

# SOUTHEASTERN YEARLY MEETING

## *Gathering & Annual Sessions*

APRIL 16 – 20, 2014

United Methodist Life Enrichment Center, Fruitland Park, Florida

## DOCUMENTS IN ADVANCE, PART 2

*Dear Friends,*

Welcome to our 50<sup>th</sup> Annual Gathering of Southeastern Yearly Meeting. In April, 1963 SEYM became a yearly meeting. We are nearing completion our 50<sup>th</sup> year of existence! We are planning a group picture on Saturday after dinner and a birthday cake among other things to mark the event. It is time to celebrate and you are invited to come and join in the fun!!!

You are invited to join with me in the renewal of our ties of fellowship within this yearly meeting and let us lovingly extend our community to our visitors from afar and among the first time attenders to our gathering! The expectations for this gathering include lots of hugs, plenty of smiles, outright laughter and singing from our hearts, as well as opportunities for deep listening for the guidance of the Spirit.

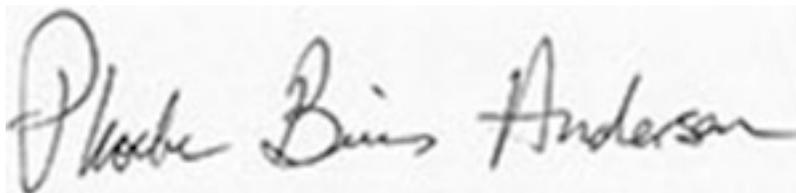
We are continuing our new format for yearly meeting business sessions. Please remember that:

- **ALL reports from SEYM Officers, Committee Clerks and Representatives are shared with SEYM Friends in written form.**
- It is my hope that all reports have already been prepared for the 2014 Documents in Advance (DIA).
- **If any reports are missing from the DIA, then please bring 50 copies of each missing report to share with Friends and the clerks table and email the original to the recording clerks to be attached to the minutes of Yearly meeting.**

I know that all reports are important to inform SEYM Friends and that our Archive Committee needs written reports for our archived records. The DIA is created for that concern and is then mailed to all members of SEYM. **As a result, no time will be allotted on the yearly business meeting agenda for oral committee and representative reports.** This will allow time for worship, as well as seasoning, and discernment of any action minutes brought forth to SEYM. Nominating, Treasurer, Finance, Worship and Ministry, and ProNica will report briefly. Please hold us in the Light as we continue this process.

We also expect that the Youth Committee will be the catalyst for some fun with the young Friends and in intergenerational activities for everyone. Again, welcome to our 50<sup>th</sup> Yearly Meeting Gathering. You are invited to have some fun, get some rest (or not), learn something new, and be renewed as we love each other in the Spirit.

In Loving Friendship,



Phoebe Biers Andersen, Clerk

# DOCUMENTS IN ADVANCE, PART 2

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### *REMINDER FROM THE OFFICE*

Please print out copies of the DIAs and these DIAs, Part 2 to bring to Yearly Meeting. Some additional copies will be available at the Gathering. If you have late committee reports for Yearly Meeting which are not in the DIAs, please bring 50 copies to share.

All requests to be on the Agenda for Yearly Business Meeting should be directed to Phoebe Andersen, Yearly Meeting Clerk.

# SEYM Earthcare Committee Report

January 18, 2014

The proposed SEYM Minute on Climate Change was edited from the input we received from MMs and individual F/friends. Please see the revised copy that follows. We are open to further input but now ask for a deadline of February 28 in order to have the final copy ready for YM. (*Also see revised Proposed Minute dated April 2014, at end of this report.*)

## Southeastern Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

### Proposed Minute on Climate Change – January 2014

We, the Friends of Southeastern Yearly Meeting, bring this minute forward at a time when the evidence of climate change is becoming more clear. The realities and impacts of climate change are more apparent as levels of CO2 continue to rise past 400 ppm, causing widespread, global climate disruption. As Floridians, living on a peninsula, we know we face catastrophic environmental damage from sea level rise and salt-water intrusion, so the crisis is Southeastern Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends immediate and personal for us.

Although we may feel confusion, anger and despair, we understand with compassion that our denial has been our attempt to protect ourselves from feelings of helplessness and hopelessness. We need to remind ourselves that our concern for the climate is spiritual and is grounded in our certainty that there is that of the Light in all life. Hope can be found in our Quaker faith and practices, our reliance on our testimonies, and our Quaker worship that will guide us and clarify behaviors asked of us. We rely on our leadings that give us the joy and determination to carry on. Throughout our history many Friends have found the resolve and hope for the daunting work they faced, as we can.

We as a religious community are called to respond now. We acknowledge with gratitude the many individual and lifestyle changes Friends have already made and the deep spiritual concern that motivates those changes. We also face that the problems are global, and individual changes are not remedy enough.

One answer is already available to us – the testimony of community. We must collectively work to address local, regional and global needs. A second answer is to put our faith, completely, in the guidance of the Light to support and direct us.

The following queries begin to articulate the tasks we must address:

1. Are we willing at this time to seek the Light to guide us in our work, to bring the wisdom of our spiritual community and the deep wisdom of our hearts to our corporate leadings?
2. Can we now resolve to see clearly the slow moving emergency of climate disruption, to educate ourselves and to seek the work that is ours as a community of faith?
3. Are we willing as monthly meetings to discern our particular work and undertake it, especially working locally with other groups who share our commitment?

We commit ourselves as a community to provide emotional, practical and spiritual support to all those who work to care for the Earth and her healing.

We commit ourselves to the well being of our children and of future generations of all beings whose lives will be so profoundly affected by what we do now.

The following Minute was approved by the Earthcare and Peace & Social Concerns Committees at FIBM 2013:

**The Earthcare Committee of SEYM recognizes deep concern in our Yearly Meeting about care for our Earth, her people, and creatures. Therefore, the Earthcare Committee of SEYM approves further discernment and seasoning to bring forth and implement a plan for a released Friend from SEYM to work on Earthcare issues. Our seasoning will include purpose and goals for the released Friend as well as a job description and a plan for financial support. We seek ideas and input from interested individual Friends and Monthly**

## Meetings.

We seek further discernment.

As a result of the above minute, the committee along with discernment by P&SC proposed the following to WIBM:

The most difficult thing we grapple with as an earth care committee is the growing catastrophic outcomes of climate change as we have now passed 400ppm of carbon in the atmosphere. We must face that every aspect of our lives, and of more concern, those of our children and grand children are now being impacted.

We seek to live in the spirit that moves us into a new earth awareness, into new patterns and examples that enhance peace, life energy, and ecojustice.

**The Earthcare Committee presents the following plan for a released friend supported by SEYM and working for earth care.**

**Purpose: to enhance awareness, connections, planning, and actions for earth care within SEYM.**

**Process: release one SEYM friend to work one quarter time under the care of SEYM's earth care committee**

*Toward peace with the Earth, The Earthcare Committee of SEYM*

## Proposed Minute on Climate Change - April 2014

We, the Friends of Southeastern Yearly Meeting, bring this minute forward at a time when climate change is undeniable. The realities and impacts have become obvious as levels of CO2 continue to rise past 400 ppm and are causing widespread global disruptions. As Floridians, we personally face catastrophic environmental damage from sea level rise, salt-water intrusion, and pollution of our aquifers, rivers, lakes and springs.

We as a religious community are called to respond now. We recognize we may feel overwhelmed and fear that humankind may not be equal to the task ahead. Many of us have used denial to protect us from what we see is coming. We understand with compassion that this is our attempt to protect ourselves from feelings of helplessness and hopelessness.

We need to remind ourselves that hope can be found in our Quaker faith and practices, in the unfailing presence of the Light, in our testimonies that guide us and clarify behaviors asked of us. We value the process of discerning leadings to give us the joy and determination to carry on. We find in our history that many Friends have found the resolve to bring attention and intention to the daunting work they faced, as we can.

We acknowledge, with gratitude, the many individual efforts and changes Friends have already made, and the deep spiritual concern that motivates them. It is time we collectively address local, regional, and global climate issues. We can put our faith, completely, in the guidance of the Light to sustain and direct us.

We commit ourselves as a community to the following:

1. We resolve to see clearly the slow moving emergency of climate disruption, to educate ourselves and to seek to see the work that is ours as individuals and as communities.
2. We commit to seeking the Light to guide us in our efforts, to bringing the wisdom of our knowledge and the deep wisdom of our hearts to this work.
3. We commit as monthly meetings to discern our particular leadings and undertake them, especially joining locally with other groups who share our commitment.
4. We commit to provide emotional, practical and spiritual support to those who work to care for the Earth.
5. We will strive to create right relationships with and within Earth.
6. We commit ourselves to the well being of our children and future generations of all beings whose lives will be so profoundly effected by what we do.

*The SEYM Earthcare Committee*

## Epistle from American Friends Service Committee Corporation Meeting March 6-8, 2014

### To Friends Everywhere:

The annual meeting of the American Friends Service Committee's Corporation was convened on March 6, 2014, in Philadelphia by Arlene W. Kelly, Presiding Clerk of the Corporation, with optimism and celebration of 97 years of AFSC service.

Some Friends came on canes, walkers, crutches or braces. But don't be fooled: Corporation members representing U.S. yearly meetings traveled long distances through inclement weather to reach AFSC's annual business meeting. The members of the Corporation, which brings representatives from yearly meetings throughout the U.S. to consider business and engage in program work, took their responsibilities seriously. We are a diverse group, as befits an organization with over fifty offices and even more programs in the U.S. and around the world. We are all Quakers upholding and putting into practice Quaker values.

We conducted the business of the Corporation, appointed Corporation and Committee members, and approved the Friends put forward by the Standing Nominating Committee. We also approved the placement of the Friends Relations Committee as a committee of the Corporation, parallel to that of the Standing Nominating Committee.

The members of the Corporation of American Friends Service Committee from all walks of life included different regions of the country and branches of Quakerism. Youth and elders, staff and visitors gathered to worship and work together. As a community of seekers, we gathered in this sacred place to address peace and social justice issues of our contemporary world.

The gathering began on Thursday night when we directed our attention to art as a catalyst for change. Hearing songs of forgiveness and unity from Tribe One, we were inspired to search in the Spirit for the power to reconcile and bring peace. We also heard from Naima Lowe, who presented "39 Questions for White People" to challenge us to consider issues of privilege.

The Friends Relations Committee (FRC) is tasked to nurture a greater vitality in the Corporation and the connection between AFSC and U.S. Friends in their monthly and yearly meetings. FRC participated in the planning of the Corporation meeting. During the meeting Friends experienced both programmed and unprogrammed worship and worship-sharing sessions. The theme this year, "Steadfastly working for peace and justice in Israel-Palestine," offered evening sessions on this topic.

Several seasoning sessions gave Friends a deeper familiarity with AFSC programs and provided an opportunity to advise staff and the AFSC Board.

We discussed the indicators of AFSC as a Quaker organization. An AFSC document, two years in the making, was reviewed at a seasoning session to get feedback and opportunity for refinement. This document reports on how AFSC seeks to embody Quaker practices in its mission, governance, leadership, program strategies, relationship principles and our spiritual connection through worship.

We held several seasoning sessions. One revolved around critical issues facing AFSC and the world. This session discussed a working paper, titled Shared Security: Reimagining U.S. Foreign Policy, jointly authored by the AFSC and our partners in the Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL). This document is the foundation of new program initiatives to embrace youth leadership both inside and outside of Quakerism and strive to change the narrative that justifies militarism and violence in the media. In our seasoning we explored the issue in terms of U.S. foreign policy abroad, amongst our own communities, and ways in which the language and concept of "security" could be redefined to promote dialogue between different communities.

This theme of security informed other discussions throughout the day, most notably concerning the Israel-Palestine conflict. Many times the question arose: What is the price of the current narrative of Israeli security in the form of restrictive walls, military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and discrimination and brutality directed towards the Palestinian people? Growing concerns were noted among Friends, which have resulted in initiatives in many monthly meetings towards a just peace in Palestine, while noting that the narrative of "peace" is also a complicated one. We heard from Sandra Tamari and Dalit Baum about the recent history in the region and attempts to boycott companies tied to apartheid against Palestinians. Although we do not know how these challenges will ultimately be overcome, we unite in hopes of a world where all can walk down the street and not be labeled criminal for simply existing. AFSC affirms its involvement with programs in Israel and Palestine. Since 1948 AFSC has been persistent in the search for a just peace in Israel-Palestine.

In another program presentation we heard about mass incarceration, specifically for people living in poverty. We asked ourselves what the future of the prison system should look like, seeing the injustice but not knowing a way to end it.

General Secretary Shan Cretin's annual report joyfully emphasized the return of AFSC's financial stability after critical years following the economic downturn. The required shrinkage of AFSC has resulted in higher efficiency. Any new work considered by AFSC will be guided by the strategic plan and financial health. The organization is smaller than in 2007. We have learned the need for good stewardship of our resources to meet our obligations, such as retirement plans. The 2013 Annual Report, including the audit results, was ready for the Corporation meeting. All documents were available electronically to members of the Corporation, reducing the environmental impact of printing. Plans are in the works for the centennial celebration and a related Courageous Acts campaign to raise additional funding for general endowment, interns/fellows, and strategic opportunities.

This time marks Friend Arlene Kelly's last meeting as Clerk. She is released from these duties with gratitude for the leadership she has shown in partnership with the General Secretary, governing bodies, and committees. A strong and articulate voice of reason, she will be remembered for her ability to pause for silence and wait for clarity to resume in the meeting. While she conducted business with humor, her high expectation of commitment, promptness, and exacting nature led AFSC through challenging times, ensuring viability for future generations. During her tenure as Clerk, AFSC faced restructuring and reorganization due to the economic downturn. Board committees were combined or laid down, and well-defined charges gave clear direction for each committee. Her trait of discernment is a special gift that she has brought to us and leaves with us. A minute of appreciation was approved and signed by the Corporation.

Phil Lord will become Presiding Clerk at the rise of meeting. He brings a wealth of experience from many roles within AFSC over the years. He is a longtime member of the Society of Friends.

Phil is currently a member of Chestnut Hill Meeting in Philadelphia. He has had more than twenty years of experience with the AFSC, during which he has come to know many different aspects of the organization and has served in varying capacities, including assistant clerk of the Board of Directors at two different points in his Board service. He wrote recently in Acting in Faith, an AFSC blog, "At its very best, AFSC is a vehicle and conduit for mutual transformation and Continuing Revelation."

Ad Hoc Epistle Committee: Harold Branam, Patric Garrison, Ted Klyce, Jane Kroesen, Carolyne Lamar Jordan, and Margaret Rowlett.

## FGC Consultation on Deepening Spirituality....

March 6-9, 2014, FGC held a Deepening Spirituality Consultation at Pendle Hill. More than 60 Friends from all over the US, Canada and Great Britain considered where Quakerism is now and where we need to be going in the digital age. We heard talks from Barry Crossno, General Secretary of FGC, Ben Pink Dandelion, Deborah Fisch and others. We met in small focus groups to look Issues such as encouraging families and young people, deepening worship, and making use of current technology. Each group later made a short presentation. Since the consultation, notes have been transcribed and soon will be made available to meetings. A sense of a new vitality was felt among participants with many ideas on how to keep our spiritual flame alive in a time of religious decline. The word "liquid church" was used: ministering to people where they are, outside Sunday morning. Young people are meeting in coffee shops or for mid-week worship, finding ways to nurture spirit in their busy lives.

It wasn't until I arrived at the FGC consultation at Pendle Hill that I found I was the informal representative for SEYM. With such a diverse cross section of liberal Quakerism, the FGC Deepening Spirituality Consultation was a good experience of revitalization for individuals and the organization. As SEYM rep, informal or not, I thought I should write up a short report to let friends know what's going on in the FGC world. We'll be hearing more about this later. And if course it's always a joy to be at Pendle Hill, even with wind chill and snow on the ground!

Ellie Caldwell



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## FRIENDS COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL LEGISLATION

*... a Quaker lobby in the public interest*

### 2013-2014 Program Report to Yearly Meetings

Since the early days of the Religious Society of Friends, God's spirit has led Friends to take action in the world. For more than 70 years, FCNL has carried on this witness of the Spirit through action on Capitol Hill. Governed by a General Committee of 184 Friends that includes representatives of 25 yearly meetings and seven Quaker organizations around the country, FCNL seeks to bring the concerns, experiences and testimonies of Friends to bear on policy decisions in the nation's capital.

#### **Driven by faith.**

At FCNL's Annual Meeting in November 2013, the General Committee approved a new statement of legislative policy entitled *The World We Seek*. Revised every ten years, the new document was the product of an 18-month process of prayerful discernment involving more than 240 Friends meetings and churches. The statement sets forth FCNL's broad objectives for public policy and is the foundational document for FCNL's legislative priorities, which are set every two years. Meetings and churches have been invited to participate in setting the new legislative priorities, which will be approved at Annual Meeting this November, just after the congressional elections.

#### **Grounded in policy.**

In 2013 FCNL welcomed a record 271 people to our Annual Meeting. During Quaker Lobby Day prior to the start of Annual Meeting, 200 people visited 140 congressional offices to urge Congress to invest in our communities and impose budget discipline on the Pentagon. In the last year alone, Friends in FCNL have made more than 300 personal visits to lobby congressional offices in Washington and in their local districts. Our national FCNL network has also sent 126,000 issue-related messages to Congress, and in the first two months of 2014, Friends in FCNL published 60 letters to the editor in newspapers around the country.

#### **Focused on the future.**

A record number of young adults attended FCNL's Annual Meeting, providing energy, innovation and leadership for the future of Quaker advocacy. As I write this report, FCNL is preparing to host Spring Lobby Weekend, at which more than 150 high school and college students from around the country will learn, through skill building and policy seminars, about Quakers and government, public policy advocacy and how Congress works. This year our young adults will be lobbying Congress for repeal of the Authorization for the Use of Military Force. By creating opportunities for young people to engage in peace and social justice policy during the formative years of their lives, FCNL is ensuring that Friends' values will help shape public policy for years to come.

We are thankful for the meetings and churches, yearly meetings and individuals who provide FCNL with sustained and vital support. We are convinced by our faith and experience to continue building the peaceful, just, equitable and sustainable global community we seek. Above all, we seek to remain open to where God's spirit leads us.

DeAnne Butterfield, Clerk FCNL General Committee, March 2014

***We seek a world free of war and the threat of war. We seek a society with equity and justice for all. We seek a community where every person's potential may be fulfilled. We seek an earth restored.***

FCNL's staff and volunteers work with a nationwide network of thousands of people to advocate for social and economic justice, peace, care for the earth and good government. The following is a list of some of the issues that have been the focus of our work in 2013-2014:

Words into Action in Central African Republic: FCNL played a behind-the-scenes leadership role in connecting on-the-ground relief groups and conflict prevention experts with members of Congress and the administration. FCNL coordinated and drafted a policy document signed by nine colleague organizations urging a comprehensive U.S. government strategy to address the violence in the Central African Republic. The document was used by FCNL staff, who worked closely with the administration to help form the White House response to this ongoing crisis.

Campaign Finance: Last month, the 18 faith communities of the Faith and Democracy Working Group, including Quakers, sent a letter to Congress urging support for a Constitutional amendment to repair the damage done by the Citizens United case. FCNL co-convened the group that last fall finished brief reports on three topical areas where money in politics has skewed or prevented congressional debate on issues of importance to faith groups. The selected topics were climate change, gun violence and private prisons.

Hope for Averting War: FCNL's persistent and strategic lobbying on Capitol Hill has helped keep the door open for diplomacy with Iran. The historic first-step nuclear deal with Iran is significant movement toward a final agreement to prevent a nuclear-armed Iran. FCNL lobbyists in Washington have worked closely with administration officials and congressional offices to support negotiations with Iran. Grassroots advocates have been in regular contact with members of Congress to support these steps toward peace and security in the Middle East. We believe that these new diplomatic talks are the best opportunity in more than 30 years to end the cycle of confrontation between our countries.

Advocating for Rebalanced Federal Budget Priorities: The FCNL community worked very hard on the \$850 billion reduction in Pentagon spending over 10 years that Congress approved. Yet the military budget is still far too bloated at a time when funds for necessary domestic programs are dwindling. We continue to press assertively for better budget priorities that serve human and community needs.

A New Approach to Climate Disruption: FCNL is partnering with faith, citizen, diversity and youth communities on the local, state and national level to ask elected representatives to acknowledge the reality and impact of climate disruption as a moral issue. FCNL advances the shared concern for and commitment to Creation and lifts the voices of people of faith, young people and people from communities directly affected by climate disruption. Through this lens of a shared future, the initiative strives to minimize partisanship and create political space for meaningful legislative solutions.

Repeal of the Authorization for the Use of Military Force (AUMF): We have the best opportunity in more than 12 years to roll back the law that has kept our country in an endless war since 2001. Passed immediately after the 9/11 attacks, the AUMF has been used to justify not only the war in Afghanistan but also everything from indefinite detentions at Guantanamo Bay, to a growing number of drone attacks, to widespread warrantless wiretapping. This year we are working hard to repeal the AUMF in the House through intensive Hill lobbying and a focused mobilization around the country.

This report may be reproduced and circulated. Friends Committee on National Legislation ([www.fcnl.org](http://www.fcnl.org)), March, 2014

# STATE OF THE MEETING REPORTS

## Jacksonville Monthly Meeting Spiritual State of the Meeting 2013

January 5, 2014

Attendees: Wendy Clarissa Geiger, Bonnie Hall, Kenneth Hall, Al Geiger, Connie Guenther, Doug Halpin, Elaine Martin (Clerk), Mike Shell (Recording Clerk)

*“It’s a bit of a paradox, that the more vulnerable we are with one another, the more at home we are; the less we fear each other.”*

—Liz Oppenheimer, “Being known by being vulnerable” (1/1/2014)

On 1st Month, 5th day, 2014, six Friends joined in worship-sharing, after meeting for worship and a “bag lunch,” in order to reflect on the current spiritual state of Jacksonville Friends Meeting.

The Liz Oppenheimer epigram used above was quoted early on and speaks to our sense of how we are maturing as a Meeting. Here are some of the recurring worship-sharing themes.

### Maturing of the Meeting

One Friend spoke of Meeting as being like a field. It may lie fallow for a time, growing with weeds. Then there is plowing, planting, waiting, sprouting, thinning, weeding, nurturing. The processes can take longer or shorter than expected. 2013 felt like a year of preparing the garden for the year to come.

Another Friend said we seem more content to be in the present with each other, practicing quietness—not in complacency, but in expectation. Formerly we felt more genuine urgency to find physical and spiritual space. Now we are in touch with each other, even when we are not all present with each other.

A third spoke of having increased hope for Meeting and encouraged us to be fearless, acknowledging the human condition, since we can’t deny it, yet proceeding with our ministry.

A fourth affirmed that Meeting is meshing as a group and doing more functions as a group, and urged us to increase such shared activities.

### Opening to and caring for each other

The Friend who quoted the epigraph spoke to the challenge of being vulnerable. One has to “get out of God’s way” as an individual to allow this. Such movement is even more challenging for a group, but everyone seems willing to try, week after week. Meeting is becoming more like a body, with members bringing different talents, ideas, beliefs, interests, yet functioning together.

Another Friend noted both many accomplishments and many wants in Meeting. There is palpable improvement in the spiritual state of the Meeting. Our needs don’t negate our progress, because spiritual foundations are being forged. We are getting to know and care for one another, learning that we can find something to nurture in each other, that we can love despite annoyances. The Christmas gathering was an especially spirit-filled demonstration of this.

This growth is reflected in the ways Friends are taking care of each other. One Friend spoke about needing to spend a lot of personal energy dealing with family this past year and about being helped by Meeting as “various Friends kindled fires in me.” Another spoke of attentiveness to other’s needs in the Meeting’s search for a more accessible location and the building of a wheel chair ramp. (However, see Ongoing Needs below in this regard.)

### Articulating our faith and practice

Friends noted that we need to become articulate as a Meeting in responding to the query, “What do Friends believe?”

One Friend shared two basic reasons for coming to Meeting. First, there are many denominations in the phonebook—not just many churches but many denominations. Unlike some other denominations, which tend to threaten punishment for misbehavior or misbelief, “Quakers don’t have beliefs because we are told to believe.” Second, Quakers are pioneers in making decisions by consensus. As Benjamin Zablocki wrote in *The Joyful Community: An account of the Bruderhof*, no community can survive long without consensus decision-making.

Another Friend said that we need to acknowledge the roots of Quakerism, especially in teaching our newcomers. It is okay to speak from the Bible, the Qur’an, etc., because the Light is there in all scriptures. This Friend cited the second verse of “The Ballad of George Fox”:

With a book and a steeple and a bell and a key  
They would bind it forever but they can't, said he.  
O, the book, it will perish, and the steeple will fall,  
But the Light will be shining at the end of it all.

A third Friend spoke of joy in attending and being part of Meeting. "I came to deepen my own spirituality and to be part of a spiritual group. Others may seek this as well." Far too many practice religion as something to do once a week to get forgiveness and salvation, then return to their usual behavior. "I know people who call themselves very religious yet pray, 'Jesus, protect me while I rob this house.' I search for something more than protection. I search guidance for my own actions. The attractiveness of Quakerism for me [is] not a set of ideas [but] a set of principles to apply seven days a week."

### **Witness in the community**

Several of us spoke to the Meeting's role of witnessing to the larger community. Although we sometimes doubt that we can make any difference, a common theme was that the mere visible presence of Quakers who act out of their faith and practice influences others.

Here are some of the comments:

- \* We come to Meeting to recenter, so we can go back out, living from our center.
- \* We can contrast politics/social action as concepts with the day-to-day "What's up now to deal with?"
- \* Cardinal Emmanuel Célestin Suhard said: "To be a witness does not consist in engaging in propaganda, nor even in stirring people up, but in being a living mystery. It means to live in such a way that one's life would not make sense if God did not exist." This past year, Meeting was such a palpable mystery.
- \* At the alternative New Year event at King's Bay, some people said, "We're just not effective," to which our clerk replied, "Yes, you are."
- \* We may not sense what Meeting gives to us, to Jacksonville, to NE Florida.
- \* Jacksonville would be different without Meeting. People notice the witness of Quakers. When we name ourselves, they remember that witness (e.g., conscientious objectors).
- \* We seek common grounds for community actions.

### **Ongoing needs**

With these blessings, Friends also acknowledged needs continuing spiritual and practical growth.

As addressed above, we want to focus more on our efforts to articulate our faith and practice to the larger community and to be a visible witness in that community.

We are very grateful to our current host, who welcomes us into her home every week. Even so, we know we still need a more centralized, visible and accessible Meeting location. Some Friends have a very long commute to reach our present location, and the present location lacks accessible restroom facilities.

We are also very grateful to our First Day School leader for her ongoing, excellent preparation and presentation of the bi-monthly FDS events. We acknowledge, though, that Meeting still lacks a full-fledged FDS program. Our youngest regular attenders are in their 50s. As a small Meeting, it is hard for us to fulfill our Quaker obligations. Unless we find ways to make space and ministry for young people and families more central, where is our continuity as a Meeting? Will our Jacksonville presence end?

We know and trust that Jacksonville Friends Meeting will continue, so we lift up these challenges for the year to come.

### **Thanks**

The Clerk noted that the 2010 Spiritual State of the Meeting worship-sharing was the first worship event she led. Today felt like a new beginning for her, and she welcomed the trust and guidance Friends continue to give her.

Friends in turn expressed respect and admiration for the Clerk and her bravery in guiding us.

We want to recognize the commitment, dedication and hard work that presently exist in Meeting. The individuals involved truly want meeting to flourish and contribute abundantly to our small yet growing family.

An incomplete list:

- \* Friends from Fernandina, St. Augustine and elsewhere who regularly travel a good distance to attend Meeting on First Day
- \* Treasurer and Recording Clerk, who are always prepared and do an excellent job for Meetings for Worship for Business
- \* Representatives to two local organizations, the Interfaith Council of Jacksonville and the Florida Coalition for Peace and Justice
- \* Friends who commit to providing First Day School, the newsletter and the website
- \* A Friend who built a handicap-accessible ramp and researched community projects
- \* Friends who generously host and provide pot luck gatherings
- \* Active involvement of Friends in SEYM activities, including the Youth Program
- \* Involvement in other Quaker Organizations, the Steering Committee for QUF, etc.
- \* A Friend who regularly communicates with members and attenders and networks through phone calls and emails, providing information, spiritual writing, and poetry. Her activities are like glue holding us together.

Submitted by Mike Shell, Recording Clerk

## Havana Worship Group

Letter from Mercedes Soca, January 25, 2014, to Southeastern Yearly Meeting

### Dear Friends,

Letters from Havana Unprogrammed Worship Group (HUG) have been sent through Ann Jerome to the Executive Committee of SEYM Interim Business Meeting. However, for you to understand how HUG revival was possible, I wrote here some details.

In June of 2013 I visited Cuba for a month having the opportunity to organize, with the help of some friends, 5 meetings of unprogrammed worship and met 23 people to talk about Quakerism.

On December, I came back to Cuba to take care of my partner, the painter Juan T. Vazquez Martin (one of the founder of HUG). He required an eye cataract surgery. As he has one eye vision, his doctor recommended extreme care for his recovering. My plan was to return to the US in a month but Juan's eye had an inflammation. He couldn't see but a white veil in front of him. Under this circumstance I had not other choice than to stay longer. To lose my returning ticket was not in my plan!

However, during this additional time in Cuba I listen and had conversations with Alejandro Castellanos (HUG attender from the first years) who finally decided to take the responsibility to continue HUG meetings. He has experience in the Unprogrammed Worship practice and knowledge of Quakerism. He explained himself in his letter.

Now, HUG meetings are held weekly in Alejandro's home each Fourth Day at 4 pm, with a regular attendance of 5, and 6 with me; and three who are not regular. There are others interested like Hope Bastian, Quaker from Tallahassee and resident in Cuba along with three other persons more. These others have difficulties to come to meeting the Fourth Day.

I suggested Alejandro that those who cannot attend the Fourth Day, they could come the First Day of the Meeting for Business. Instead of to meet at Alejandro's, like we did on December, this meeting would be where we used to have meetings before, because it is a larger house. I talked with the other house owner, Mercedes Gimenez, who is one of three generations of her family who have been HUG attenders since 1994. She is now closer to her 80's years old, reason for what she prefers a frequency of once a month.

The Meetings for Business are held the 3<sup>rd</sup> First Day of the month.

Two committees are coming back to work, Outreach and Library. I am trying to organize the Quaker studies materials like La Colina Silente, leaflets translated and edited by the HUG stored in my home; also, gathering books and leaflets in English, some in Spanish from different Quaker editorials. We named our Library long time ago as 'Domingo Ricart' in honor to a Catalan Quaker, very spiritual Spanish writer and teacher of Quakerism.

The idea is to leave HUG, at my departure, with structure, method and a Quaker literature in Spanish organized from where to learn about Quakerism and the Unprogrammed Worship practice.

Friends, this is an effort from us to structure HUG to continue sharing in Cuba the Quaker Unprogrammed Tradition and its powerful worship practice. This effort needs of support and love, more than ever to keep going. Please, not leave HUG alone; create a plan of communication that could work this time. Do what is convenient under SEYM Faith&Practice, but please, without losing sight of what is necessary from the spiritual.

On my side, I do my best to follow the prompt of the Light in my heart, Mercedes Soca, from *Havana Unprogrammed*

## Havana Quaker Unprogrammed Worship Group

January 15, 2014

To: South East Yearly Meeting

We are pleased to send you this brief note result of the search and experience of our small group, which on December of 2013 decided to continue with the Quaker silent worship or unprogrammed meeting, based on the most pure Quaker Practice.

We feel guided by the Spirit, which marked the Way to all Friends since more than 350 years. It shows us that only the Light can manifest and make grow the Divine Seed, which is inside of each man and woman of this universe not matter their differences of social class, race, sexual orientation, creeds, politics, etc.

We invite you to join with us to share our experiences with others like the early Quakers or Seekers did; when they brought with them to every place they could the message of Peace and Love that demand from us our dear Mother Earth.

In the Light,



Alejandro Castellanos González, coordinador



Maria Aurora Rigual Alfonso, secretaria



Taimy Martínez Naranjo



Margarita González



Juan T. Vázquez Martín



Mercedes Soca Gil, representative to SEYM

Meeting for Worship: Wednesday at 4 pm

Meeting address:

Hospital #468 e/ San Miguel and Neptuno, Centro Habana, C.P.10300  
Phone: 873 9269

# Grupo Habana de Adoración Cuaquera No-Programada

15 de enero de 2014

A: South East Yearly Meeting

Nos complace enviarles a ustedes esta breve nota surgida desde la búsqueda y experiencia de nuestro pequeño grupo, que en diciembre del 2013 decidió continuar con la reunión cuaquera de Adoración Silente o No-programada, basándose en la Practica del Cuaquerismo más puro.

Nos sentimos guiados por el Espíritu que ha marcado el camino de todos los Amigos a lo largo de más de 300 años. El que nos muestra que sólo la Luz es capaz de manifestar y hacer crecer la Semilla Divina que habita en cada hombre y mujer de este universo sin importar diferencias de clases sociales, raciales, de orientación sexual, credos, políticas, etc.

Por todo lo anterior los invitamos a que nos unifiquemos para compartir nuestras experiencias como hicieron los primeros Cuáqueros o Buscadores; quienes llevaron a donde pudieron el mensaje de Paz y Amor que demanda nuestra querida Madre Tierra.

En la Luz,



Alejandro Castellanos González, coordinador



Maria Aurora Rigual Alfonso, secretaria



Taimy Martínez Naranjo



Margarita González



Juan T. Vázquez Martín



Mercedes Soca Gil, representante ante SEYM

Fecha de reunión: miércoles a las 4pm

Lugar de Reunion

Hospital #468 e/ San Miguel and Neptuno, Centro Habana, C.P.10300

Phone: 873 9269

