



Titus Hensel
Quaker Meeting House

FORT MYERS MONTHLY MEETING

OF THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

Newsletter, Second Month, 2005

2755 Providence Street
Fort Myers, Florida 33916

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- Potluck luncheons are once a month, the first First Day of the month.
- Deadline for inclusion in the next newsletter is Second Month 12, 2005
- If you want to save postage and get your newsletter by email, please email: ericalynne@earthlink.net

Kyle Remembered: The first anniversary of the death of Kyle Goff is 2/24/05. Our regular meeting for worship on 2/20/05 will open with an invitation to remember Kyle and pray for him and his family.

QUERIES FOR THE FIRST MONTH

*What is the state of your Meetings for Worship and Business?
Ministry*

- **Is the vocal ministry in your meeting exercised under the leading of the Spirit?**
- **Are you sensitive to one another's needs and to God's promptings, whether your response be in silence or through the spoken word.**
- **Do you foster the use and growth of the spiritual gifts of your members?**

Fort Myers Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

First Month 5, 2005

The Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business, attended by 19, opened with thoughtful consideration of the first Query on our religious meetings. Friends sensed that waiting for Divine guidance is a practice in our meetings. A strong sense of community is also present. Friends commented that it is sometimes hard to carry the attitude of meeting for worship into the meeting for business. Some spoke of losing patience in business meeting, or speaking in an "unQuakerly" manner. Another Friend stated that he feels filled by attending our religious meetings. We were reminded that the guidelines for meeting for worship also prevail in meeting for business, such as speaking only once

to an issue and seeking discernment before we speak. It was also brought up that the mid-week worship in Naples is sustaining to those in attendance.

Ministry and Counsel reported concerns about our relatively weak involvement in the wider Quaker events in our area and have set up a plan to encourage more participation. Specifically, organization and coordination of transportation to events may prove successful in helping us extend our horizons.

A letter was received requesting that the worship group in Naples be discontinued. Ministry and Counsel will contact Nancy Webster and clarify the message.

01MM05. We wish to clarify that the Fort Myers Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends holds a mid-week worship meeting in Naples in order to provide an additional opportunity for corporate worship.

The Treasurer's report was given and accepted.

02MM05. The following minute was approved by Friends: The officers and shareholders of the Fort Myers Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, Inc., designate the following officers and shareholders to control and to access the checking account(s) and safety deposit box maintained at First National Bank, its successors, and assignees. The individuals are:

Nancy Howell, Treasurer

Albert Webber, past Treasurer

Larry Butler, Clerk of the Meeting

Thomas Fennell, Clerk of Ministry and Counsel Committee.

03MM05. Marilyn Stahulak sent a contribution for our Meetinghouse fund in honor of Kyle Goff, who passed away one year ago next month. An additional \$100.00 will be taken from our Meetinghouse fund, added to the contribution, and transferred to Friends General Conference Meetinghouse fund, as requested.

A discussion of designated gifts followed, addressing the concern that we follow the intention of the gift giver. Gifts that are to be used at a much later time may no longer reflect the Meeting's plans, may be confusing as to original intent, or may actually limit the Meeting's future actions. No change in our current policy of accepting designated was offered at this time.

04MM05. An additional gift from Larry Butler and Wandson DeOliveira, also designated for Friends Meetinghouse fund, was gratefully accepted.

At this point in our business meeting the Clerk asked Dave French, clerk of Finance Committee to oversee our continuing discussion of this year's budget. We first reviewed our philosophy of budget planning; that is, to give funding primarily to Quaker organizations and local community needs. It was pointed out that last year care of our own members became our first concern and that care of our community has always been a top priority and responsibility. Questions about specific line items were raised and commented upon. Accountability of the organization to which we contribute is a major concern among Friends, and that includes Quaker organizations, as well.

Friends again decided to lay the budget decisions over for another month. We were reminded that we are to use this month for the purpose of discernment.

Peace and Social Concerns announce the need of a clerk for this committee.

Property Committee was asked to query the Nature Center regarding adding more shell on the access to the handicapped entrance to Iona House.

The minutes were reviewed and approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Fennell, Recording Clerk and Secretary of the Corporation.

The SEYM Gathering

What is SEYM?

SEYM stands for South Eastern Yearly Meeting and our meeting is a member of this larger gathering of unprogrammed Friends.

Unlike “top down” religions, with bishops, priests and so on at the top, down to individual churches and parishes below, the Religious Society of Friends is a “ground up” fellowship in which individual monthly meetings gather into yearly meetings, and the yearly meetings gather into an even larger world wide fellowship.

The Fort Myers Monthly Meeting is a member of the Southeastern Yearly Meeting, a community for unprogrammed monthly meetings, primarily in Florida. The annual “yearly meeting” is held from Wednesday through Sunday of Easter weekend. All Quaker Friends and attenders are invited to attend.

Some Personal Experiences

I went to my first gathering at Easter time, 1997. I was a seeker looking for a spiritual home, and I found it with the Quakers. The gathering answered many of my questions about Quakers and about my own spirituality. It was such a rewarding experience that I have returned every year since 1997.

The gathering is always held at Easter. We currently use the Methodist Life Enrichment Center in Leesburg. We are usually the only group there because all of the Methodists are at their home churches for the Easter celebrations. The gathering starts late on Wednesday afternoon, and closes after lunch on Sunday.

The Center is a large, beautiful property on a large lake, and it was built in an old grove of live oaks on a hillside sloping down to the lakeshore. Early morning worship is held outside, under the oaks, on wooden benches facing the lake. It is truly a glorious experience. There is a large free-standing auditorium, a large dining room, classrooms, a screened pavilion & campground, and two other types of sleeping options (“motel” rooms or group cabins). Meals are served cafeteria style in the dining room, or one can choose to take low cost “Simple Meals” at breakfast and lunch at the Pavilion.

Early morning lakeside worship (7:30-8 AM) begins each day. Then comes breakfast (8-9 AM), small group worship sharing (9-10 AM), and workshops/committee meetings/Meeting for Business (10-12 AM). Next is lunch, followed by general activities such as music classes, yoga, story telling, knitting, swimming, and napping from 1 to 3 PM. These activities are followed by a second period for workshops/committee meetings/Meeting for Business from 3:30 to 5:30 PM. Dinner is from 6-7 PM in the main dining room. This is usually followed by an informal group sing at the piano in the dining room. The evening programs begin at 7:00 PM and continue to 10 or 10:30 PM. Friday evening is usually a dance for children and adults, in folk or country style, and Saturday evening is usually the keynote address. Easter morning has the final report on the gathering and then the major Meeting for Worship. Attendance varies somewhat from year to year, but is usually between 200 and 250 children & adults. The children’s programs are held separately from the adults. Teens share some programs with adults, but mostly have their own program.

I have always found the gathering to be a time of excitement, of learning, and of spiritual renewal. It has been a wonderful experience for me to meet and share Quaker philosophy and spirituality with so many other committed individuals. I believe that these experiences have helped my spiritual growth and understanding, and I strongly recommend this experience to you.

SEYM and our meeting offer scholarship funds to help those with significant financial need to attend, and we may be able to help with transportation as well. Please contact me for more information.

Tom Fennell 863-699-1276

Excerpts from Barry Morley's:

Beyond Consensus: Salvaging the Sense of the Meeting

The sense of the meeting is a gift...of enormous worth, more valuable, perhaps, than any other Quaker gift or practice. Quakers are not the only people who worship in silence. They are not alone is waiting for continuing revelation by attending to the Light within. Other people besides Quakers give testimony to peace and live in simplicity...

For some reason, present day Quakers seem intent on rejecting the sense of the meeting... Like a sparsely watered plant, it withers. Before we realize what has happened, sense of the meeting is gone and consensus has taken its place...

“What’s the difference?”...Consensus is achieved through a process of reasoning in which reasonable people search for a satisfactory decision. But in seeking the sense of the meeting we open ourselves to being guided to perfect resolution in the Light, to a place where we sit in unity in the collective inward Presence...

We understand by now that Alcoholics Anonymous works because individuals turn their alcoholism over to their higher power. Sense of the meeting works because we turn our decision making over to a higher power. Consensus is the product of an intellectual process. Sense of the meeting is a commitment to faith.

Another Friend explains it this way: “Consensus is the product of willfulness. We will ourselves to a decision. Sense of the meeting is a product of willingness in which we allow ourselves to be led. It is the difference between reason and faith...

A Quaker meeting for worship is particularly vulnerable to abuse. It requires constant nurture and discipline. Its centeredness can be jeopardized by individuals determined to be heard, whose truths are unassailable, who belittle the offers of others, who need to lecture, who need to correct.

We sometimes overlook that meetings for business are also meetings for worship... Thus meetings for business are subject to the same kinds of abuse and require the same kind of nurture and discipline as meetings for worship. Robert’s Rules of Order apply neither to meeting for worship nor to meeting for business. Faithfulness to the worship process does. The Quaker business meeting is as dependent on the sensitivity, good will and spiritual readings of its participants as is meeting for worship.

If the process by which we discover the sense of the meeting is to work, we must be willing to lay aside personal needs and grievances; we must be willing to reach beyond what you or I want. When I am able to set my ideas aside, and you are able to set your ideas aside, doors are opened which allow solutions to enter on a shaft of light.

The sense of the meeting is not discovered through competition of ideas. Outcomes should be determined neither by rhetorical skill, nor logical brilliance. The test of reason is not the test. Though compromise and moving toward consensus are tools which can assist early in the process, they must be laid aside as we reach for the Inward Presence.

Ideas should be offered and explained, rather than argued. They should be heard thoughtfully and respectfully, just as messages in meeting for worship are heard thoughtfully and respectfully. Sense of the meeting requires listening rather than contending, weighing rather than reacting. It requires the kind of patience that understands that all things will work themselves out in due course. Unless we are willing to settle for consensus, pressures imposed by urgency must not be allowed to erode the process. Quaker business procedure, subjected to the clock, is always corrupted....

[Of one business meeting, a Friend said] “we feel a pressure to complete business quickly.” Thus decisions are made out of a sense of urgency, rather than because they unite us. A sense of urgency is, in itself, uncentering. How can we make decisions that center us when we are functioning out of uncenteredness?...

Through the process by which Quakers attain the sense of the meeting, transformation occurs. We are changed. We feel, in a literal way, the loving Presence which hovers over us. It manifests in the love we have for one another. We form invisible bonds among ourselves which transcend the petty and make the next sense of the meeting more desirable and more readily attainable. We are participants in each other’s well being. Later we may stop to wonder whose idea evolved into the sense of the meeting. But we can’t remember. Often the person through whom the idea came cannot remember. We sense that the sense of the meeting came through us and for us, but not from us. We are amazed that it works – exactly as it is supposed to. Over and over we are amazed; it is appropriate that awe and transformation co-exist...

[In reaching the sense of the meeting] We reach, if only momentarily, that place beyond time where we taste tranquility. We have slipped beyond the issues and answers to a place where peace and love are the same words. We are immersed in a mystical moment even though we might not consider ourselves mystics. We take to ourselves the gift of experiential faith which the early Friends promised us...

In a message spoken in a meeting for worship a Friend said, “My father taught me that peace is not the absence of war. Peace,” he said, “is a sense of internal harmony.” If this is the case, no amount of manipulation of external conditions will bring peace because peace is not an external condition. Sense of the meeting leads us to collective internal harmony. A world at peace is many collective internal harmonies.... When Quakers reach a sense of the meeting, they arrive individually at a place of internal harmony which manifests itself in collective outward harmony.

The world cherishes this gift. But if Friends are to give it, we must first come to cherish it ourselves. And before we can do that we must rededicate ourselves to making sense of the meeting work among us...The world is filled with people who long for the sense of the meeting without even knowing what it is. Perhaps it is not too late for Friends to recover the gift as intended for them...

Barry Morley was a member of Sandy Springs (MD) Monthly Meeting. He taught in Quaker schools for 25 years and directed Catoctin Quaker Camp for 23 years. The pamphlet from which these words were extracted is considered recommended reading for all Quakers.

Address Correction Requested

Twelfth Month 2004

2/6/05	Meeting for Worship Potluck	10:30 am After rise of Meeting
2/9/05	Naples Midweek Meeting for Worship	7:00 pm
2/13/05	Adult Education Class Meeting for Worship Meeting for Business Last Chance Book Club	9:15 am 10:30 am After rise of Meeting After rise of Meeting
2/16/05	Naples Midweek Meeting for Worship	7:00 pm
2/20/05	Adult Education Class Meeting for Worship and Remembering Kyle Goff	9:15 am 10:30 am
2/23/05	Naples Midweek Meeting for Worship	7:00 pm
2/27/05	Peace & Social Concerns Meeting for Worship	9:15 am 10:30 am

**Friends Meeting of Fort Myers
Religious Society of Friends
c/o Erica Lynne, Editor
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