

Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business
Approved Minutes
Bellingham Friends
August 9, 2015

Present: Don Reinke, Larry Thompson, Jessica Bee, Kirsten McLewin, Joanne Cowan, Dorothy DeFremery, Rob Dillard, Sharon Trent, Lorina Hall, Virginia Herrick, Wendy Courtemanche, Dusty Andersen, Betty McMahon, Mark Hersh, Karen Steen, Alice Robb, Mimi Freshley, Lorena Boswell, Mary Ann Percy (acting Clerk), Judy Hopkinson (recording clerk)

Meeting opened with silent worship and reading of a description of Meeting for Worship for Business. The reading was followed by additional silent worship

Lorena Boswell sat in silent worship and held the meeting in the Light through our period of discernment.

2015.08.01 Social and Environmental Concerns committee report (see attached)

2015.08.02 Nominating Report -

2015.08.02.1 The nomination of Wendy Goldstein for membership in the Outreach and Welcoming Group, having seasoned for a month, was approved.

2015.08.02.2 The nominating clerk advised Friends that it had completed a revised job description for committee clerks (attached).

2015.08.03 Ministry and Counsel (Report Attached)

2015.08.03.1 Meeting joyfully approved Jessica Bee for membership in Bellingham Friends Meeting

2015.08.03.2 Friends were asked to settle into worship and then consider whether we are led to continue exploring the Bell Towers Studio as our Spiritual home. The Clerk read a message from M&C regarding the process. The Clerk also shared that it is important that we all remain open to the Spirit and not cling to our preconceptions or emotional responses. Virginia read the first of two queries:

Please describe your positive vision of a physical manifestation (a "right place") for our spiritual home.

These thoughts were shared by Friends:

- Our spiritual home is not a place but it is within our group. There are many factors and no building will cover all of them
- One that embodies our testimonies and that is sustained continuously by the health and dynamism of the community
- I was raised in a tradition where the building mattered a lot. I was led to Quakers because they met in each other's homes. Buildings can be a burden that can distract from our spiritual connections

- I hold in my heart that this meeting will always be able to grow and be safe - wherever we go, we should be able to grow in spirit and be safe. I acknowledge my fears, and hope they will not slow me from moving forward.
- A place where we can become more a part of the community and the community can become more a part of us. I believe a building would make us more “out there” and help others who are Quakers in their hearts to join us.
- The home for our spiritual community is us, but there are some conveniences that make it easier for us to do what we want to do. Also stewardship and sustainability and connection to the earth are important . e.g. a kitchen, space for our books, green space, handicapped access, simplicity. Many elements are important - especially simplicity.
- Although our true spiritual home is our hearts, when I think about a possible physical home, I think about a building that expresses who we are, that speaks our testimonies, that incorporates nature and light.
- When I think about this, I am reminded of visiting a new children’s school and it was so clearly totally designed with children in mind - it was not made to fit. Whatever building we have, we will take our community with us. I am not thinking of one building over another, but I think if we are all together on the decision, we will convert whatever space we own into one that expresses our testimonies.
- I have no vision of a space - I don’t care who owns it. I have positive connections to this building, but I sort of feel that owning a building is sort of a white privilege / entitlement thing. “We are so special, we deserve a building”. I don’t want us to buy a building and have the building become more important than the people. The people who will be coming in our doors in that neighborhood may not feel welcome in a place where people are overly concerned about caring for the building itself.
- He who is not busy being born is busy dying. I agree that the meeting is the people, but there is a trajectory to our spiritual growth. I believe that we create our own reality and that we will find ways to shape what happens going forward. I believe it is the spirit of the people that creates the spirit of the building, not vice/versa. I feel ready to take on more of a role in the broader community, and if we do that our spiritual life is making a difference. I am not particularly interested in a place that lifts me up. I come here because this meeting fills me up and gives me energy for my week.

Virginia H then read the following query

Do we feel led to continue exploring the Bell Tower building as our home? Might this building be the “right place” for us at this time?

Friends shared the following Light:

- Reading Gandhi last night, there was a passage that captured how I feel about this building. Gandhi was in S. Africa building community. They found a place that had rental property that would pay for itself. Gandhi said he was against creating a permanent fund (outside source of revenue) was inherently corrupting to whatever the goals/ missions the community might have.
- We have looked at a number of places over the last 18 years. This is the most suitable place we have found so far. If we are going to be in a more Friendly or visible place, we have not seen one yet.
- If money was not the issue, this is not what I would build or design. But money is an issue and we have limited choices. Thinking of the meeting as an organization, I have to ask whether this entity (the meeting) has the strength, the energy, the determination to hang onto this for the long haul to transform this building what we need. If we are thinking that other people are going to join and help us do that work— I don't think that is what happens. When I came I found more than I was looking for - but I came for myself - I took far more than I gave for a long time. Only gradually did I begin to be ready to take on the work. I think it will take a lot before people who join us will come to feel that it is worth the trouble to do all the work needed to maintain and operate that building.
- Every other meeting I have attended had a building of its own. When I came here there was a very small meeting house fund, and it seemed like something very far in the future at best. I have been an intermittent attendee, but when I heard that there was a chance of an actual space that could be lived in and built upon, I was totally psyched. I made it to the tour and saw all the problems as well as the beauty of the potential meeting room. I now want to look at all the issues and deeply examine all the options and see what we are left with. I think that we have really legitimate concerns - especially the lack of yard (which would also be a huge responsibility).
- I am feeling really nostalgic for the basement of St. Paul's where the only negative was the Sunday morning basketball games upstairs from the worship room. (offered partly in jest) I do see that continuing the process of exploration and discernment would be valuable. But it is important to know that if we do move forward it would not be harmful to our community.
- If we keep moving forward on the process of having a space of our own, we will gain knowledge about what we really need, even if it is not this building. I do think we need to allow Friends to consider things carefully even if we are not sure the purchase would be the right decision.
- We could cobble together the finances to buy a building - for the first time in our history. I think we need to be realistic about our own individual desires to have a meeting house, to grow larger, or to go back to the smaller meeting that we once were. Deeply held desires may be rooted in unrealistic expectations, and we should examine them carefully.
- A Friend shared that she would like to pay homage to Annelise for her contribution to our meeting and other parts of our community.
- When I first came here, connecting to this meeting for me was more difficult because of the absence of a dedicated space - it seemed impermanent. I hope we find a space, if not this one, then another. But we have to have unity for this to work.

The consensus of the meeting was that we need to continue exploring not only this building, but also the issue of property ownership. We need more opportunities to explore these issues - worship sharing or other opportunities. The Clerk of M&C spoke to scheduling opportunities for Q&A and for worship sharing. Aug 23, 30, labor day weekend, at the retreat, Sept 20 are options. Evenings are also an option. M&C will handle scheduling in coordination with the meeting house committee.

2015.08.04 Finance Committee (Report attached)

2015.09.04.1 The meeting approved payment to the City of \$2,200 for possible use as a contingency fund related to expenses incurred prior to a possible closing date.

2015.08.05 Children's Committee - Sharon T. reminded the meeting that she will be resigning as Children's program coordinator and asked Friends to consider serving on the new Children's committee that will be formed. She also reminded Friends to sign up to teach in the children's program.

2015.08.06 Retreat Planning Committee (Report Attached). Registration forms were distributed and will be available as a link in the E-news. The deadline for registration is Sept 4.

2015.08.06.1 The meeting approved Retreat Planning Committee spending a \$500 anonymous donation and an additional \$150 so that retreat could proceed without a need to charge fees to attend.

2015.08.06.2 The meeting minuted its appreciation for the anonymous donation.

2015.08.07 Building Liaison - reported that our rent will increase to \$600/ mo, or slightly less than the 10% increase in rent which Explorations Academy is facing. Daniel K wanted the meeting to know that Explorations values its relationship with Bham Friends Meeting that he will work to accommodate any requests to use space in the building outside our regular worship time. The meeting noted its appreciation of the flexibility that Explorations Academy has shown in our relationship. The rent increase was agreeable, however the meeting asked the Liaison to request a monthly contract in light of our uncertainty about the purchase of a meeting house in the next few months.

2015.08.08 Minutes for last month's meeting were approved (with inclusion of corrections noted by Dusty A.).

Silent worship preceded adjournment at 2:10

Ministry and Counsel Report

Bellingham Friends Meeting for Worship for Business

Aug. 9, 2015

1. **Advices and Queries** – From *NPYM Faith and Practice*: Different ways of understanding the divine life may occur among us. These differences should not be ignored for the sake of a superficial agreement. They should be recognized and understood, so that a deeper and more vital unity can be reached. When conflicts arise, do we make timely endeavors to resolve them in a spirit of love and humility? Are we prepared to let go of our individual desires and let the Holy Spirit lead us to unity?
2. **Membership**: We joyfully ask Friends to give final approval to the membership of Jessica Bee in Bellingham Friends Meeting, which has been seasoning since MfWfB last month.
3. **Member concerns**:

Please hold **Carole Teshima** in the Light. She is home after knee surgery, and still not able to sit long enough to join us in worship. She is likely to need a ride to worship when she's ready. Several Friends have visited and brought her meals, and she says she feels held in the Light and supported by the Meeting.

Memorial minutes for **Tom Hall and Howard Harris** appear in this month's edition of *Friends Journal*. Powerful lifelong advocates for peace, they would be glad to see that the cover story this month is entitled, "The Effects of War."

4. **Meetinghouse Offer**: Ministry and Counsel is holding the Meeting in the Light as we explore the question of whether this is the right time and the Bell Tower Building at Ellis and Garden is the right building to become the physical home for our worshipping community. Friends in the past few weeks since the Meeting approved making an offer on the Bell Tower building, have had many questions about specific costs and benefits of the building. They've been concerned about paint and parking, rent and remodeling. Before we get into those important details, M&C feels that in order to nurture the spiritual life of our Meeting, we must first have unity about whether we are led by the Spirit to continue considering the Bell Tower Building as a *possible* home for our spiritual community. To discern the answer to this question, we ask Friends to settle into worship and from that place of silent listening, please consider this invitation:
 - a. Please describe your positive vision of a physical manifestation (a "right place") for our spiritual home.
 - b. Do we want to continue exploring the Bell Tower building as our home? Might this building be the "right place" for us at this time?

If we have clarity to continue investigating, or if we need more time to reach clarity on both or either of these queries, what form would we like our discernment to

take? M&C recognizes that there are many questions to be answered. One possibility we considered was to have a second hour where the first 20 minutes was Q&A, and the last 40 minutes was worship sharing. Then we might follow up with a threshing session or two.

5. Second Hours:

Aug. 16 - M&C – Presentation on Quaker Decision-making Process. (Virginia’s presentation and discussion. Handouts are available in advance.)

Aug. 23 – Informational Meeting/Worship sharing on Meetinghouse Offer? (Or, Mary Ann’s presentation on Advance Care Planning.)

Aug. 30 – Held open as possible MfWfB if needed, (OR threshing session, re: Meetinghouse proposal?)

Sept. 6 – Labor Day Weekend, extended social time (OR threshing session, re: Meetinghouse proposal?)

Sept. 13 - BFM Annual Retreat (with potluck Sunday)

Sept. 20 -

Sept. 27 - Quarterly Meeting, extended social time

Oct. 4 - Potluck

Oct. 11 - MfWfB

Oct. 18 – “39 Questions for White People” (SEC)

Oct. 25 - “39 Questions for White People” (SEC)

6. Our next meeting will be at 7 p.m. either Aug. 25 or Sept. 14, or both, or neither, depending on the need to coordinate further discussion of the Bell Tower building.

BELLINGHAM FRIENDS MEETING

FINANNCE COMMITTEE NOTES

MEETING OF AUGUST 5, 2015

The regular committee meeting took place on August 5 with all four members present. Below are key conclusions with importance for the meeting as a whole.

1. Donations to the Meeting continue to run well behind schedule. Specifically donations year to date are only 80% of what was budgeted and expected. Members and Attenders are asked to accelerate their donations to Meeting.
2. As a result of the lower income, the meeting is \$1,090 over budget as of the end of July
3. There were no significant changes to the balance sheet except to note that the \$25,000 escrow payment for potential meeting house purchase occurred in July.
4. Members discussed and agreed to ask Meeting to approve the transfer of \$5,500 for possible use as a contingency fund related to expenses occurred prior to a possible closing date.

Updated June 2015

Committee Clerk:

Purpose: Lead the committee with spiritual guidance and respect for Quaker process.

Responsibilities: Convene meetings. Make sure members know where and when.

Set an agenda.

Facilitate Meetings according to Quaker practice. Whenever possible, begin and end with a brief period of silent worship for centering. You may want to call for silent worship when unity is not clear. You may want to remind Friends to be concise when discussion becomes repetitious. You may want to table items when there is not unity, or take the issue to Meeting for Worship for Business for input from the full Meeting. You may want to seek help from the Clerk of Meeting or Ministry and Counsel if your committee is not clear how to proceed on an issue.

Issues, ideas and plans involving the Meeting as a whole are brought to Meeting for Worship for Business for final approval.

Hold the records for the committee.

Provide a committee report to Bellingham Friends Meeting clerk before Meeting for Worship for Business, as needed. Reports may include items requiring a decision by the Meeting, or items that inform Meeting about the committee's work.

Prepare announcements for the Meeting's newsletter.

Receive any concerns for the committee from people in Meeting.

Tell Ministry and Counsel members, the clerk of the Meeting, or Nominating Committee members if there are needs or concerns about the function of the committee.

Schedule an overlap meeting that includes outgoing and incoming committee members as a way to facilitate a smooth transition.

If you or your committee needs to use Explorations Academy during a time other than Sunday morning, or if your committee's responsibilities involve some interface with Explorations Academy, please contact the Meetinghouse Liaison in order to communicate with our landlord, the director of EA.

Term: 1-2 years.

**SEC Report to MfWfB – August 9, 2015
August 4, 2015**

Information items:

- 1. Concern of the Month – Compass Health Rainbow Center**
- 2. Comments are needed in response to the draft EIS for the Tongue River Railroad in southeastern Montana, site of the Otter Creek coal mine. Wendy will write up some short letters and make them available to Friends who would like to submit comments. We will also make available a link to more information on the issue. The deadline for comments is Aug 24.**
- 3. The Totem Pole Journey, which was our July Concern of the Month, met its fundraising goal. The Totem Pole Blessing will be on Aug 22 (details to follow as available), and the Pole will be gifted to the Northern Cheyenne at Otter Creek.**
- 4. We will be posting AFSC's short videos on immigration detention centers in the e-news**
- 5. Judy will place an order for the art piece, "39 Questions for White People" for our meeting to use on October 18 and 25th during Second Hour.**

Report of 2015 Retreat Planning Committee to BFM, 8/9/15

The Retreat Planning Committee is now in the final stages of planning for our Meeting's annual retreat scheduled for September 12th and 13th at Camp Lutherwood. Accompanying this report are two additional documents, a registration form and a current schedule of retreat activities, which may be subject to some minor tweaking in the next month. We have developed worship-sharing queries, coordinating on this matter with our keynote speaker, Christine Hall from Whidbey Island Friends Meeting. Interest group proposals have been solicited from within our meeting, from Lopez Island Friends planning to attend, and from both Christine and her husband, Jim Hall. The deadline for such proposals is approaching on August 15th.

The registration form and retreat schedule will also be available for download via links in the weekly Enews and in the August Metamorphosis, once the appropriate arrangements have been made, and in hard copy here at meeting. Completed registration forms should be sent to our registrar, Carole Teshima, and may be submitted electronically, postally, or in person once Carole returns to meeting. The addresses are on the form and the registration deadline is Friday, September 4th.

Finally, an action item: An anonymous donor gave the Meeting \$500 in cash several months ago, earmarked "for over night retreat or a better cause if there is one". We now ask that the Meeting approve our use of at least part of that money for retreat expenses that go beyond what is available in the Special Events line item of our 2015 budget. Currently we expect to be spending about \$400 for facilities rental at Camp Lutherwood, a \$125 honorarium plus modest travel expenses for our keynote speaker, about \$75 for food for the two Sunday meals and for snacks, and about \$25 for program supplies, so the total retreat cost should be in the general neighborhood of \$650. Meeting approval of making the donated funds available for retreat expenses will allow us to offer it to attending Friends at no cost to them.

--Don Goldstein, Clerk of 2015 BFM Retreat Planning Committee

Other committee members are Mary Ann Percy, Wendy Goldstein, Carole Teshima, and Mark Hersh

Hi, this is Alice/Turtle, feeling some responsibility to express thoughts re BFM buying meeting house... I will try to make it to meeting to be part of discussions, however am not sure if that will be possible.. or if I would be able to express myself very well ... as I write this, I find I obviously have some passion on these issues! meanwhile I am guessing about who is M&C, but at least I got up to date enough to know Dorrie's Clerk!! I am fine with these thoughts being shared with anyone who can help sort them out...

Several levels of thought.. lastly, about that building in particular, but first about the idea of owning meeting house in general, and even more basic, about our discernment process

Discernment: Trusting Spirit, that decisions and realities will be, can be, "right", but not expecting that to come easily. I approach this new decision with an old distrust of BFM process, based on the meeting at Roeder House many years ago in which the meeting took a turn toward expanding our community, initiating the OWG committee, looking toward a future of more people, with an expressed goal of someday perhaps being a large enough community to have "our own Meeting House." I spoke that day, against the general emerging sentiment, to say I felt uncomfortable with growth that comes from the active solicitation of new attenders through marketing techniques and the goal of owning a building. This is not to say that I disapprove of the subsequent growth of the meeting or any of our new attenders/members. Just that I was uncomfortable with that process, that day.

That meeting was set up as a "retreat," about which we said in advance "decisions will NOT be made here today," and yet the by the end of that day, the Meeting had clearly changed direction and made decisions. Although I respect the current results of all that, I did feel then that my perspective was not respected, was made invisible, was not included in the summary of that meeting and has remained un-acknowledged as we have moved forward. I had to leave before the end of that day, I think Will was very sick then, and I have felt a distance from Meeting in a way ever since then. I feel that the more extroverted and assertive people will push for what they want, and with their enthusiasm, sweep other people under the rug. I feel a responsibility to voice my point of view, but based on past experience, I don't really trust that it will be respected.

Owning a Meeting House in general

Does BFM need a meeting house, why? I understand that many Bham Friends have a strong and long-standing desire to have a meeting house because they feel dissatisfied with our current location, or because they have had good experiences in other Friends Meetings where there was a meeting house. I think it is important to separate those personal desires (and nostalgia) from considering the needs of our Meeting as a spiritual community.

I am sure I do not raise new concerns in asking Do we have enough energy, \$\$, time, social capital to manage a building, and is this how we want to spend our time, energy, etc? Does owning a building fit our Quaker values of simplicity and equality?

To speak very plainly -- bluntly I'm afraid-- I think that buying a building is an expression of white privilege and entitlement and I don't see how it serves the Spirit. When we are caring for and protecting our building, will we have the energy or perspective to be open to human spiritual needs? I had an experience in our meeting, which has stayed with me vividly -- it happened on a day when I was emotionally stressed and also overwhelmed dealing with meeting business and communications. (I may have been clerk or recording clerk, don't remember exactly, this was at least four or five years ago.) When I was finally able to sit down in the meeting room, I accidentally tipped a cup of coffee over on the floor. What a fuss this created! Four people

rushed in to clean the carpet beneath me, full of anxious high-energy care for the floor, and yet no one looked at me or saw that I was in pain. Friends' concern for the floor was clearly more important to them than concern for my emotional/spiritual state. I fear that owning a building would amplify that kind of behavior/focus.

I hear Friends say something like "We would love to have a building and share it with other progressive groups, like Whatcom Peace and Justice Center." This feels to me like BFM wants to be benevolent landlords, to be vicariously associated with good causes, rather than to do such work themselves. Again, sorry, but this seems to me a very white privilege way of do-gooding. As an activist, I have always found it strange and kind of insulting to have people thank me for being an activist, as if I am doing it on their behalf, so they won't have to get their hands dirty... because they have more important things to do... this is that same kind of feeling... We take credit on our webpage for the Friday vigil and the Peace Center, and yet how many, how few? of us have anything to do with those things, on the ground?

A different experience which leads me to believe I would not be comfortable about BFM owning a meeting house-- a woman who came to our Meeting for a brief period, many years ago; her conversations were almost all about the value of material items. (real estate and antiques) The last time I saw her, she told me she'd been to University Friends Meeting in Seattle, and that she'd felt so much more comfortable there because of some decoration or furnishing that she admired in that building. This gave me the feeling that by having/displaying more material wealth, we will attract more people interested in that same value and that could diminish the spiritual value of this community for me.

About this particular building

I have had interesting experiences in this building in the past, a dear friend once lived in an apartment in the basement, and other friends have conducted new age healing workshops there. I feel a connection and comfort about it, as a Space, and am not at all opposed to it as a meeting place. I am not at all opposed to Bham Friends moving to any space that makes people more comfortable, nor am I uncomfortable in our current location.

The location of this particular church seems like it could draw foot traffic from the low income housing and street people in the area. Are Bham Friends prepared to be open and hospitable to the range of personalities who may join us if we settle within their territory? I am sorry to say that I have not experienced our Meeting in the past as very welcoming to low income or disadvantaged folks or people with mental disabilities or disabilities in general (we tolerate them, one or two token persons at a time, often with great tension, which is not the same at all as being welcoming/accepting. I imagine Will, Roberta, and Lenard F, multiplied by a dozen, is that a picture anyone else envisions?) I do not see how owning a building will change our orientation toward poor people, and yet unless that attitude is different, conflict and stress seem inevitable for everyone.

I heard that there is a nursing home being built next door and people have hopes that this will provide some positive opportunities, for intergenerational activities? Knowing that industry very well, I am dubious and see this as wishful fantasy. If people want to visit nursing homes there are plenty of old folks all over town waiting for visitors and we don't need a facility as a neighbor to make that happen. Every facility I have ever worked in has had a loud Fundamentalist-type bloody Christ on the cross hymn-centered service on Sunday morning; is that a good match for our childrens' program? I believe that the facility management will be protective of their building

& residents, and their parking areas, in ways that could just as likely (if not more likely) be a negative experience as a positive one for our Meeting.

My strongest feeling in relation to the purchase of a building is that I am opposed to any funds other than the designated Meeting House funds being used for this purpose. I don't approve of diverting any funds from scholarship funds bequeathed by Annelise, in case that is being considered. I know this shifting of funds has been raised as a possibility (and ?? perhaps even minuted as an acceptable option in case of finding a suitable building) at some point in past few years, before there was a specific building in question, but I strongly believe that would not be in keeping with her intentions and values at the end of her life.

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