

# Southeastern Yearly Meeting *of the Religious Society of Friends*

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## Fall Interim Business Meeting Saturday, October 3, 2015 Documents In Advance

### Greetings SEYM Friends,

As we prepare for our Fall Interim Business Meeting, I look to be guided by the spiritual wisdom of those who came before us and led the way.

*"And keep the gospel order . . . so that in all your men's and women's meetings, see that virtue flow, and see that all your words be gracious, and see that love flows, which bears all things, that kindness, tenderness and gentleness may be among you, and that the fruits of the good spirit may abound."*

---George Fox, *SEYM Faith & Practice* p.79

As the new EC and IBM Clerk, I look forward to seeing you in October.

Love and Light,  
Lisa Stewart

hosted by

### St. Petersburg Monthly Meeting

St. Petersburg Friends Meetinghouse, 130 19th Ave. SE, St. Petersburg, FL 33705

#### **Directions from I-275:**

- Take a left exit at Tropicana Field onto I-175
- Continue until you reach 4th Street S - take a right
- Continue until you reach 19th Avenue S - take a left
- Continue until you reach 130 19th Avenue SE
- Meeting House is on the right

#### **Recommended Hotels:**

**The Hollander Hotel:** at 4th Street N and 4th Avenue N. is a 1920s renovated hotel and is quaint and adorable. There is a pool, a restaurant, and free parking. Phone: 727-873-7900; website: [hollanderhotel.com](http://hollanderhotel.com)



**Overnight Hospitality:** If you need overnight accommodations in Friends' Homes, please contact Susan Wade, preferably by email, [swade3231@gmail.com](mailto:swade3231@gmail.com), using the subject line "FIBM Housing." She can also be reached by phone if necessary: 727-821-5048.

# Fall Interim Business Meeting

## Schedule & Agenda

### Friday, October 2

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#### Executive Committee Meeting

- 6:30 pm Fellowship
- 7:00 pm Executive Committee meeting, *all are welcome*  
followed by Executive Committee as Personnel Committee (*EC members only*)

### Saturday, October 3

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#### Fall Interim Business Meeting

- 8:00 am Coffee and snacks
- 9:00 am Worship
  - Nominating Committee preliminary report
  - Announcements
- 9:30 am Committee meetings – all are welcome to attend
- 12 noon Lunch provided by St. Petersburg Friends
- 1:00 pm Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business:
  - Roll call of Meetings & Worship Groups
  - Welcome of visitors
  - Announcements
  - Nominating Committee report
  - Worship & Ministry Committee report
  - Executive Committee report
    - June EC minutes .....3
    - Earthcare Committee report .....3
    - Treasurer’s report
    - Youth Committee report
    - Gathering Committee report
    - Half Yearly Meeting Committee report
    - Peace & Social Concerns Committee report
    - ProNica report .....4
    - Representatives to Organizations
    - Reading back the minutes
- 4:30 Closing worship
- 5:00 Fellowship; dinner at a local restaurant

### Sunday, October 5

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- 10:00 am Worship with St. Petersburg Friends

#### Other reports in these Documents

- Committee for Ministry on Racism Report ..... page 4
- Friends General Conference Representative Report .....6
- Friends for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, & Queer Concerns .....7
- Quaker House Representative Report .....8

## Summer Executive Committee Meeting • Numbered Minutes

- 15SEC01. SEYM Executive Committee approves making the new internet site domain name seymquakers.org. The old domain name of seym.org will be kept for a year, with a direction to the new site.
- 15SEC02. SEYM Executive Committee approves formation of a subcommittee of Executive Committee members to work with the Earthcare Committee on a job description for the Field Secretary for Earthcare and a process for hiring the Field Secretary for Earthcare. Phoebe Andersen, Bill Carlie and Cheryl Demers-Holton agreed to serve on that subcommittee.
- 15SEC03: The Executive committee of SEYM approves SEYM acting as the official 501c3 sponsor of Circus McGurkis for the city of Saint Petersburg in 2015, as required for the permit to use the Lake Vista Park.
- 15SEC04: SEYM Executive Committee expresses extreme gratitude to Tampa Monthly Meeting for their warm hospitality and refreshments in hosting the June 2015 EC meeting.

## SEYM Earthcare Committee Report • August 22, 2015

1. The focus of the Earthcare Committee (EcC) has been on implementation of the SEYM Field Secretary for Earthcare position. The following are steps we have taken and our current status.

Approval of the FSE job description and Anchor Committee description by the EcC Committee in conjunction with members of Executive Committee (EC). These two documents are being sent to Executive Committee for their approval. The final versions will come to FIBM.

The current amount of funds raised is \$ 22,300. Our goal is full funding is over \$40,000.

Continued fund raising includes follow up contacts with the clerks of SEYM MMs requesting discernment by their meetings and individuals if they have not already contributed. Committee members are offering visits to MMs should they so desire.

Other fund raising sources include obtaining grants. A Friend with significant experience in grant writing has felt led to work with us on funding the FSE. She has proposed a well layed out plan to this end. There has been discussion of the use of crowd funding. There are questions to be answered, however, before there is a possibility of going forward with this.

The EcC is working on proposals for a job ad, target resources for the ad, and a search committee. These will be brought to EC and FIBM.

It is our goal with approval from EC /FIBM to go forward with the hiring process after FIBM.

2. Other activities by EcC:

- Brad Stocker's workshop "BeFriending Earth" is now available on the SEYM website and can be a tool for MMs to use for their own programs.
- Considerations of the Pope's Encyclical are on the website.
- Also on the website are a link to Northern Spirit Radio program interview with Tere Campos and Brad Stocker about the Nicaraguan Transoceanic Canal, QEW, and ProNica.
- The EcC plans to present two workshops at YM.

Respectfully submitted,

Brad Stocker & Barbara Letsch, Earthcare Committee co-clerk

# Committee for Ministry on Racism

report for 2015 Fall Interim Business Meeting

Dear SEYM Friends,

Norwegian psychologist and economist, Per Espen Stoknes, author of *What We Think About When We Try Not to Think About Global Warming*, cites psychological barriers to caring about climate change:

1. Distance. The problem is far off in time and in someone else's neighborhood.
2. Doom and gloom scenarios make us feel helpless.
3. Our psychological defenses help us avoid guilt about our own complicity.

**These same points can be used in deliberating about racism: it's far away, someone else's problem, we feel helpless, and we'd rather not feel guilt or part of the problem.** Let us think about ways to change this story, as Stoknes suggests, to speak of truth, but also resilience, hope, and the emergence of a more just and healthy society.

If you are interested in serving as a meeting/worship group contact, please get in touch with the co-clerks of the Committee for Ministry on Racism. Together we can make a difference!

Carry On With Love and Fortitude!

Wendy Clarissa Geiger, Jacksonville Meeting

Ellie Caldwell, Palm Beach Meeting

Co-clerks, SEYM Committee for Ministry on Racism

## PRONiCA Report to FIBM 2015

For those who choose to try to, "live a life that takes away the occasion for war," Nicaragua continues to offer many opportunities, and ProNica continues to pursue them.

First of all, we are appealing to everyone reading these words to seriously consider joining us for a week or so as we do our work. Pam and I are going in December along with some other Friends, and we'd love for you to join us. A very important part of the ProNica mission is to educate North Americans about our country's relationship with Nicaragua. To get the message out, we publish a newsletter, we present at conferences, Quaker gatherings, and we occasionally stop unsuspecting strangers on the street. I certainly hope everyone has read or heard the message; but nothing compares to a personal visit. Just your presence provides a little extra hope in place where hope is too often in short supply. At the same time, you can expect to be deeply affected.

What a delegation can mean is exemplified by a recent group of "Healers," who joined us in Nicaragua, and interestingly were sponsored by the Peace Committee of Sandy Spring Meeting near DC, along with an organization named, "Just Peace Circles." While there, they focused on trauma healing, community building, and hands on healing body work. The delegation was a great success. Perhaps someday we can send Friend John Calvi to do his healing work there as well.

ProNica's intern program is available for students who want a deeper immersion experience than short-term trips can provide. We are pleased to report that in early August three Haverford College interns finished a six-week week stay where they worked with our project partners on a variety of educational activities. No doubt their lives will never be the same. *Continued next page...*

When the need is great, community organizations must prioritize. For example, personnel security, food, and shelter often precede education. In ProNica's case, it has always been women and children first. For this reason I am pleased to report that our beloved project partner, Los Quinchos, despite desperate financial constraints, started a program of courses in carpentry, electrical repairs, and other skills for young men trying to escape gang life in Managua. A generous ProNica donor contributed \$10,000 over a period of two years to help launch this program.

In another area of Nicaragua, far from Managua, the women living in the village of Rio Blanco are suffering under increased levels of violence. Community organizers are helping, but it is a growing and horrifying need. Please hold these women in the light. While it may not help the women far away in Rio Blanco, ProNica has long dreamed of supporting a new domestic violence shelter near Managua that currently sits idle. The facility was built with money from a Spanish aid agency, but when the bottom fell out so did the funding. The shelter now sits unused, waiting for money to fund its operation, and justice remains in short supply.

And then there is the canal. When someone comes up with an idea that will change the ecology of an entire country, one would hope that more information regarding planning would be available in the United States. Yes, there is information, but it is more difficult to find than one would hope. Fortunately at ProNica we have a politically astute couple serving as our co-directors in Nicaragua, and several members of our Board are very well informed on the subject. I am anxiously awaiting our next Board meeting for more information. It is interesting that it is a private Chinese company supporting the project. I will be interested to see if current disruptions in the Chinese economy will dim the possibility of construction.

Friends have long expressed interest in ProNica's ever diminishing reserve funds and how to best put them to use for the lives of Nicaraguans. Currently ProNica splits investments among the Vida Fund which provides low interest loans to cooperatives and small businesses in Nicaragua, a microloan organization focused on Central America, and Friends Fiduciary Fund. Following the lead of other Quaker organizations, we have also transferred some reserves to a socially responsible money manager who is versed in Central American investments. Informed members of our Board wrestle with the ideal balance of the reserve accounts, and we continue to work hard on it.

Saving the best for last, we were blessed with a video project performed for us by three young and talented filmmakers, one of whom has a very well-known last name. The film highlights the work of the beauty school—and is itself beautiful. Please visit the ProNica YouTube page at <https://www.youtube.com/user/ProNicaOnline> to watch and find out just what that famous name is; and don't forget the donate button.

Herb Haigh, ProNica Board President

# Friends General Conference (FGC) Report of SEYM Representatives

FGC's Central Committee is solely responsible for making final policy decisions affecting the FGC organization and program, approving the annual budget, and making changes in the corporate by-laws.

Ed Lesnick and Kay Lesnick are SEYM's current representatives to Central Committee. Gerry O'Sullivan is nominated as the yearly meeting's third representative. She will replace Dustin Lemke, who continues serving the wider Quaker community as led.

This past July, fourteen-hundred Friends from the United States, Canada and overseas, joined for the FGC Annual Gathering, held at Western Carolina University. The campus is nestled in a forested valley in the Smoky Mountains - an ideal location to become re-invigorated by the Spirit and share in the community of Friends.

An in-depth look at the Friends Gathering is at <http://www.fgcquaker.org/gathering> Videos of three evening plenary sessions are on YouTube.

The saying goes, "FGC is more than the Gathering." Interest group sessions included information on FGC Programs available for Friends and their monthly meetings:

- Building Intergenerational Community
- Couples Enrichment
- "Faith In Play"
- FGC Publications
- Ministry on Racism
- New Meetings Project
- "Quaker Cloud" web hosting
- QuakerQuest
- Spiritual Deepening Program
- Traveling Ministries

Unlike SEYM's combined annual gathering and YM business sessions, there is no formal FGC business conducted during the summer sessions. FGC Executive Committee met in April (Philadelphia) and September (Baltimore). The results of their work will be brought forth at Central Committee sessions.

The annual Central Committee sessions will be in Reisterstown, Maryland, Thursday, October 22, 2015 - Sunday, October 25, 2015.

Ongoing concerns for discernment include:

Feasibility study in development of a fundraising campaign The financial prospects and stability of the Conference

- Engaging Friends and inquirers through creative communications
- The present operation and future of the FGC Bookstore, Quaker Books
- Development of FGC programs and services to monthly meetings

Submitted by: Ed Lesnick, August 1, 2015

# Friends for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, & Queer Concerns

Fall 2015 Report from Stephanie Preston, SEYM Representative to FLGBTQC

Dear SEYM Friends,

I am honored to begin my second term as your SEYM Representative to FLGBTQC. I am indeed strengthening my connection to the Quaker world outside of Florida as a result of this service. Most recently I attended the Friends General Conference (FGC) Gathering from 5-11 July, 2015 at Western Carolina University in Cullowhee, NC. For me this was a time of profound joy, spiritual renewal, and personal reflection. SEYM assistance with travel expenses allowed me to be fully engaged with this wonderful community. I am incredibly grateful for your continued support.

My time there was so full, it requires listing everything in bullet point format! Among other things...

- I stayed in the FLGBTQC housing pod and met other LGBTQ Quakers from around the country
- I learned how to practice restorative self-care at my daily morning workshop, *Abandon All Weariness*, led by Quaker healer John Calvi
- I represented SEYM at FLGBTQC Meetings for Worship with Attention to Business
- I joined in daily Meeting for Worship under the care of FLGBTQC
- I received training and provided childcare so FLGBTQC parents could also attend events
- I accepted a nomination to serve a two year term on FLGBTQC Ministry & Counsel Committee beginning in 2016
- I co-facilitated a late night discussion group with high school teens on what it means to identify as an LGBTQ youth
- I helped to lead a worship sharing circle for newly out LGBTQ Friends that included individuals from Africa attending their first ever FGC Gathering
- I went to the evening plenary sessions, each of which moved me to tears, laughter, or singing
- I attended the FLGBTQC cabaret, talent show, and silent auction. This is something that I recommend everyone to do at least once in their Quaker lives. You will not be disappointed!
- I volunteered to hold sacred space at The Gathering Healing Center
- I engaged in deep dialogue with fellow LGBTQ Friends about the unique concerns faced by transgender people of color and how we can work together to address them

There are also a few other noteworthy news items to share with you:

- **THE GOOD:** The US Supreme Court issued its landmark decision in *Obergefell v. Hodges* on 26 June, 2015. This ruling granted same-sex couples the right to marry in all 50 US states under the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment in the US Constitution. Thank you for holding our justices in the light during this time. It is expected that some faith organizations will file legal challenges that this recognition violates their freedom of religion under the First Amendment, so the fight is not entirely over.
- **THE NOT SO GOOD:** Some conservative and evangelical yearly meetings outside of SEYM continue to wrestle painfully with the question of how to respond to individual monthly meetings and churches that are affirming of their openly LGBTQ members. In 2015, both Northwest Yearly Meeting (NWYM) and North Carolina Yearly Meeting (NCYM-FUM) “released” specific meetings for their stance of welcoming queer Friends. FLGBTQC believes the verb “expelled” is

actually the more appropriate term. You can read more on this issue at Chuck Fager's website at <http://afriendlyletter.com>

- **THE NEUTRAL:** FLGBTQC will hold its next Midwinter Gathering (MWG) from 15-18 January, 2016 at the Greene Family Camp in Bruceville, TX near Waco. This is a one-time change from the usual gathering weekend near US President's Day in February due to lack of available venues on our desired dates. I will be unable to attend this upcoming FLGBTQC MWG because it coincides with SEYM Michener Lecture and Winter IBM and I am on the Orlando MM host committee for these events. However, I am extremely excited about attending the Friends General Conference (FGC) Gathering from 3-9 July, 2016 at the College of St. Benedict in St. Joseph, MN.

Yours in peace, Stephanie Preston

## Quaker House Report      Lynn and Steve Newsom, August 2015

**The Drone Quilt Project:** We displayed the Drone Quilt Project at Quaker House and several conferences and provided information and materials for making blocks to create new quilts. Each block is a memorial to an innocent victim of a drone strike.

**Conscientious Objection Education:** We began doing workshops and presentations on Conscientious Objection to provide information for our youth to help them discern whether or not they are pacifists and, if so, how to document it in case the draft is reinstated. We developed this also to help Meetings understand how to help their young people develop and document their beliefs.

We traveled to the Bellvale Bruderhof community in NY on May 14<sup>th</sup>. We spoke to their 5<sup>th</sup> grade and up classes about Conscientious Objection in the afternoon, and then we spoke to the entire community in the evening about the plight of our service members and veterans. Soon after, a young Bruderhof couple visited us on their way to Chapel Hill, where they will be starting a community.

**Moral Injury Education:** Clearwater and Jacksonville Friends Meetings organized community wide presentations on moral injury. Thanks to their wonderful outreach, the attendance was very diverse: military members, veterans, and civilians. Acknowledging the reality of moral injury provides common language for people of faith to collaborate with the medical profession and the military in caring for the needs of service members and veterans. Lynn and Steve gave these presentations at several conferences this summer as well as breaking ground by giving it at Ft. Bragg for the Military Family Life Consultants.

**Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Counseling Program:** A military chaplain now refers his soldiers with moral injury to Joanna, our therapist, for counseling. Joanna was approved as a Courage Beyond therapist. Their program will pay for most therapy sessions as well as referring clients to us. Courage Beyond is run by the Wounded Warrior Project. This is wonderful news for our program!

**Publications and Publicity:** We are working with Cecilia Yocum of St. Petersburg, FL, to help her write a booklet of interventions and therapy for moral injury victims. This booklet will be distributed by Quaker House. Alice Lynd wrote a booklet about moral injury and donated 200 copies to Quaker House to distribute at no cost other than shipping. The Baptist Peace Fellowship included our publication "Resources on Moral Injury" in their monograph about moral injury, The Soul Repair Center of Brite Divinity School published an article about Quaker House's work to provide education on moral injury, we were credited for our help in the Human Rights Watch publication "Embattled: Retaliation against Sexual Assault Survivors in the US Military," and our work with moral injury education was pointed out in Kristen Richardson's excellent article in the August *Friends Journal*. The Huffington Post published an article by Matthew Hoh, "Insulting America's Sacred Idols: Helping Veterans Recover from Moral Injury."

He talks about his presentation at Quaker House and included the video that Lewis produced. The video is also posted on YouTube. David Swanson shared the video on the “World Without War” Facebook page.

**New AA Group:** We are providing the AA group for “Agnostics and Others” a home for their weekly meetings. It is led by veterans and reaches out to veterans and service members. They were turned down by area churches when they requested space. Victims of moral injury often feel uncomfortable in traditional churches.

**Continuing Work:** We continue to offer free Mindfulness classes, quarterly protests against torture and demanding accountability at the Johnston County Airport (home to rendition flights), and participating in many civic and military groups that work to help service members and veterans.

Submitted by Elaine Martin, Jacksonville,  
SEYM Representative to Quaker House