

Executive Committee Meeting
Yearly Business Meeting
United Methodist Life Enrichment Center
Fruitland Park FL
March 31, 2010

Meeting opened at 3:20 p.m. with centering worship.

Present were Gary Arthur, Acting Executive Committee (EC) clerk and Yearly Meeting (YM) assistant clerk; Susan Taylor, YM clerk and acting recording clerk; Wendy Clarissa Geiger, Worship and Ministry co-clerk ; Nancy Triscritti, Worship and Ministry co-clerk; Neil Andersen, Treasurer; Phoebe Andersen, clerk of Faith & Practice committee; Caroline Lanker, Finance committee clerk; Mary Jo Klingel, Nominations committee clerk; Herb Haigh, clerk of Trustees; Barb Letsch, Earth Care committee clerk; Lyn Cope, Administrative Secretary; Peter Ackerman, Sybil Ann Brennan, and Peter Crockett.

Gary Arthur, EC Acting clerk stated his gratitude for all who came to EC meeting and noted all that is involved in getting to the EC and Yearly Meeting.

The *Personnel Policy* section on non-discrimination will be considered at a later date. EC awaits input from Becky Steele on this matter.

Friends discussed the use of e-mail along with a recent concern over Friends being vigilant regarding the sharing of information about any particular item which might be in the process of being seasoned by a committee.

It was agreed to take concerns to an appropriate committee, avoid e-mail conversations on sensitive issues, and to encourage face to face meetings whenever possible. We're reminded that e-mail is easily misinterpreted and should be used with discretion.

Regarding the *Working Minute on SEYM's relationship with FUM*, it was recommended a committee continue the contemplation of the working minute with light from the plenary sessions and during auxiliary sessions. The committee is charged with bringing new light to the yearly meeting for possible unity.

The committee members include Gary Arthur, Phoebe Andersen, Jack Badin, Mark Grantham, Mary Jo Klingel, and Rebecca Miles.

The concern about dwindling Yearly Meeting attendance was presented. Five years ago, 200 people attended yearly meeting and Gathering. This year, 129 people are registered. Later in this meeting it was noted by Gathering Committee that there will be only 15 children attending compared to 45 last year. Consideration was given to why there is decrease in attendance. Friends offered a variety of causes and possible remedies.

- ❖ Attendance is down in diverse meetings throughout the country.
- ❖ As they have done, The Trustees may look at additional ways to help with costs.

- ❖ “Cohesiveness” is not as great. People who are aging are leaving the area. Seasoned Friends, who have supported the Yearly Meeting, are among those no longer able to attend.
- ❖ The *Half-Yearly Meeting* format may be a model to consider. Alternatives may include meeting elsewhere and sharing homes for accommodations.
- ❖ Friends must consider “What is happening to us as a sub-culture?” Have Quakers’ core socio-political concerns been taken over by others?
- ❖ Yearly meeting must be fun, not a chore.
- ❖ People have problems with jobs, travel, and accommodating their children. Schools don’t honor SEYM’s letter stating yearly meeting is a religious holiday. SAYMA changed its yearly meeting to June in order to increase children’s attendance.
- ❖ If we were in a position to feed people spiritually and people felt that, they might come
- ❖ One Yearly Meeting has time of fellowship and spiritual retreat and it does business during interim business meetings.
- ❖ The Gathering Committee should survey Friends about this problem. The survey should be sent to monthly meetings. A Friend stated we don’t promote or advertise enough.
- ❖ Some people are not spiritually grounded in their home meeting and see no value in YM
- ❖ The FUM issue has been too much of a preoccupation.
- ❖ There are Friends aren’t convinced that YM will do anything for them.
- ❖ There are youth issues. Behavior guidelines have been disregarded. Yet, parents and all YM attenders value youth’s presence. One Friend mentioned that there different styles of parenting regarding rules. It was reported, some adolescent girls did not want to come to YM this year because they felt uncomfortable in the teen program. Another Friend stated, as Friends we are non-hierarchical and allow destructive behaviors to keep happening. “We have trouble with tough love.”
- ❖ A suggestion was made to have an outreach committee to promote YM.
- ❖ Another Friend mentioned that Young Friends of North America drew young Friends (18-35) who did not have a strong youth program in their home meetings.
- ❖ The YM Secretary expressed a strong affirmation for what Gathering Committee is doing.

- ❖ The EC, which is SEYM's personnel committee, must support the well-being of the Administrative Secretary in dealing with the many tasks that come her way in the SEYM office. Lyn Cope reported that she has called two members for support: Cecelia Yocum and Nancy Fennell.

A formal support committee was suggested. Lyn said it would be helpful to have 3 or 4 people to talk about issues or a particular situation.

At this Gathering, Herb Haigh, Ellie Caldwell, Peter Ackerman and Lisa Stewart volunteered to support Lyn.

- ❖ We welcome 15 new people this year to YM Gathering. Peter Crockett was asked to observe, take notes, and make suggestions as a first year YM attendee.
- ❖ Others suggested keeping business meeting as part of YM Gathering. As it is the foundation to how we work as Friends. Perhaps, the content could be changed or. Gathering should be held for fewer days.
- ❖ Ellie Caldwell suggested greater outreach to other Yearly Meetings might be useful. For example, Worship and Ministry might extend the inter-visitation program. This will be discussed on a later date.

Neil Andersen, Treasurer, handed out the *Treasurer's report*.

The meeting ended with closing worship at 5:20 p.m.

Secretary's Report

to EC 03/31/2010 to be held at YBM-2010, Life Enrichment Center

This report describes activities that have taken place since EC Meeting, 01/15/2010.

General office activities during winter/spring:

Office work was anything but routine following WIBM. Due to the earlier YBM-Gathering, layout and publishing work was seemingly telescoped into fewer days. Gathering Clerk Ellie did a phenomenal job getting her drafts to the office in a timely manner. Meetings responded with enthusiasm with State of the Meeting reports; only a few will be brought to YBM because they failed to arrive in a timely manner.

Due the misfortunes of failure of the database computer, the YBM-registration materials, DIA, and newsletter had to be snail-mailed at greater expense but to lesser number of people. Attenders did not receive this mailing, however clerks were encouraged to inform all of those listed in the Directory under the care of their meeting. To compensate, the office did send out emails to each individual listed, however, email addresses seemingly change quickly and/or mailboxes get full, so the office is uncertain how many actually were received.

The office continues to appreciate regular and ongoing communication with several clerks whose good humor lighten the load. Half Yearly Meeting [HYM] has been informed that the state is closing Wekiva Springs State Park for extensive remodeling for a year so that the camp will not be available for next Thanksgiving weekend.

Financial/Bookkeeping:

Routine financial bookkeeping is up to date. The secretary greatly appreciates the careful monthly review of QBP data by the treasurer and clerk of Finance.

There continues to be some debate regarding the perceived definition of Trustees' role in money management and accounting. The secretary wishes to use the dictionary definition of Trustees:

“an individual person or member of a board given control or powers of administration of property in trust with a legal obligation to administer it solely for the purposes specified.”

Note: This is not the definition used for Trustees of Quaker Schools or state universities, etc., where Trustees may be given great power in policy and decision making. Rather, SEYM and other yearly meetings define the Trustees' roles as caring for property and investments other than for the budgeted funds which fall under the care of a finance committee and treasurer.

The confusion undoubtedly arises from the following. Please bear with me—this is not complex but does need to be dealt with. Please see *Faith and Practice, Southeastern Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends* 1987, printed in 1989:

“The Incorporated Trustees of Southeastern Yearly Meeting Religious Society of Friends is incorporated under the laws of the state of Florida. Under its bylaws, title to and management of Yearly Meeting property, trusts, and funds are vested in six Trustees appointed by the Yearly Meeting for three-year terms. These assets are administered and expended according to the direction of the Yearly Meeting and under conditions prescribed by the donors.

The six Trustees are from diverse areas of Southeastern Yearly Meeting, two nominated each year for three-year terms. They select a Clerk, a Secretary, and a Treasurer of the Trustees. The group meets at least twice yearly, at Representative and Yearly Meeting times, or upon special call of the Clerk of

Southeastern Yearly Meeting.

Trustees are charged with managing Yearly Meeting trust/reserve funds, and make an annual accounting as to disposition of these funds. All papers relevant to investment and handling of the transactions are kept systematically at a known location, for purposes of Southeastern Yearly meeting information and annual audit. Trustees are responsible for investing trust/reserve funds and real property in keeping with the testimonies of Friends and the express wishes of donors.”

For historical perspective, it should be noted that SEYM submitted its initial application to the state of FL as the **Incorporated Trustees of Southeastern Yearly Meeting, Religious Society of Friends** in 1963. Article II stated, “*The nature, objects and purposes for which the corporation is to exist shall be as follows: To receive and maintain a fund or funds of real or personal property, or both....*”

In Nov. 1994, the articles of Amendment submitted by Nadine Mandolang [later Hoover] changed the name to: **Incorporated Trustees of Southeastern Yearly Meeting Religious Society of Friends, INC.**

Faith and Practice was reprinted in 1991, 1992, 1998, 2000, 2001, and 2003. During these interim reprints, with a desire to unify references and practice, ‘corrections’ were added to a reprinting without requesting yearly meeting approval. Several of these modifications occurred at the time a former clerk of the yearly meeting and the clerk of the Faith and Practice thought an oversight had occurred. It was requested that as secretary, I re-type and include the following lines [changes underlined]:

1st paragraph: *These assets are administered and expended according to the direction of the yearly meeting and under conditions prescribed by the donors.* [Lower case y and m].

2nd paragraph received greater modifications to reflect actual practice, second sentence was deleted with following substitution: “*A clerk is nominated each three years. The Yearly Meeting Treasurer is a member of the Trustees.... clerk of the yearly meeting or the clerk of representative meeting.* [Change in policy and scope for treasurer and for clerk of Interim Business Meeting.]

3rd paragraph: ... *at yearly meeting... [deleted comma] and make an annual accounting of these funds at yearly meeting sessions ... all papers relevant to investment and handling of the transactions are kept by the secretary. Copies of these papers are kept by the clerk of the committee.* [This modification was made following loss of the Trustees record-box; the current SEYM administrative secretary was requested to go through minutes and reconstruct investment records noting the intent of donors; change in policy and scope for secretary’s job—reminder: appropriate since secretary is paid staff.] “*The trustees are responsible for investing trust and reserve funds and are responsible for real property of the yearly meeting in keeping with the testimonies of Friends and the express wishes of donors. The trustees make a recommendation to the yearly meeting about accepting the conditions specified by donors of large gifts.*” [Inspired by an individual who wished to give VERY restricted gifts.]

Of further historical note is that by 1993-94, several individuals in the yearly meeting questioned the original founding members’ intent in **incorporating the Trustees** rather than **incorporating the Yearly Meeting**. New Articles and Bylaws were drawn up in May 2004 and submitted to the state thereby deleting reference to the Trustees and changing the name to **Southeastern Yearly Meeting, Religious Society of Friends, Inc.** There are those who fear that this now leaves SEYM’s assets vulnerable to lawsuits, whereas they were protected when solely owned by the Trustees functioning under the care of the yearly meeting. Several of the early members had implied that their reason for the original choice for incorporation was in keeping with Friends’ practice [see history of three Wilburite Orthodox Conservative Yearly Meetings in the US and British Friends Meetings in GB].

Whereas, this is seemingly a minor issue, the issue remains unresolved for the Trustees and the yearly meeting treasurer regarding the completeness of reports and who has which responsibility. The secretary and Trustees

would add a concern for liability that has yet to be adequately answered.

It should be noted that QuickBooks Pro was set up to be inclusive in record keeping for all funds so as to replace the accountant who was charging us \$3000 annually to create an Annual Report.

An additional problem in accounting arose when Bank of America could no longer accept and submit 941 quarterly reports. The IRS had been eager to receive direct payments at a surcharge which the secretary had declined on behalf of the yearly meeting. However, commencing last quarter in 2009, we were ordered to pay directly so I set up the required book work and online forms to submit the funds. A problem arose when the IRS and our accountant failed to inform me that our payments now had to be done monthly rather than quarterly. I trust that after several phone conversations, the fines the IRS would like to meter out, will be excused. Apparently our accountant also failed to use the new required form, as well. All of this is still pending. In the mean time, 941 taxes are now due by the 15th of the month following the writing of the check, but curiously, when I submit them at the time of writing salary, the IRS fails to attribute the payment to the current month. The catch-22 is that the payment also has to be made 2 weeks prior to the 15th. One must have a sense of humor regarding these conversations with the IRS!

Website:

The online registration for YBM-Gathering 2010 was up and running with only a few minor corrections required. We are working with the online-database data; the learning curve is steep, but I am confident that together, Chuck, Caroline and I will have sufficient details figured out to write SQL scripts.

Mike Flanery created a new google map for the home page of <<http://seymmeetings.org/>> that is beautiful and interactive—takes a couple minutes to load. Friends and visitors may download online directions to the meeting locations. The on-line data, however, is only as current as the data meetings provide to the office and to membership database for Directory, so this is a gentle reminder for Friends to regularly submit updates.

Publications (Print and Electronic):

The loss of Phoebe's hard drive proved to be problematic for the Andersens and the office. All information about YBM-Gathering and one newsletter was snail-mailed first class to members and meetings. Unfortunately attendees only received the information shared by their clerks. This is problematic if the attendee is not at meeting on the First Day when a clerk might mention YBM-Gathering.

The good news is that with colossal effort, the database was reentered by Phoebe in a timely manner for most Friends to receive the second newsletter this week before YBM.

Last year's Walton Lecture, *Struggle and Hope*, by Mary Ellen McNish has been printed and will be available for purchase at YBM for \$5.00. In addition, the Publications consultants approved a first publication whose sales will benefit the Gathering Youth Fund. Its title is *The Little Quaker Book of DeClutter* by Ellie Caldwell and will sell for \$6.00. Both FGC and Pendle Hill bookstores will carry these titles. Two Michener lectures remain in the loop for publication.

Respectfully submitted by Lyn Cope