

MIDCOAST MONTHLY MEETING FOR BUSINESS

April 18, 2021

Clerk of the Meeting Diane Dicranian opened the meeting with a moment of silent reflection.

2021-10 – Diane presented an email from a black Friend in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area speaking to the deaths of George Floyd, Dante Wright, and so many other black people killed in police violence. He asked for those who have friends or family in Minnesota to become involved through such organizations as the Black Visions Collective and George Floyd Square.

2021-11 – Committee Reports:

A. Building and Grounds:

- Guy reported.
- The lobby area needs painting and Guy has spackled holes from art hanging in preparation.
- Sue noted that the posts and newels on the porch and deck had pieces come off in the winter and that she knows someone who would be good to hire to fix this. A show of hands recommended fixing the porch.
- Sue recommended we contact the carpenter now as they will have an influx of business soon.
- **Report accepted.**

B. Ministry and Council:

- Jim reported.
- Jim reported that there was nothing to discuss except for the hiring policy of FUM which would be handled later in the meeting.
- **Report accepted.**

C. Pastoral Care:

- Jean and Willow reported.
- Jean expressed gratitude to Willow on behalf of the meeting for her report on the quarterly meeting.
- Emergency contact forms will be going out.
- **Report accepted.**

D. Newsletter Committee:

- Guy reported.
- No news.
- Will get contact forms out.
- **Report accepted.**

E. MOPC:

- Sue reported.
- Had conversation with the Knox County Jail regarding what materials of comfort they would like for Quaker prisoners.
- The diaper bank is still doing well.

- **Report accepted.**

F. Finance:

- Bruce reported.
- The amount allocated for pastoral care has gone from \$250 to \$400 this year.
- Emergency fund rollover – Barb said we have over \$1,000 in the fund now and \$500 to put into the fund for this year. Bruce said it will be around a total of \$1,700.
- Bruce posed the question: Do we want to place a cap on the Emergency fund total?
 - a) The last time the fund was used for a significant item was three or four years ago.
 - b) Barb suggested that we impose a cap as anything substantially more than about \$2,000 will be quickly voted on by the meeting.
 - c) Bruce said the cap was \$2,000. If we want it to be higher, we should adopt an amount.
 - d) Willow said we had put a cap of \$2,000 on it and we should rollover until we reach this amount.
 - e) Jim felt that \$2,000 was a comfortable amount and that we could get an immediate vote if we had a greater need.
 - f) Barb suggested \$3,000, as we are a “comfortable meeting.
 - g) It was agreed that there should be a cap.
- Bruce reported that we received three more checks for the Rockland Library fund. Deb suggested we wait until the end of April to send them additional donations.
- Jean suggested that this was a good time for the Pastoral Care budget to increase as the money sent to the Vicki Diamond Memorial fund set up at the Rockland Library was prior to the new budget. Also the price of flowers has increased.
- **Report accepted.**

G. Monthly Newsletter:

- Elisa reported.
- Said that she needed material for the May newsletter.
- Needs contributions by May 5 in order to get the letter ready for publication by the 15th.
- Reminded friends of the “between friends” segment, asked for photographs and articles. Articles should be between 400 and 600 words or less.

2021-12 – Threshing Session – Friends United Meeting (FUM) Hiring Policy Letter to The New England Yearly Meeting (NEYM)

- A. Diane led the meeting in a moment of silent reflection to center prior to the discussion.
- B. Barb said she was concerned about the general understanding of Quaker discernment. She said that we go along with the sense of the meeting if it is not 100% only if those who disagree are willing to step aside. She does not feel it is appropriate at this point to step away from NEYM. She asked if this was coming from the community or from the light and said that she felt anger behind the passive resistance. She said that action needs to be geared to the seeds of love. Barb brought up the Vietnam War and WWII stating that conscientious objectors worked in hospitals and drove ambulances out of love not anger. She feels people in the meeting might have a personal interest in LGBTQ rights and are taking things personally.

- C. Karen said she worked in Human Resources and Middle East Issues for many years with FUM. She said many lost family and lives, but were asked to sit at the table together. How can we not sit at the table with our own Friends?
- D. Martin said that he sees one issue that keeps coming up. One of our basic tenets is to respect every human as a reflection of God, beyond our own Meeting, but on a broader scale. He asked if we should be reminding FUM of that. He feels the letter is too direct and definitive and should be more in line with Quaker process.
- E. Jacqui – She said she has been a Quaker for 30 years. She feels that someone is hurting our people and we are not going to stand for it anymore. Said she has been a registered nurse for 40 years. She said she was active in advocacy for patients and workers rights, in Vietnam war protests, the England into Ireland problems and more. It was not the people she disliked; it was the policies that were harmful. She said that we cannot allow unfair and harmful treatment to go on while we hide behind intellectualism and reflection. She said, “I’m tired, 70, ill and I’ve had enough. The letter is excellent – not angry.” If members of the GOP go against LGBTQ people they will go after others, too. There has been a lot of damage – people are killing themselves and others! We must have courage – be courageous. This is the time and place and season to speak out and use our voice.
- F. Rachel – My concern regarding the letter is if we disengage from NEYM, what does that mean? What do we get from them? Diane said we have access to workshops, we have a voice at FUM, and Friends general conference, AFC, FWCC reps and reps to other Quaker meetings. Rachel then asked if we withdrew would that mean we wouldn’t have access to these things. Diane said she didn’t know but would check.
- G. Jim – Feels there was clarity in the original minute that we sent. Although he hears the concern about maintaining fellowship and dialogue, the homophobic policies stand in complete opposition to Quaker standing. They echo and support virulent attacks to the point of death to LGBTQ persons and Quakers alike. There is a chain of consequences from this thinking in the African setting. We do have a continued desire for conversation, but we should not provide funds to go toward maintenance of the policy. Stepping back from association is different than funding. The letter only talks about the *possible* disassociation. The people who support this have shown a deep intransience to change their views on policies that conflict with Quaker beliefs.
- H. Bruce – We heard that we must speak truth to power. Just like we did in times of slavery, we need to say FUM policy is against Quaker feeling. We asked NEYM to make progress towards changing FUM policy. They haven’t. It has been five to ten years, and we have seen no progress.
- I. Ally – Young people are leaving and not joining Friends Meetings because of policies like this. Kids all over the globe – in Africa – are told they should look for reasons to hate other Quakers who are LGBTQ. 40% of homeless people are LGBTQ. The GOP is coming hard and fast. We have to tell LGBTQ youth that if they join their funds will not go towards brutalizing their

friends. Supporting this policy is creating strife. We must stop holding hands with people who are not walking in the light. We still have a structure where we pay tithes – funds go up the structure. We cannot put money where our mouth is not. The letter is not based on intimidation or anger. It is affirming to those that need help. If youth are on the fence about their Quaker membership, the letter should help. This is an important issue. We are simply saying – Hey, let's move.

- J. Elisa – Not doing something to stop these policies is the same as agreeing with them. Complacency is the same as being complicit in this prejudice. I have seen kids and adults alike hurt by these attitudes every day; some to the point of suicide. How can we as Quakers stand by and say there is time. There is no time. The time is now. One more day of suffering for someone affected by this policy is too much. Who are we to say how long we should wait while discussions are held? When something is wrong, it is simply wrong, and it is our duty to say so. We are not saying that we are leaving NEYM, just that we are withholding funds until progress is made. What if we change the wording of the letter so that instead of saying we will leave at the end of a year, we say that we will take further action at the end of the year?
- K. Guy – We are all in agreement about inequality and the letter is beautifully written and should be sent as is.
- L. Polly – I came to listen and not to speak, but I have to ask, where do we draw the line? Suppose Jews were being taken to death camps, but Quaker meeting policy was letting it happen. Would we be so open as to let it happen? Karen, Mary Jones, daughter of Rufus, could not close down on any person or meeting. I met her too. My father was a student of Rufus Jones. They are not here today. What would they be doing or advising? What would they think about a policy allowing friends to be brutalized around the world?
- M. Kate – I appreciate all who spoke to what was in their hearts. But I feel disbelief we have having this discussion. I came to Midcoast because we had reaffirmed our commitment to activism – LGBTQ rights. We have been together on this for a long time. Why is it so hard for us to take action n?
- N. Andy – I want to say that I've been thinking a lot about this, the letter, and how we take action. I am aware of ow we have been awakened to ow words don't express where we are in our hearts. A letter can seem kind to some – others not. Does this warrant a delegation to go with the letter? In Quaker history, we went to meet with the Nazis, as with the Pine Tree amendment for the Wabanaki. Can a delegation go to FUM, sit and meet and talk? I realize delegates have gone, but can we do something *more* than a letter?
- O. Jim – As happens, delegation to the Nazis was in my mind. Rufus Jones spoke with them. There is no situation where dialogue is not good. However, Rufus Jones would *never* have given one penny to the Nazi party.

- P. Nancy – People have said wonderful things. We should not support FUM in any way. But we can have a dialogue.
- Q. Deb – I’ve been told that separating funds is not an option. How do I know this is true? How do I know there won’t be an acceptance of dialogue?
- R. Diane – NEYM SAID it in a letter. They want to see what this will cause meetings to do or declare.
- S. Deb – My heart does not agree with any idea of disassociation. I need to know more. I think we all need to be together when we get to that point.
- T. Martin – What is the FUM policy? Legal framework?
- U. Diane – Either celibate or married relationship between a man and woman. Otherwise you cannot work for the organization. Religious organizations don’t have to listen to the law.
- V. Jim – In Africa, homosexuality is illegal. Violence however is legal. FUM is doing nothing.
- W. Karen – Frederick, NEYM rep to FUM, is concerned about changing FUM policy. The inability to hold dollars by NEYM will be considered again this fall. Indiana was adamantly against the policy change. The new person coming on is very fluid in their beliefs. Karen asked if reps from our Meeting can meet. Said this is a very complex issue. Need to discuss different ideas on what will initiate change. We may have an opportunity to weigh in again at NEYM. It would be a good idea to meet with representatives.
- X. Diane – I feel like I am an object being discussed. I have asked for my rights for 20 years. Have any of you?
- Y. Ally – I feel like I have been told to sit down and shut up. I don’t have the finances to go to FUM. We can change little things in the letter but asking to do this year by year is ambivalence. We are devoted to political action. Grass roots.
- Z. Bruce – Ally speaks my sense. I do not intend to write a check and if this cannot be settled, I will remove the word “withdrawing” from the letter and include “consider next steps.” Our \$2,000 doesn’t mean much to NEYM, but the value of the letter is going public; taking a stand.
- AA. Polly – Send the letter as written. I do support sending reps from NEYM to FUM to try to change the policy.

AB. Diane – Other meetings are waiting to see what we will do.

AC. Diane – We will send the letter and the minute to the Permanent Board of NEYM, the quarterly meeting, LGBTQ Friends, and all meetings. The letter will be changed as follows: the second to last line will say, “Consider next steps” instead of “consider leaving.” We will not send a check to NEYM this year.

Action passed by the meeting.