers. Those with related concerns can bring them to Nancy Nixon.

Joint School/Meeting Property Task Force

The Laskin Road Project looms large. This work will have a significant impact on the Meeting. The committee is working to prepare for this. Expect more information and a call for discussions as the nature of the changes that will be required becomes clear.

Meeting closed with a period of silence.

David French, Clerk for the day and Patrick Goold, Recording Clerk for the day

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Summary of lesson 1 - review of our Faith and Practice / Book of Discipline from David French, January 19, 2014

About a dozen people met with leader Dave French for our opening session of our adult study of our Faith and Practice (F&P). The majority of the discussion was on pages 4 and 5, and more specifically the paragraphs dealing with the various divisions which have separated Quakers into today's several types of Meetings.

During the class, Dave described how Quakers were a unified group in the early 1800s. In the US, a highly admired Friend was Elias Hicks, from Long Island. He frequently traveled in the Americas as a minister to Friends and others, and preached the normal Quaker messages. Part of his message, however, was understood to doubt the divinity of Jesus (as some earlier Friends had done) and to rely on the leadings of the Spirit. Others, especially in Philadelphia, began to oppose him, and part of this may be more related to his condemnation of wealth and power, which were important to the urban leadership of Friends. In the attempt to squelch him, an effort was made to expel him from the Meeting, and this ultimately resulted in the split of several Yearly Meetings in New England. Friends who were loyal to him or to the concept of individual freedom to speak one's views went along with the split, which Elias Hicks himself deeply regretted.

The second major division among Friends happened when a revival of Bible reading was sweeping the country. Admittedly, many Friends had stopped reading the Bible, instead placing primary value on the direct leading of the Spirit. Some Friends lost sight of the early history of our religion, when deep knowledge of the Bible, and total acceptance of it, were a "given". The emphasis on direct communion with the Spirit was embodied in a Friend named Wilber, while a prominent British Friend named Gurney embodied the new emphasis on Biblical knowledge and religious training. These competing views lead to a major division as sides were taken, and several Yearly Meetings split over it.

Another movement that had huge impact on Friends was the religious revival movement of the mid-1800s. Especially in the Midwestern states of Ohio and Indiana, tent revivals and charismatic preachers won many converts to Christianity and to Friends. However, Meetings found themselves unable to hold these new converts with our normal unprogrammed services, and thus began a more conformist style of Friends Meetings with a hired minister and hymn singing. Traditionalists were aghast, and some Yearly Meetings split over this change in style.

North Carolina Yearly Meeting had observed all this without becoming deeply involved in it. However, as the issues of slavery and the Civil War approached, many North Carolina Friends had emigrated to Midwestern states to escape the violent conflicts in North Carolina. They were strongly influenced by the revival activities there, as described in the paragraph above. Following the war, those who returned to North Carolina brought with themselves the experience of having appointed and paid ministers who did evangelistic work. This became an important influence among the older North Carolinians, and also a point of considerable conflict, especially among the Rich Square Quarter meetings. Those Meetings began to refuse to pay the portion of their Yearly Meeting assessments that supported evangelism.

Many in North Carolina had also been so aligned with Midwesterners that they wanted to attend the 5 year gathering at Richmond, Indiana, which was first held after the end of the civil war. That gathering of various Yearly Meetings decided to write a joint declaration of Faith which all member meetings could use. When North Carolina Friends considered adopting this declaration, it was found unacceptable by the Rich Square Quarter, at least partly because it was to be imposed upon them, and because it emphasized Biblical knowledge instead of direct revelation. In 1904, the tension of these different points of view became too great, and North Carolina Yearly Meeting divided, just as many other Yearly Meetings had done in the earlier century. Our branch ultimately called themselves "Conservative" claiming to uphold the old tried and true ways.

Thus, the North Carolina Yearly Meeting (Conservative) was born in 1904. It was a very small offshoot of the formerly united group, and only included a few Monthly Meetings. It allied itself with several other Yearly Meetings that had gone thru a similar process of division over doctrine and practice, and NCYM-C found kinship with Ohio and Iowa Yearly Meetings. That informal alliance continues to today.

Another trend has been vital to understanding who we are. After WWII, major new social movements became very important in the US. Those include:

- the anti-war movement. Friends had been conscious objectors during WWII and gained the notice and respect of many non-Friends.
- the civil rights movement saw new strength, based on the military service of so many Blacks who came home to expect civil rights that they had fought for but were denied. Friends, who had championed anti-slavery movement 100 years earlier, were allies of that movement.
- liberalism and world service became more broadly embraced. Programs such as international service in the American Friends Service Committee were appreciated and emulated.

These 3 social trends, that were embraced and often lead by Quakers, attracted many outsiders to our Meetings, where they also observed the Quaker ways of decision making and of equality to women. New Meetings developed on college campuses and in communities that previously hadn't had them. These Meetings had little appreciation of historic Quaker ways, and sometimes had little value for standard Christian beliefs, but had great energy for social work and belief in the direct leading of the Spirit. In NCYM-C one can find several such Meetings, who have affiliated with NCYM-C because of geographic closeness and because of the NCYM-C embrace of the concept of "waiting worship".

Thus, the Virginia Beach Monthly Meetings finds itself as part of NCYM-C for a variety of reasons. We are part of the community of Friends who worship without paid ministers and programmed services. We embrace the tradition of local independence. Geographically, we could be part of Baltimore Yearly Meeting (there is no Virginia Yearly Meeting), but years ago a decision was made to be in North Carolina, and there has been no need to change that. We are not socially conservative, nor are we - collectively - theologically conservative. But we are part of NCYM - C in that we have held to the older ways of waiting worship.

Every group finds ways to justify its position, and we Quakers have certainly done that. We can find Biblical passages to support our positions on many topics, and we can quote George Fox to support ourselves on many others. However, others can do the same. One example is the old testament stories of God supporting his chosen people to make war against their enemies. How would Biblically oriented Quakers reconcile this with our testimonies against war? Has God changed his mind? Have we misunderstood a message? However, another contradiction may be found in our worship; we would normally find in our hour of worship at least 50 minutes of silence and less than 10 minutes of spoken messages. In George Fox's time, he preached as long as an hour and other Quaker ministers did the same. Those attending meeting felt something was missing without the acknowledged ministers speaking at length. If we came to worship and found that today, we would find it contrary to our concept of the "right way" for us to gather, but we would have to admit that it was closer to our true roots. Thus, we have difficulty claiming that we hold on to the true original ways!

The final question for us is what we want to be, given all this. We gladly acknowledge the diversity within our Monthly Meeting, but we may sometimes be challenged to define who we really are and what we believe. Do we need to more closely define that? Are we open to whomever wants to join us, regardless of their religious views? Do we find ourselves adequately comfortable within NCYM-C in spite of some of the views of their official statements? These and other questions may be considered later.

The purpose of this newsletter is to share the Monthly Meeting minutes with members, attenders and others interested in the Virginia Beach Monthly Meeting. The minutes represent the official view of the Meeting. Other articles relating to the Meeting are included on a space available basis and reflect the views of the person submitting the information. The name of the person writing or submitting each article is included to avoid the impression the information represents the opinion of the Meeting.

Newsletter Notes: The Deadline for the newsletter is the day of our monthly Business session.

newsletter via only electronic emails. **To receive the newsletter and/or other Meeting news electronically via email only, send a request to vbfm.emailer@gmail.com.** Please include your name, address, phone number and email when making requests. Please indicate if you no longer want to receive the hard copy newsletter. You may also communicate via the We are encouraging folks to receive the newsletter electronically to help save our funds. Please consider receiving this Meeting's mailing address, Virginia Beach Friends Meeting, PO Box 4371, Virginia Beach, VA 23454.

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