

Minutes of Green Pastures Quarterly Meeting

Saturday, May 16, 2015

Michigan Friends Center, 7748 Clarks Lake Road, Chelsea, Michigan 48118

Attending:

From Ann Arbor Monthly Meeting: Nancy Taylor, Helen Fox, Al Connor, Karen Connor, Richard Tucker, Jeff Cooper, Peggy Daub, Susan Hartman, Joan Sampieri, John Williams, Tom Blackwell

From Birmingham Monthly Meeting: Inge Brieger, Geoff Brieger, Ellen Barnes, Marvin Barnes, Ellerie Brownfain, Jonah Brownfain, Pam Melick

From Detroit Monthly Meeting: Carmen Kelly, Mike Kelly, Pam Melick, Peter Dale, Cristin Graham, Celeste Glenn, Nora Glenn

Grom Grand Rapids Monthly Meeting: Mike Holaday

From Kalamazoo Monthly Meeting: Joe Mills, Linda Mills

From Pine River Monthly Meeting: Don Nagler, Nancy Nagler

From Red Cedar Monthly Meeting: April Allison, Cathy Clifford, Erick Williams

American Friends Service Committee: Natalie Holbrook

[1] The meeting began at 9:15 with a half hour of silent worship. The clerk read a paragraph written by Marianne McMullen from Britain Yearly Meeting Faith and Practice # 2.66. A Friend offered reminiscences from the early years of Green Pastures Quarterly Meeting approximately 50 years ago.

[2] Roll call:

Ann Arbor	- 8
Birmingham	- 6
Detroit	- 4
Grand Rapids	- 1
Holland	- 0
Kalamazoo	- 2
Pine River	- 2
Red Cedar	- 3

[3] Approval of Minutes

Minutes from the Business Meeting of September 20, 2014 were written and approved during the course of that meeting. The copy on the LEYM web site is approved.

[4] Treasurer's Report

The treasurer reported income for the year of \$ 13,754.00 and expenses of \$ 13,120.40 leaving a difference of \$ 633.60. The checking account has a balance of \$ 2,793.02 as of 5/16/2015. All assessments have been received. All budget items have been paid, except the Youth Program, for which no bills have been received, and the Friends School in Detroit Wade McCree program ad. The McCree Dinner has not yet taken place.

[5] Finance Committee

Joe Mills presented a proposed budget for July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2016. The current year's budget was based on assessments of \$ 43 each for a total of 327 individuals; the proposed budget is based on the same assessment for 299 individuals. The proposed assessment totals \$ 12,857 and proposed expenditures total \$ 13,700. The amount budgeted for the Adult Program is reduced by \$ 200 and contributions to AFSC and FCNL are reduced by \$ 50 each. The \$ 843 difference between income and expenditures will be covered by the Meeting's assets of \$ 2,793. This draft budget will be presented again at the September meeting for business.

[6] Nominating Committee

April Allison reported that there are nominees for five out of six positions to be filled, but still no nominee for Clerk for next year. Friends are urged to give worshipful attention to this need. The five nominees are: Assistant Clerk – Raelyn Joyce (Kalamazoo); Treasurer – Linda Mills (Kalamazoo); Recording Clerk (continuing) – Tom Blackwell (Ann Arbor); Nominating Committee (3 year term) – Sharon Ottenbreit (Detroit); Trustee (renewal for a 3 year term) – John Williams (Ann Arbor). These five nominees were approved with gratitude. Current members of the Nominating Committee are April Allison, Don and Nancy Nagler, Jonah Brownfain and Sharon Ottenbreit.

[7] AFSC Report

Natalie Holbrook has been leading the American Friends Service Committee Michigan Criminal Justice Program for the past 12 years. The program's general focus is on improving the conditions of incarceration for people in the Michigan state prison system. These include health care, mental health, reducing the use of solitary confinement and trying to make the state prison system a more humane system. In order to do this they focus on building and maintaining relationships in three directions – with the state prison system administration, the legislature, and with people in prison and their loved ones.

One specific project is a peer-to-peer curriculum which operates in the Kinross prison in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. This is a small group training in which the men work with one another to develop accountability, empathy, responsibility, to work through trauma and shame and to begin to recognize the root causes of what precipitated the event. A second project documents racial disparities in the use of solitary confinement. This is supported by a grant from the Jackson Social Welfare Fund. Staff member T. J. Spitma, released after 40 years of incarceration, is developing parole preparation workshops for prisoners with life sentences. Their parole process receives extra scrutiny, and the difficulties they face after parole are often greater. Staff member Ron Simpson-Bays is developing a curriculum and training for a mail communication and mentoring project which will pair up people inside and outside the prison system one-on-one.

[8] Clerk's Report

Ellerie Brownfain reported that this has been a year of growth for Green Pastures Quarterly Meeting. Ad hoc committees have been reaching out to our members, sharing experiences and information, truly listening and acting on suggestions that will grow our attendance and active participation. The position of clerk has been a gift. It has at times been a challenge, but with great rewards in the contacts with many Friends and personal spiritual growth. She encouraged friends to take an active role in Quarterly Meeting and noted that currently we desperately need a new clerk for the coming year, September 2015 – September 2016.

[9] Ad Hoc Re-Visioning Committee

Pam Melick read the Committee's report. Results from last summer's survey show that Friends' priorities for Green Pastures Quarterly Meeting are to nurture the spiritual life of Friends and to encourage fellowship among Friends throughout the Quarterly. There was a successful Winter Gathering led by Mike Green from the School of the Spirit. The ad hoc committee will find a time to meet again to consider steps to strengthen the work they have begun. The Committee's report was accepted later during the Meeting.

[10] Ad Hoc Study Group for the Relationship between the Quarter and Friends School in Detroit

Susan Hartman reported that following approval of the study group's draft "Guidelines for the Care Relationship of Green Pastures Quarterly Meeting with Friends School in Detroit" at last September's Business Meeting, the ad hoc committee contacted the Friends School Board of Trustees and arranged to meet with a subcommittee of the Board to discuss the draft Guidelines document. Board members were very supportive of the philosophy behind the guidelines. However, by the time of the meeting, April 28, 2015, the School was in deep crisis and it was decided not to immediately address any detailed changes to the document. It was agreed that as way opens, the School and the Quarter will go forward following the spirit of these guidelines. The report of the ad hoc Study Group was accepted later during the Meeting.

[11] Friends School in Detroit

Joan Sampieri presented a report on the current financial status of Friends School in Detroit (attached). She emphasized that this is a report from a Board member, but not a report officially adopted and presented by the Board of Trustees.

The current enrollment is 84 students. The current total of outstanding debt is \$949,717.35. Additional salary expenses to the end of the school year, including taxes, will be approximately \$140,000, while expected income from tuition is \$54,718. The Board has agreed to list the school building for sale.

After much thought and discussion, the following minute was drafted and adopted, with one member, Erick Williams, standing aside.

[12] Minute on Friends School in Detroit

Green Pastures Quarterly Meeting deeply appreciates and wishes to honor the generous donations of time, effort and financial support on the part of teachers, administration, the Board, parents and students to educate the youth of Detroit over the past 50 years in the Quaker manner through Friends School in Detroit.

Unfortunately, under the present circumstances of the school, both in its financial and infrastructure deterioration, we are in unity that the Board should lay down (close) the school. It is our hope and expectation that this will be done following Quaker ethics and integrity.

[13] Appointment of Trustees to Friends School in Detroit

The names of Mike Kelly, Kineret Gable and Kurt Spieles were brought forward as potential Trustees of Friends School in Detroit. All three were approved. These are positions which were filled by the Board that the Quarterly meeting is now approving.

[14] Michigan Friends Center

In view of the hour, John Williams briefly summarized the report from Michigan Friends Center, saying that additional Board Members are greatly needed and asking GPQM to help identify two additional Quaker Board Members to provide leadership from our community. Board Members at a distance could attend Board meetings by Skype. Monthly meetings are asked to identify a Meeting Representative to receive communications from Michigan Friends Center even if they cannot identify a Board member.

[15] Minute of Appreciation for Ellen Barnes

Green Pastures Quarterly Meeting is grateful for the service that Ellen Barnes has provided. For the past four years she has grocery shopped at Costco to provide food for our morning refreshment and lunch. This minute was approved.

[16] Minute of Appreciation for Mike and Marsha Green

April Allison offered to draft and send a minute of appreciation for Mike and Marsha Green's retreat leadership at the GPQM Midwinter Gathering (attached). Meeting approved with thanks.

[17] Minute of Appreciation for Ellerie Brownfain

Green Pastures Quarterly Meeting is grateful to Ellerie Brownfain for taking on the clerkship of the Meeting for two consecutive years at a very difficult time. Meeting approved with thanks.

[18] Minute of Thanks

GPQM thanks the Friends of Ann Arbor Meeting for providing child care for today's meeting.

[19] Summer Gathering

The Summer Gathering of Green Pastures Quarterly Meeting will take place in Quaker Park, Battle Creek, on Sunday August 9, 2015 at 11:00.

[20] Fall Meeting for Worship with a concern for Business

The current clerk will determine a location for the Fall Meeting, to be held on Saturday, September 19, 2015.

Report to Green Pastures Quarterly Meeting
 Saturday, April 16, 2015
 Joan Sampieri, Assistant Clerk, Friends School in Detroit

This report is an update to the report made to the Quarter in September 2015.

The most current financial information (as of 11 April 2015) from the FSD's Interim Head of School who also serves as the admissions director and in some respects as the business administrator for the school is that:

- The current enrollment at the school is 84 students.
- The state has a \$23,000 levy against our Bank of America checking account for unpaid unemployment insurance
 - The total outstanding amount for unemployment insurance is currently \$48,129.03
- There is a lien against the building for \$11,500 for water and sewer charges
- The mortgage (which the school has again stopped paying) is \$501,217.35
- A second mortgage, held by Quaker lenders, amounts to \$80,000 plus interest
- Faculty and staff are owed \$136,000 in unpaid payroll which does not include interest on the amount
- Loans from members of the board, parents at the school and one that was discovered last year when the lender made a demand total \$85,000
- The school owes DTE \$76,000 for unpaid gas and electric charges
- We have an unpaid insurance deductible claim of \$5,000 outstanding
- And Marta believes that miscellaneous unpaid bills add up to another \$5,000
- The current total of outstanding/unpaid debt is \$949,717.35

Tuition income to the end of the year will amount to approximately \$54,718 but the remaining salary expenses, including taxes will be about \$140,000.

Remittance Date	Planned Payments	Remitted To School	Paid Directly	Total Receipts	Pending Remittance	Remaining Balance
05/11/2015	\$1,672	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,672
05/13/2015	\$879	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$879
05/26/2015	\$21,529	\$588	\$2	\$589	\$0	\$20,940
06/03/2015	\$5,147	\$0	\$281	\$281	\$0	\$4,867
06/09/2015	\$2,181	\$0	\$52	\$52	\$0	\$2,129
06/15/2015	\$879	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$879
06/18/2015	\$6,858	\$0	\$74	\$74	\$0	\$6,784
06/23/2015	\$12,397	\$588	\$0	\$588	\$0	\$11,809
07/03/2015	\$4,784	\$0	\$25	\$25	\$0	\$4,759
	\$522,897	\$370,754	\$61,485	\$432,239	\$21,103	\$54,718

Friends School in Detroit has gone through several periods of uncertainty and some of relative stability. At the moment, it is deeply in debt. There are possible solutions on the table

The most recent information we have (as of 11 April 2015) about the future of the school are these:

- The MDOT purchase of the school's building for the Detroit Meeting
 - The school proposed a \$1.2 million sale price to cover the 1st and 2nd mortgage and

- other debts and to bring the building up to code
 - MDOT has not yet either accepted or rejected the request although there is anticipation that information will be forthcoming this month
 - If MDOT agrees to the amount as proposed, the Detroit Monthly Meeting will need to come to unity on moving forward with FSD as a tenant or not
- The board has agreed to list the building for sale and if the MDOT sale does not go through, the proceeds from the sale will be used to pay the debts
- There is a possibility that a piece of art will be offered for sale by James Turrell to help pay the debts and the estimates indicate the benefit to the school could be six figures
- The board is also considering a move to a shared space with mid-town Montessori. It is exploring the cost of rental and moving and if enough parents would move with the school or if new parents would enroll
- Finally, the school could sell the building, pay its debts and close either temporarily or permanently
- Draft budgets and planning for each of these contingencies is underway

If the school were to remain open in whatever form it is able to take, there are some changes to board process that can be instituted that can help going forward:

- Accurate and timely financial records
 - Although the board requested that a bookkeeper be hired, one never was.
 - There are no financial statements and haven't been since September, which has made decision-making, problematic.
- Training for incoming clerks on Quaker decision-making process
- Annual training for all board members in the role of the board
 - To meet the budget in the past, critical positions (bookkeeper and business manager) were cut
 - To keep costs down, a full-time director of development was not hired
 - These and other shortcuts meant that board members often took on the role of staff and did not attend to the critical strategic and oversight responsibilities that have led to hurried decisions, not enough important information, and a level of frustration for everyone involved
 - Lack of understanding of the board's role also leads to a lack of cohesion at the board level and encourages ad hoc behavior on the part of board members who mean well but who don't realize that they cannot speak for the board - it becomes "whisper down the lane" at its finest and complicates already complex issues
 - A much stronger Quaker culture that focuses on Quaker Faith and Practice so as not to let slide the issues that find us not paying taxes or our staff
 - Encouraging open communication about the problems in order to find solutions, not hoping that the problems will somehow be solved

**SPRING MEETING
OF GREEN PASTURES QUARTERLY MEETING,
LAKE ERIE YEARLY MEETING**

**HELD AT FRIENDS CENTER, CHELSEA, MICHIGAN
MAY 16, 2015**

Minute of Appreciation for the retreat leadership of Mike and Marsha Green

Each winter Green Pastures Quarterly Meeting gathers Friends from monthly meetings throughout Michigan for an extended time of spiritual nurture and fellowship. Our monthly meetings share the responsibilities of hosting, with each in turn establishing a planning committee to extend hospitality to Friends.

The March 2015 gathering was planned and hosted by the Red Cedar Friends Meeting in Lansing; and Friend Mike Green, accompanied by Marsha Green as his piano companion and elder, traveled from Durham, North Carolina, to lead us in a deep experience of Sound Spirituality. Mike has been a core teacher at the School of the Spirit Ministry's program On Being Spiritual Nurturer and has taught music at several educational institutions.

Through sharing his profound experience of sound, Mike led us to three lessons: "First, we might come to know that we are all musicians, just as we are each a beloved child of God." ... "Second, by understanding certain sound phenomena and how we embody them, we might uncover a rich vocabulary for the spiritual journey." ... and third, "Our stories—and meditating on those stories with the help of others who have gone before—are the only Truths we need in order to understand anything important."

Today we minute our appreciation for Mike's ministry and his ability to touch our souls through a deeper understanding of sound. We also wish to encourage Mike to continue in this newly blossoming ministry among Friends, and we thank Marsha for her gifts of accompaniment as they share this journey.

Ellerie Brownfain, Clerk
Thomas Blackwell, Recording Clerk