

Williamsburg Friends Meeting
Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business
May 9, 2021

Queries on Diversity

Does your vision of a just society include people living their lives without fear of discrimination based on who they are, what they believe, and whom they love? Are we willing to be in communion with each other, open to our differences yet secure in the on Spirit that calls us all to be Friends? How do we work toward creating a community of different people, rather than being a community that just lets different people in? Do we take the time to see what we want to become as people and as a global community, and do we humbly acknowledge that we have some work to do?

Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business was convened by Clerk Thayer Cory at 11:10 with seven Friends in attendance. The Queries, Advices, and Voices were read.

Responses to the Queries:

A Friend had an experience while staffing the BLM lemonade stand. A smiling white man with his children had a demeanor and attributes that made this Friend expect an unsympathetic question from him. He identified himself as a police officer in a conservative, very white community. This Friend found herself making assumptions. The police officer said he is trying to make change from the inside and he sees the BLM stand as an ally in his mission. The message from this Friend is “Don’t make assumptions.”

Another Friend finds herself making up stories about people, filling in the blanks – and she realizes these are probably never the right stories.

Another Friend observed the distinction between a community of different people vs. a community that just lets different people in – this is central to the work of the camping program. “We let them in” is not the same as “All of us gather from wherever we started, to form a community.” It requires continual questioning of “what we have always done,” and it requires humility, and it’s important.

One Friend is finding meaning in the book *My Grandmother’s Hands*. The author, a trauma therapist, talks of the different traumas we all have. Trauma lives in our bodies, and our reactions and knee-jerk thoughts are grounded at a neurological level. It also affects how we learn, our medical lives, every facet. Ways of healing these traumas are different for everyone; we need to heal ourselves from the inside.

Another Friend learned recently that when a colleague discussed his retirement with the president of his university, the president’s reaction clearly indicated distrust of any white person. This Friend asks himself, what can we say to the president to persuade him that white people in the program have no desire to undermine or sabotage it or him.

Peace and Social Concerns Committee

We are fortunate to have wonderful conversations in our committee, and we are ready to continue having these conversations with the larger meeting as long as the meeting is also ready.

Elaine Luria, Congresswoman for many of us, was our guest for a second hour. She wanted to learn more about Quakers, and she answered a number of questions from us.

Friend Beth maintains her connection with Atlanta Friends Meeting, attending a reading group there. They are holding us in the Light for our election.

Ad Hoc Committee on Reopening

The committee is still awaiting more information from the UUs on their decisions, although we are not necessarily bound by their decisions. The committee is reviewing recommendations from the CDC. Many of the concerns about churches do not apply to us, as we do not usually sing, do not have Communion, etc. We would need to make sure we have PPE and sanitizing materials available. Also we would need signage so people entering the meeting would know how we keep safe. If all of us are fully vaccinated, arrangements could be different, but we would still need to have protocols in case of unvaccinated attenders. A possible feeling of exclusion from someone unwilling to be vaccinated has to be part of our thinking. Meeting outside with distancing may be a step on the way to meeting indoors eventually. Friends are comfortable with the idea of a Zoom screen allowing distant Friends to continue attending. Some Friends, though fully vaccinated, are also experiencing some ambivalence about re-entering public spaces. Friends express enthusiasm for continuing our Thursday night Zoom gatherings, and our committees are likely to continuing meeting by Zoom. We will consider the request of the AA group to return after we figure out our own arrangements. We are aware that some Friends will not return until we are meeting in person rather than by Zoom.

Ministry and Counsel

The committee continues to provide support for Friends recovering from medical issues and other issues.

Norfolk Friends

Harriet brought a number of Norfolk Friends documents to be kept with our records in our Meetinghouse. She is moving to Charlottesville. She and her husband Ralph started Norfolk Friends in 1999 in their home, under our care. After Ralph died in 2007, Harriet faithfully carried on with the meeting, in several locations. Harriet's departure effectively spells the end of Norfolk Friends Meeting. Thayer will draft a Minute of Appreciation for Harriet for approval next month, and also will write to Wayne to let BYM know that we are laying down Norfolk Worship Group. The meeting ended with a period of silent worship.

Elizabeth Krome, substitute Recording Clerk