



FORT MYERS MONTHLY MEETING

OF THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

Newsletter, Fifth Month, 2005

4272 Scott Ave.
Fort Myers, Florida 33905

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- Potluck luncheons are once a month, the first First Day of the month. All are welcome.
- Deadline for inclusion in the next newsletter is Fifth Month 18, 2005
- If you want to save postage and get your newsletter by email, please email: ericalynne@earthlink.net

QUERIES FOR THE FOURTH MONTH

How do Friends Care for one another?
Education

- Do your children receive the loving care of the meeting?
- Does the influence of the meeting promote their religious life and encourage their desire for service to others?
- What efforts are you making to educate all your members in the knowledge of the Bible, especially the teachings of Jesus and their relevance to the principles and practices of Friends?
- Do those of you who are parents seek to share your deepest beliefs with your children, while leaving them free to develop as the Spirit of God may lead them?
- Do you encourage members to consider the advantages of education in Friends' schools and colleges for their children and do you give such financial aid as may be necessary?

Upcoming Events

What	Date	Time	Where	Topic
Potluck	May 14	Noon	Bonnie and George Cummings Cape Coral 239-549-1910	The light of Faith and Practice in Meeting for Business
Potluck	June 18	Noon	Ann de Nevers 9840 Lake Fairways Blvd. Fort Myers 239-731-2645	TBA

Fort Myers Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

Fourth Month 10, 2005

The Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business opened from the silence and with consideration of the Fourth Query on Unity within the Meeting. Of the 19 present, many spoke to this query, noting that conflict in community is part of being human, that we need to address difficulties with love, and that we want to work toward being part of the solution, not part of the problem. Humility and respect for each other is important. Self-righteousness was seen as potentially poisonous to community. Also, we should avoid a “rush to solution;” that is, we need to follow Quaker process, taking time for discernment and time for God to work among us. Friends mentioned that our sincere efforts to get along peacefully, or to be respectful, are not always appreciated or understood. Sometimes even our presentation to others is misunderstood and we need to go beyond the surface to listen for and understand the meaning of others. Another spoke to trying to understand what Spirit might be teaching us when conflict arises, what opportunity for growth may be there.

Ministry and Counsel report was given.

The representatives to Yearly Meeting (YM), and others who attended the recent gathering, reported on their experience. The major business to come before Southeastern Yearly Meeting (SEYM) was a letter of concern from St. Petersburg Meeting regarding SEYM’s affiliation with Friends United Meeting (FUM). The issue of concern is FUM’s discriminating personnel policy, a problem that has been around for many years and has been visited often in the past. This year, SEYM sent a letter to FUM, stating our disapproval, once again. In addition, monthly meetings were asked to take up the question of SEYM’s continuing affiliation with this organization and to report back to SEYM.

Others who attended the gathering spoke of the worshipful business meetings and threshing sessions. Watching the clerk function through difficult issues was instructive and engendered admiration. All agreed attending YM was a broadening and invigorating experience. It was reported that YM Peace and Social Concerns Committee has asked all meetings to become knowledgeable about conscientious objection issues.

Nancy Fennell was named the Clerk of Interim Business Meeting, formerly called Representative Meeting, for SEYM. In that position she will also clerk the Executive Committee meetings.

Tom Fennell submitted a request to resign as YM representative for our meeting. His request will be forwarded to the Nominating Committee, but he wanted to outline the duties of the representative and thank the meeting for the opportunity to serve in this manner for the past six years.

The Treasurer’s report was given and approved.

Finance Committee asked us to give input as to whether we wish to continue with our current phone and yellow page arrangements, given the expense incurred. We have a couple of months in which to review and, perhaps, to alter our arrangements. The committee thanked Theron White for his years of service to the Finance Committee. We will miss Theron when he moves to the east coast of Florida.

The Education Committee reviewed our upcoming potlucks and the topics for discussion at each. Plans are in place through the middle of June. Over the next few months we will review our Faith and Practice section on the business meeting and discuss how the meeting determines the sense of the meeting. Then, our affiliation with Friends United Meeting, through SEYM, will be brought to threshing and discernment. Materials will be distributed prior to discussion of these topics.

Peace and Social Concerns announced their next two meetings: the last First Day in April and the fifth First Day in May. Please note that the May meeting is a deviation from the usual schedule.

Property Committee advised that a new director has been found for the Calusa Nature Center. The Committee will meet with him when he is acclimated to his job.

The Clerk reported a letter from the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) thanking us for our recent contribution. The Clerk also shared a letter from SPECTRUM, a gay and lesbian community center to which this meeting contributes.

The minutes were reviewed, emended, and approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Fennell, Recording Clerk

A Brief History of the Origins of the Religious Society of Friends (from ReligiousTolerance.org)

The movement was founded in England by George Fox (1624-1691), a nonconformist religious reformer. At the age of 19, he left home on a four year search, seeking answers to questions which had troubled him since his childhood. He sought guidance from a variety of the country's spiritual leaders. He gradually became disillusioned with those leaders and with the existing Christian denominations. At the age of 23, he heard a voice, saying "*there is one, even Christ Jesus, who can speak to thy condition*". He felt a direct call from God to become an itinerant preacher and promote the concept of the *Inward Light*, or *Inner Voice*. He believed that an element of God's spirit is implanted within every person's soul. He called this "*the seed of Christ*", or "*the seed of Light*". Thus, everyone has an innate inner capacity to comprehend the Word of God & express opinions on spiritual matters. The term comes from John 1:9 in the Christian Scriptures: "*The true Light, that lighteth every man that cometh into the world.*" Logical consequences of this belief were:

- That every man and woman has direct access to God; no priestly class or "*steeple houses*" (churches) are needed.
- That every person – male or female, slave or free is of equal worth
- That there is no need in one's religious life for elaborate ceremonies, rituals, gowns, creeds, dogma or other "*empty forms*."
- Following the inward light would lead to spiritual development and towards individual perfection.

Fox taught his followers to worship in silence. At their meetings, people would speak only when they felt moved by the Holy Spirit. He promoted simple living, and the prohibition of alcohol. He spoke against holidays, sports, theater, wigs, jewelry, etc. They thought of themselves as friends of Jesus and referred to themselves as "*Friends of Truth*" (from John 15:15). Later, they became known simply as "*Friends*".

The movement came into conflict both with Cromwell's Puritan government and later with the restored monarchy of Charles II, over a number of points: they refused to pay tithes to the state Church; to take oaths in court; to practice "*hat honor*" (doff their hats to the king or other persons in positions of power); or to engage in a combat role during wartime. They developed an intense concern for the disadvantaged, including slaves, prisoners and inmates of asylums. They agitated for an end to slavery, and for improvements in living conditions in penitentiaries and treatments in mental institutions.

Fox was greatly persecuted during his lifetime and imprisoned many times. Once, when he was hauled into court, he suggested that the judge "*tremble at the word of the Lord*". The judge sarcastically referred to Fox as a *Quaker*; the term stuck, and has become the popular name for the *Religious Society of Friends*. During the second half of the 17th century, over 3000 Quakers spent time in English jails for their religious beliefs; many hundreds died there. About 1660, a group of congregations were established, called *preparative meetings*. Once a month, these groups gathered together and held a *monthly meeting*. Four times a year, the latter groups would hold a *quarterly meeting*. Finally, all of the quarters would gather annually for a *yearly meeting*.

Address Correction Requested

Fifth Month 2005

5/1/05	Meeting for Worship	10:30 am
	Potluck	After rise of Meeting
5/4/05	Naples Midweek Meeting for Worship	7:00 pm
5/8/05	Meeting for Worship	10:30 am
	Meeting for Business	After rise of Meeting
	Last Chance Book Club	After rise of Meeting
5/11/05	Naples Midweek Meeting for Worship	7:00 pm
5/14/05	Potluck: ProNica	Noon
5/15/05	Meeting for Worship	10:30 am
5/18/05	Naples Midweek Meeting for Worship	7:00 pm
5/22/05	Meeting for Worship	10:30 am
5/25/05	Naples Midweek Meeting for Worship	7:00 pm
5/29/05	Peace and Social Concerns	9:15 am
	Meeting for Worship	10:30 am

Friends Meeting of Fort Myers
Religious Society of Friends
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