

Annapolis Friends Monthly Meeting (AFM)
Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business (MfB)
Second Month, Fourth Day, 2024 (2/4/24)

Present were: Karen C. (clerk), Phil C. (recording clerk), Martha B., Cairn K., Ellen M., Martha L., Sky E., Nancy Jo S., Ann R., Pat S., Jonathan & Lisa H., Patty R., Karl R., Sylvia O., Marjorie K., Jack L., Ben K. (Owl operator), Jack H., Kathy T., Russel T., Mary B., Angela H., Kim F., Bonnie P., Marcia O., Steve P., Wes J., Diane S., Jeanne W., Christina F., Zoran Z., and Margaret H.

(A note as to prior minutes: 1/7/24 minutes were made available online and minor corrections were made.)

We met on this day both in person and via Zoom, beginning with centering worship and screen-sharing of BYM's Second Month Faith and Practice queries. From the initial silence, our Clerk welcomed Friends and reviewed AFM's anti-racist queries. Then, we proceeded with reports and action items from various AFM committees.

Peace & Social Concerns (PSC) Com.: Phil reminded Friends that PSC was tasked at our December MfB to recommend 2023 disbursements from our newly-endowed Retrospective and Restorative Justice (RRJ) Fund which seeks "ways we can act to end racism ... and to make our communities more inclusive, diverse and whole." He then reviewed PSC's discernment process leading to these recommendations.

Mindful of the full history of our Quaker predecessors, PSC Friends recalled that not all Quakers were always "the good guys" leading the movement against slavery and making peace with Native-Americans. Over the generations, some Quakers kept enslaved people until a couple of generations before emancipation; BYM Friends operated Indian Boarding Schools where native youth were harmed being separated from their families, their native languages, and their culture; many Friends knowingly benefited from segregated schools and government programs that excluded minority families from their benefits. The result today is a society where huge economic disparities and divides persist between people who are white, African-American, and from other minority races and ethnicities.

PSC participants included some people who are African-American and Friends informally consulted with others outside AFM; PSC Friends concluded that education represents one of the largest factors that leads to white Friends' advantages, so using RRJ funds to provide educational benefits for disadvantaged people who are African-American and Native-American whose communities have been harmed would be a good first-time use of the RRJ fund. Thus, PSC's three recommendations for education-related donations in the RRJ Fund's first (2023) year are:

- a) \$1,000 - American Indian College Fund,
- b) \$1,000 - Thurgood Marshall College Fund, and
- c) \$5,000 - Anne Arundel Community College Foundation - Black Male Institute (BMI) program, which would be directed to "first generation" college student(s) who aspire to become public school teachers.

Each of these funds, Phil noted, is confirmed a tax-exempt charitable organization in good standing, according to the IRS website-- [Tax Exempt Organization Search | Internal Revenue Service \(irs.gov\)](#) – and other nonprofit rating websites.

These disbursements would leave almost \$5,000 "seed money" to begin our 2024 / year-two process for further donations and discernment for future restorative activities.

Phil also offered a few notes about BMI program, as some Friends had inquired about apparent "male" limitation in that program's name:

- 1) It's not actually limited to Black males, but alternately will welcome those "required as freshmen to take at least one developmental course; those who qualify for financial aid on the FAFSA—Free Application for

Federal Student Aid—form; those who belong to a minority group; OR (emphasis added) those who are military or veteran students." <https://www.thecampuscurrent.com/5603/campus-life/black-male-initiative-helps-minority-youth/>

2) Within the program, BMI administrators have told us, they may have additional scholarship opportunities -- which AFM could create with our donation-- focused particularly on students who may wish to become public school teachers.

3) The program is not strictly one providing funds, but also provides mentoring and counseling. This is particularly helpful for "first generation college students" and those from at-risk populations for whom the college experience is unknown. <https://www.aacc.edu/resources/student-success/black-male-institute/>

After some discussion and questions, Friends approved these recommended year-one RRJ disbursements.

Green group (GG): Marjorie for GG asked Friends approval for AFM's signing the Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake - Partner Congregation pledge. After a reading aloud of the pledge, Friends approved AFM becoming a partner congregation and displaying the pledge in our Meeting House.

Ministry & Pastoral Care: For MPC, Martha B. reported that the newly-combined committee has begun collaborating. One of MPC's first plans will bring BYM's Spiritual State of the Meeting queries to AFM for consideration, seeking focus both on our spiritual strengths and areas where growth is needed. The queries will be considered in a worship-sharing format during our next Meeting for Worship on First Day, 2.11.24.

Martha read the queries (attached). She also invited Friends' worship-sharing response to the first MfB query with 15 minutes of worship-sharing during this MfB. Notes from the worship-sharing were forwarded to MPC.

MPC will share these responses, as well as those received during Meeting for Worship on First Day, 2/11/24, into a statement to bring back for consideration and approval at our next MfB on 3/3/24.

Announcements:

Clerk's Support Committee: Our clerk, Karen, noted that Margaret H. will replace Sheila M., joining Martha B. and Ellen M. on her Clerk's support committee. Karen also thanked Margaret for hosting a recent meeting. If Friends wish to pass along concerns or questions, we may take these directly to Karen as clerk or other members of her support committee.

Surplus: Our Clerk also advised that Stewardship and Finance Committee (S&F) in the next week plans to review the approximately \$5,000 surplus created by Friends' generous year-end donations. Individuals or committees with suggestions may contact S&F in the meantime; these recommendations will be presented at our next (3/3/24) MfB and will be discussed further then.

Library: The Library Committee today will offer an "open house" during potluck. Friends are invited to visit the Library then.

Communications Committee: Ellen noted that committee contact pages have been updated on our Meeting website; the full 2024 slate, approved by December MfB, also is available on the Gifts and Leadings Committee webpage. Any suggestions for website improvements should be sent to the Communications Committee.

One Friend suggested that our website, while great, was "pretty invisible" online for a search on the subject of child / Sunday School. She suggested that this may be because AFM Friends currently "aren't too invested in SEO"--search engine optimization--and key words in text. Another Friend, who operates a small

business, recently hired an SEO consultant for \$2,000. (NOTE: The Committee reports that it actually has home page references to AFM's Children's Religious Education (Sunday School) and "nursery" as needed, but that it actively is working on issues of SEO.) Friends thanked Sheryl, Ellen and the Communications Committee for working so hard on the website "without squawking."

Meeting House and Land (MHL) Committee: Our co-clerks reported that our last community work-day (the 2nd Saturday of the month from 9 to noon) was awesome. The next one is set for this coming Saturday at the same time.

Peace and Social Concerns (PSC) Committee offered a half dozen items:

- \$500 donated in November from AFM's ESC fund as permitted by our guidelines with this later report to MfB. The Committee directed these funds to AFSC for emergency shelter and medical aid for Gaza refugees; although recognizing the war has produced horrific harm to Israelis as well, their nation is economically stronger with massive international support, but Palestinians casualties and displaced population is many times greater with much less available assistance.

- Holiday Sharing 2023-PSC thanks this program's coordinators Martha B., Kathy T., and Jack H. for their good work coordinating Thanksgiving and Christmas support for three needy local families.

- Afghan refugee family support (shared by AFM with Unitarians) is drawing to a close this month. While the family still has many needs (health, employment, and financial), they are better off than 18 months ago and will have ongoing assistance from the Lutheran refugee services program. Informally, Friends individually also may be led in different ways to advise and assist the family.

- Winter Relief 2024 - Annually for many years, AFM has collaborated with other churches on this seasonal homeless shelter program. Because our space is limited, we help staff Magothy Methodist when homeless guests stay there. Phil thanked several Friends who already have signed up to supply a Sunday meal; we need more late night and early morning "chaperones" for our week which runs from 3/18-25/24. Phil will repost the sign-up sheet on AFM announce.

-Finally, Phil reported that our second quarterly session of the Racial Reconciliation Collaborative (RRC)-Community Conversations program has been rescheduled to Sat., 2/24/24, 1pm to 4 pm and will take place here at AFM since St. Philips is booked that day. The topic selected by organizers will be addressed to young adults ("Does voting matter?") since participants in our first RRC-CC session identified lack of civic involvement of our young people as a major concern. A flier has been circulated to representatives at various schools (local high schools, AACC, St. Johns, USNA), but Phil remains concerned that these representatives may not have gotten the flier out to students. (So far, only about 20 have signed up.) He will repost the flier on AFM announce and encourages Friends to share it with students / young adult networks in the area, if possible.

We concluded with brief silence. *-These minutes respectfully submitted – Phil C., Recording Clerk.*

IPC's Partner Congregation Pledge

As a community of faith, we are called to honor our sacred bond with our Creator, serve as good stewards of the land and waters of the Chesapeake, and sustain the life and health of all creatures.

Through our words and actions, we pledge to:

- Celebrate, respect, and revere the Earth's blessings
- Demonstrate good stewardship in how we manage our land and facilities
- Engage members of our community in the work of caring for the environment.
- Embrace the mission of Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake to work together to protect and restore our shared watershed

Rooted in faith and hope, we will:

- Take actions to:
 - educate ourselves on ways to live in harmony with the Earth and teach our congregations to be faithful stewards of the Earth and thus magnify our impact,
 - reduce our impact on the Earth at our facilities and within our institution,
 - restore our watershed through cleanups, reducing pollution, and restoration,
- Promote local, state, and federal policies that protect natural resources for generations to come.
- Reinforce our commitment as part of our liturgical calendar.
- Cultivate leaders among our members who will champion watershed stewardship.
- Use our financial, volunteer, and other resources to help in this work to restore the Earth.
- Build connections with our broader community and share the message of restoration and respect of the Earth beyond our congregation.
- Advocate for all communities to have access to a healthy environment.
- Display this pledge so community members and visitors are inspired to take action.

We do all of this with gratitude for the creation which sustains all life. May we be guided by grace and compassion so that our actions may restore the beauty and balance of the Chesapeake Bay watershed – and all the Earth. May our efforts give inspiration to others, calling them toward a path of respect and reverence for all God's creation.

We are an Interfaith Partner for the Chesapeake.

Spiritual State of the Meeting Queries

(reflecting on our experience during 2023 at Annapolis Friends Meeting)

1. Meeting for Worship with Attention for Business is central to discerning Spirit's will for the Meeting. At our best, what practices in our Meetings for Business help us do this well? In what ways do you think we could do better?
2. The whole world seems at war now. How does the Quaker peace testimony live in our meeting? How do we practice the peace testimony within our Meeting? Beyond our meeting?
3. In what ways, if any, have you experienced or become aware of subtle prejudices in our Meeting? How might we be more aware of and respond to those who are impacted?
4. How does our walk with Spirit inform our understanding of what is ours to do about racism and how we are meant to live? In what ways is our Meeting working to become an anti-racist and justice-seeking community? To what extent do we suffer from the arrogance of certainty in our work?

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Guidelines for worship sharing as to SSOM queries

Annually Annapolis Friends engages in a self-reflection process, where we consider prepared queries, listening deeply to Spirit (the Light, God, Love, the Divine, etc.) and sharing our sense of Spirit's leadings for us aloud—with open heart. This process helps us gain clarity on our current spiritual state—both strengths and areas for needed growth.

In early February, this year's queries will be shared widely through our website, afm-announce, committees, and Meetings for Worship (8 am, 11 am). With the approval of Meeting for Business last month, **a worship sharing opportunity will be held as part of the 11 am worship on Sunday, February 11**. Responses can also be sent to ministry-pastoralcare@annapolisfriends.org or shared in individual conversations with members of Ministry & Pastoral Care at any time.

AFM Ministry and Pastoral Care committee will prayerfully listen to all that we receive – from the worship sharing on February 11, from our committees, and from other groups in the Meeting, from individuals – and attempt to capture the essence into a statement to be conveyed back to Baltimore Yearly Meeting. It is our hope to bring a draft statement to Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business on March 3 for improvements and approval before it is passed along to Baltimore Yearly Meeting.

This process of collective spiritual reflection is as important as the report we write. We hope that everyone will participate in some way. Please feel free to reach out to Ministry & Pastoral Care with any questions, suggestions, or concerns.