Peace & Social Concerns Committee Report
SEYM Yearly Meeting Sessions 2020
7 Fifth Month 2020

Clerk Cece Yocum opened the meeting at 19:00 (7:00 p.m.) with silent worship.

The minutes from the P&SC committee meeting during Winter Interim Business Meeting 2020 were read and approved as corrected.

Cece then called for New Agenda Items:
1. Mike Flannery asked to address the committee regarding a Friends in Need Fund.
2. Lis- Marie Alvarado asked to address the committee on behalf of AFSC Miami.

AFSC/Miami
Lis-Marie Alvarado reported on Homestead area food drive for 200 farm workers (mostly undocumented) to occur on Saturday, 16 May 2020, sponsored by AFSC/Miami office. She added that a local Miami-Dade County commissioner (name not specified) has pledged to distribute $500.00 in gift cards to those workers.

Lis-Marie requested donations from SEYM Peace and Social Concerns.

Cece noted that the committee has $400.00 of SEYM-allocated funds that can be directed by the committee toward worthy causes/needs.

Approved: The Committee recommended transfer of $400.00 to AFSC/Miami for use in farm worker food assistance.

AFCS/Miami will provide SEYM with a PayPal link for transfer of the funds.

Lis-Marie requested that P&SC committee spread the word that AFSC/Miami needs more sponsorship and donations and asked that Friends hold these workers in the Light.

Brian Olson said that he would post AFSC/Miami’s request on Facebook.

Brad Stocker introduced a food drive in Miami/Homestead area.

Jacksonville Meeting donation to SEYM of AVP funds remaining in its Meeting account
When Jacksonville Monthly Meeting laid down its meeting it returned $586.98 to Southeastern Yearly Meeting that was earmarked for Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) work. Friends Peace Teams requested that SEYM allocate these funds to help the Nicaragua AVP Trauma Healing work. This issue was brought to the SEYM Winter Interim Business Meeting 2020 and was approved. Additional funds donated by Miami Friends Meeting and by Tere Campos and Brad Stocker brought the total to $986.98.

Unfortunately, corona virus lockdowns put the Peacebuilding en las Américas (PLA) leader in Nicaragua in medical detention for one month. Because of these lockdowns in many Central American countries the project actions are now “on hold”.
The committee grappled with the question of “What to do with these funds in the interim?” During the discussion that followed Tere Campos reported that in Nicaragua there are 420 Covid-19 cases, hospitals are filling up, and the Nicaraguan government has been unresponsive, failing to provide neither assistance nor information. She stressed that AVP Training is desperately needed during this time. Brad Stocker pointed out that returning funds to donors would create a situation where we would need to collect the same funds, which we don’t want to do.

Cece then asked whether the Friends would be comfortable keeping the funds with Friends Peace Teams?

**Approved:** P&SC committee will ask SEYM to send the money collected to Friends Peace Teams to hold until the Project for AVP in Nicaragua can restart.

These funds will be mailed to Friends Peace Teams in St. Louis, MO, and designated as funds for Peacebuilding en las Américas (PLA)-Nicaragua to be used for AVP trauma healing work.

Cece will keep up with progress on this matter and report back to the committee.

**Florida Restoration Rights Coalition (FRRC)**
FRRC’s recent work includes raising concern of the high risk to prisoners, guards, and other prison employees during Covid-19 crisis and donating tablets (iPads, etc.) to nursing homes to facilitate communication with loved ones during quarantine.

FRRC recommendations to reduce population in the Florida penal system are:
- commutation of prison sentences
- expediting parole proceedings
- lowering or removing bonds

FRRC also recommends that all interested people assist in voter registration wherever and whenever possible.

The discussion that followed Leslie’s report included the information that St. Petersburg Meeting is gathering contributions. Mike Flaney suggested donation information for FRRC to be placed on SEYM website and Facebook page and Karen Putney suggested that it be included in the SEYM eNewsletter. Lis-Marie mentioned #FreeThemAll has a petition to Florida government officials (for more information, visit AFSC’s website: https://www.afsc.org/blogs/news-and-commentary/why-we-support-call-to-freeThemAll).

The committee recommended this information be forwarded to Vickie Carlie to be included in the SEYM eNewsletter.

**Report from Leslie Bouwman, member of SEYM’s and St. Petersburg Monthly Meeting’s Peace & Social Concerns committees:**
St Petersburg Monthly Meeting Peace and Social Concerns continues to raise and donate funds to the Florida Rights Restoration Coalition (FRRC). We were heartened in February when a limited number of returned citizens had their fees waived and registration given the green light. On April 7, 2020, Desmond Meade released this statement:
Today represents a major victory in the fight to restore voting rights to Florida’s returning citizens. The decision by the court to certify this case as a class action is a big deal because it drastically expands the number of people who can get immediate relief from 17 to hundreds of thousands. We are pleased that the courts appear to be consistent in placing people over politics, and that’s the approach that we have maintained since the start of our Amendment 4 campaign.

In a recent video available on the website https://floridarrc.com, Desmond expressed deep concern for incarcerated people and for those who staff facilities. He called for state officials to find bold solutions for protecting these populations. He suggests that they

1. commute sentences of those most vulnerable who have upcoming release dates,
2. release those with permanent disabilities and terminal illnesses,
3. expedite parole process for those eligible, and
4. lower bond and/or release on own recognizance for appropriate inmates, jailed and awaiting trial.

He also called for us to join FRRC in donation of masks to these facilities.

COVID19 and Palestinians
Lis-Marie will make a report on AFSC’s Response to Covid-19 in Palestine in a Meeting for Learning hosted by Miami Friends Meeting via video teleconference on Thursday, 28 May 2020, at 7:00 p.m. Register here: https://www.facebook.com/events/337008653928305/.

AFSC/Miami’s response to Covid-19 Crisis in Palestine includes information and how to take action, and is open to everyone.

Lis-Marie asked whether SEYM would want to be listed as a sponsor for this event and be listed on printed flyer?

In discussions on this item Brad reported that he is attempting to get this “Meeting for Learning” designated as a regional ZOOM call. Karen advised that the P&SC committee could sponsor as a committee but can only recommend to the SEYM Executive Committee that SEYM become a sponsor. Lis-Marie clarified that AFSC/Miami will host and that security and registration will be handled by Miami Friends.

Approved: P&SC Committee agreed to be listed as a Co-sponsor for the AFSC/Miami and Miami Friends Meeting for Learning Event scheduled for Thursday, 28 May 2020 at 7 p.m.

Zoom Security discussion
Susan presented the existing protocol by which SEYM conducts ZOOM meetings:
1. The registration email comes to the SEYM Administrator’s office and registrant is confirmed as a legitimate attender at the proposed meeting.
2. Only the Host or Co-host can “screen share” during specific Zoom meeting.
3. Host or Co-host can immediately remove anyone from Zoom meeting and the removed attender is not allowed to re-enter the meeting.
NOTE: Vicki Carlie has put together a Protocol "Cheat Sheet" for adhering to Zoom security protocols. One example: Do not allow people to self register through a web site.

Members discussed the pros and cons of using audio only but no decision was made on this issue.

**Imokalee Organizations**

Carolyn Stanley presented information concerning three organizations in Immokalee, Florida, that work closely with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) migrant workers and their families and has provided this summary:

**Report from Carolyn Stanley, Clerk of Fort Myers Monthly Meeting, Peace and Social Concerns committee member:**

I’d like to let you know about three organizations in Immokalee, Florida, that are working closely with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) and the migrant farmworkers and their families.

1. **Misión Peniel** began as a pastoral ministry of charity and service, providing food, clothing, fellowship and emergency supports to farmworkers in Immokalee, Florida, in September 2006. It is located in a small building right across the street from where many of the farm workers congregate to travel by bus to various farms. During the pandemic they have temporarily discontinued distributing clothing or serving cooked meals. They do continue to distribute food once a week. Their two biggest needs are food donations to help sustain their Friday distribution and funds for their emergency relief account which is being used to assist farmworkers with rent, bill payments, and medical expenses. Fort Myers Monthly Meeting has committed to making additional contributions to them during the pandemic.

You can find more information on their web site [www.misionpeniel.com](http://www.misionpeniel.com).

2. **Cultivate Abundance** - Working with Misión Peniel staff and using the back yard of the Misión's building, the organization Cultivate Abundance was started by Rick Burnette in 2017 to address food insecurity. A member of FFMM recommended Rick Burnette to us and we contributed to this organization at the very beginning to help them get started. They have been flourishing and are often in need of volunteers to help in the garden at Misión Peniel and to donate extra produce from your own garden. During the pandemic they have put emphasis on their container garden program so that residents can have access right outside their doors during stay-at-home or self-quarantine times.

Learn more at [https://www.cultivateabundance.org](https://www.cultivateabundance.org).

3. **Imokalee Fair Housing Alliance** - To help remedy the severe housing problem farm workers face in Immokalee, the Imokalee Fair Housing Alliance (IFHA) was formed in 2019 as a 501 (c)(3) to build 100 units of safe, affordable, worker-designed housing, constructed in multiple phases as funds are raised. The Fort Myers Friends Meeting has been supporting the IFHA through modest individual donations and an offer to spread the word among Quakers about how more of us can get involved in this exciting project. FMFM’s Peace and Social Concerns Committee had planned to begin by inviting a board member to give a presentation at SEYM this spring. Unfortunately, COVID-19 made this impossible.

This new organization has worked closely with the CIW and Mission Peniel (members of these organizations are on the board of the IFHA) They have purchased 10 acres of land in Immokalee...
close to schools, shopping, and transportation, and completed Due Diligence including surveys, engineering reports, and other studies. They are now working to raise enough money to get started building.

Learn more at https://www.ifha.info.

FMM has supported the Coalition of Immokalee Workers recent campaign to get a field hospital, PPE, and testing, established in Immokalee. As a meeting we sent a letter to Governor Ron DeSantis and Agriculture Commissioner Nikki Fried explaining our support for this campaign. Sunday, May 3, testing began. We have heard that they have a good supply of masks but they still do not have a field hospital. The big unknown is what happens to those who test positive. Where do they go to get treatment? Where do they go to be quarantined? They have no health insurance or sick leave from work. Fort Myers Monthly Meeting believes that our essential farm workers need our support more than ever during this pandemic.

Report from Helen Fox, SEYM Peace and Social Concerns committee member:
After Hurricane Irma devastated southwest Florida in 2017, the town of Immokalee was left with an urgent need for safe and affordable housing for farmworkers and their families. Their substandard, unsafe, and overcrowded, housing had been damaged even further by the storm, and in many cases, rents had tripled and even quadrupled due to unconscionable rent-gouging. To help remedy this, the Immokalee Fair Housing Alliance (IFHA) was formed in 2019 as a 501 (c)(3) to build 100 units of safe, affordable, worker-designed housing, constructed in multiple phases as funds are raised. The Fort Myers Friends Meeting (FMFM) has been supporting the IFHA through modest individual donations and an offer to spread the word among Quakers about how more of us can get involved in this exciting project. FMFM's Peace and Social Concerns Committee had planned to begin by inviting a board member to give a presentation at SEYM this spring. Unfortunately, COVID-19 made this impossible.

The spread of the novel corona virus has also exposed the need for food and basic medical care in Immokalee, where the poverty rate was already more than 43% before the pandemic hit. Currently, farmworkers need groceries as well as free, convenient testing for the virus, contact tracing, safe spaces to isolate those who test positive, and telemedicine for both standard medical complaints and COVID-19 support. The FMM has supported such initiatives with additional financial support and letter writing. We have been pleased to learn recently that the Governor has responded to local community activism by setting up three days of free, convenient testing in Immokalee and is working with Doctors Without Borders to address some of the other urgent medical issues.

Discussion of these reports included that members of the board of Immokalee Fair Housing Alliance were scheduled to make a presentation at SEYM's Yearly Gathering but had to cancel because the Covid-19 pandemic required cancellation of this event.

Attempts are being made to get an operational Field Hospital in Immokalee. Testing has started but if a person tests positive, there is no place to quarantine due to the cramped housing situations and shortages. Letters to Florida Governor Ron DeSantis and to Agriculture Commissioner Nikki Fried have been sent.

Karen reminded the committee that the large community of farm workers in Homestead are undocumented.
Phil Stone requested that assistance should focus on those in need who are unlikely to get assistance from a government program.

Friends in Need - SEYM Ministry & Counsel
Mike Flanery recommended creating a line item in the SEYM budget of $10,000, rather than a “Fund”. This would speed up disbursement of funds to fill an urgent need more quickly than the lengthy approval process most likely to occur if moneys were in set aside a Fund. A small group of approvers could be gleaned from Worship & Ministry to make up this approval committee.

Phil advised that New England Yearly Meeting has a 100-year-old fund designated for this service which he has experience with but he favors a line item approach rather than a designated “Fund”.

Friends agreed to carry discussion forward to next Meeting. Follow up: Several other committees also had similar suggestions. The Yearly Meeting is in the process of developing guidelines for such a program.

The meeting closed with silent worship.

Attending:

AFSC/Miami
Lis-Marie Alvarado

Clearwater Monthly Meeting
Mike Flannery
Carolyn Kaufman
Eileen Zingaro

Gainesville Monthly Meeting
Pete Ackerman (Recording Clerk)
Peter Harrell

Fort Myers Monthly Meeting
Carolyn Stanley

Miami Monthly Meeting
Tere Campos
Andrea Hoskins
Warren Hoskins
Brian Olson
Brad Stocker

Orlando Monthly Meeting
Chris Laning

Saint Petersburg Monthly Meeting
Leslie Bouwmann
Susan Wade (Zoom Host)

Tampa Monthly Meeting
Karen Putney
Cece Yocum (Committee Clerk)