

ATLANTA FRIENDS MEETING NEWSLETTER

March 2015

Atlanta Friends Meeting

State of the Meeting Report 2014

Submitted by Nan O'Connor, Clerk

This year we sought a deepening of our spiritual life together. Our meetings for worship are opportunities to live together in the spirit and to receive vocal ministry. Periods of holding in the Light continue to provide a rich opportunity to hear and hold the many challenges facing members and those to whom we are connected in love.

In 2014, our meeting greeted eight new babies, including a set of triplets. We took two marriages under our care. We mourned the passing of one member and held three memorial services. We welcomed five new, transferring or sojourning members. Our number of attendees averaged from 100-120 each week.

We are encouraged that Friends are finding occasions during the week to gather in small groups. There are two active Spiritual Nurture Groups, including a Circle of Trust, a Bible Discussion group, two mid-week worship groups, a Young Adult Friends group, a monthly dinner for newcomers and the Adult First Day class. These small groups help us to “know each other in that which is eternal” and provide connections that deepen our corporate worship. In the Adult First Day class members and attenders are provided an hour to share their spiritual journeys and challenges in depth. We find preparing, delivering and receiving these accounts to be rich and intimate experiences. In second month Quaker healer John Calvi led a retreat around the theme of “A Day of Rest and Renewal.” Clearness committees continue to flourish in our community and we provide education on their use and spiritual nature. AFM is now in its third year of supporting Quaker Voluntary Service Atlanta and there are currently five QVS Volunteers serving in Atlanta.

We are a large meeting and a theologically diverse one. In the last year, we explored through a forum the way different Friends root their spiritual story. We are challenged and quickened by these exchanges. Learning more from one another provides



Atlanta Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)
All are welcome

Meeting for Worship
Each First Day (Sunday)
10:00 – 11:00 a.m.
701 W. Howard Ave.
Decatur, GA 30030

QUERY

Do you believe that faithfulness and sincerity in speaking, even very briefly, may open the way to fuller ministry from others? When prompted to speak, do you wait patiently to know that the leading and the time are right, praying that your ministry may arise from deep experience? Are you aware of speaking predictably or too often, and of making additions towards the end of a meeting when it was well left before?

- Adapted from *Advices and Queries, Quaker Faith and Practice, Britain Yearly Meeting*

opportunities to move from abstract head knowledge to the sure heart knowledge that unifies and strengthens us.

We experienced great richness in the last year as leading for new ministries bubbled up in our community. We continue to experiment with processes and practices to support and recognize these ministries more formally so that they may deepen in faithfulness. A number of friends meet regularly with anchoring committees to support their ministries. In the past year we recognized and supported Friends leadings to ministries of music, photography, and Quaker interfaith chaplaincy. We continue to encourage Friends to listen carefully for prompting to take up ministries and to lay them down as the Spirit leads.

We are blessed by the many children in our meeting. We continue to seek ways for our community to support children and their parents. There is sometimes a separation felt between adults and children, and we seek ways to actively cherish each member of the community. In 11th month we held our second semi-programmed worship with attention to Welcoming Children. Members of meeting signed prepared certificates for 17 individual children witnessing our promises to cherish and nurture the children of our meeting.

The Care & Counsel Committee began the year with a half-day retreat where they set priorities for the year. As a result, several practices are in place to support those priorities. C&C continues to have a Point Person for each month to receive requests for assistance from the Meeting community. The volunteer sign up sheet was redesigned to encourage more Friends to serve in the life of the Meeting. The visitor sign-in was redesigned to make it easier to provide follow up information. To allow for a wider participation of Holding in the Light the names of those Held in the Light in Meeting for Worship may be included in the newsletter, providing the inclusion is completely voluntary and the privacy of the person involved is protected. A wheelchair was donated to assist attenders who might have difficulty getting from the parking lot to the meetinghouse. A subcommittee of Care and Counsel presented information throughout the year in forums under the theme Conscious Aging/Mindful Dying. C&C, with Ministry & Worship committee helped to arrange three memorial services.

The Administration Committee, made up of a dedicated group of Friends representing other committees, continued to focus on Meetinghouse building & grounds maintenance and repair. The major playground renovation project was finally completed, after unexpected delays. The building sprinkler system repairs were a continuing source of frustration, but essential repairs were made. A new project, renovation and maintenance of the library, was begun with the help of members of the Meeting. Administration strives to act with the intention that the day-to-day maintenance of our space is a Spiritual journey. We work to develop procedures for our facilities and our community that will not limit the Spirit with cold, closed policies. When the committee feels ready to move forward with projects, we seek patience – both within the committee and from members of the Meeting – so that all voices can be heard and considered. In all of our work, we hope our energy helps make a better life for the Atlanta Friends Meeting.

AFM continues to be challenged to find enough Friends who feel led to serve in the many roles we have created to meet the needs of the Meeting. We added a part-time bookkeeper to our staff due to the increasing demands of that position. Nominating Committee is trying to meet on a regular basis and make the inquiries needed, in between our meetings. We are also updating the spreadsheet that lists all positions and terms of those serving.

Living our testimony of equality is an important spiritual concern that compels us to address racism in ourselves, our communities, and in society, especially in the criminal justice system. Quakers for Racial Equality (QRE) has been the main group doing anti-racism work in AFM, but many individuals in Meeting

also share this leading. QRA has offered a weekly literature table, a monthly Listening Ear for concerns about racism, queries related to personal racism, and workshops on “Cracking the Codes: The System of Racial Inequity.” At Southern Appalachian Yearly Meeting and Association (SAYMA) and at AFM, QRE members showed film segments of “Cracking the Codes” and facilitated small group sharing about bias, privilege, and institutional racism. We continue our efforts to make AFM a more welcoming spiritual home for all and to track the racial diversity of attendance at Meeting for Worship. In addition, two QRA members took facilitator training and participated in the YWCA, “It’s Time to Talk about Race” circle dialogs.

Atlanta Friends Meeting

AFM participants have also been engaged in addressing racism in our neighborhoods, in Decatur, and the wider Atlanta area by supporting AFM members affected by an incident of Klan leafleting, by working with the Decatur Community Coalition to end racial profiling in Decatur, and by joining four other Decatur congregations in the Oakhurst March to protest racial profiling and police violence everywhere. AFM folks also participated in other vigils and marches in Atlanta to affirm that “Black Lives Matter”. QRE and the Prison Reform Group have supported workshops on the Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP), an approach that has been successfully used with both prisoners and youth. Five Atlanta Friends met the requirements to be apprentice AVP trainers. QRE members have also been very active with the End New Jim Crow Action Group, a racially and religiously diverse group that focuses on action in education, legislation, and re-entry. Listening to the leadership of formerly incarcerated people and recognizing how structural racism perpetuates inequality have been important lessons from this work. As we strive for racial equality in our personal lives, communities, and society, we appreciate the witness of Friends, both here and physically distant, who challenge us to follow our spiritual leadings to step up for racial justice.

The work of the religious education committee is inspired and guided by our First Day schoolteachers, doorkeepers, and the children we teach. From this deep well of the Spirit we approach this year's Old Testament curriculum. We find that we are called to teach the scripture, as Barclay says, “by the inward testimony of the spirit,” knowing that we follow the Spirit as our guide to all Truth. In our work we strive to teach children how to listen for God's voice, guiding our youngest members to the inward teacher with thoughtful wondering through our Godly Play curriculum. We endeavor to honor each child's voice and empower young people to know that divine inspiration is available to us all, thereby allowing us, at any age, to access the deeper meaning in scripture by finding our inward guide. Thus springs our 2014-2015 First Day School theme--*Making meaning of scripture: finding our inward teacher*.

This year we adjusted our classrooms from six, including the nursery to five. We knew going into the year that we would not have enough lower elementary children to fill out a full class so we adjusted our classrooms to reflect our current age distribution. On any given First Day we can expect 5-8 lower grades children (3 years to 1st grade), 4-7 middle grades children (2nd to 4th grades), 4-6 upper grades children (5th -7th grades), and 15-20 high school children (8th-12th grade). We have 14 Friends who teach First Day School on a rotating basis and 6-8 Friends who volunteer as doorkeepers weekly.

It is very important to note something that is vital to the strength of our community, but rarely mentioned. That is the countless acts of kindness and support between Friends that occur every day, but remain hidden from the larger view. Simply put, we are there for each other.

Atlanta Friends Meeting aspires to be a welcoming spiritual home for all and there is a deep desire to faithfully discern a spirit-led path toward making this an ever-increasing reality. We have made progress along this path as evidenced by our active, engaged and supportive community.

White Privilege Conference March 11-14

The White Privilege Conference (WPC), a 3-day national, multiracial conference examining privilege, racism, and oppression, will be held in Louisville, Kentucky, March 11-14, 2015. Please contact Susan Firestone at susanfires@gmail.com if you are interested in attending or need more information.

SAYMA 2015 Earthcare Retreat March 13-15

Peace and Social Concerns Alert from Bob Welsh – The SAYMA 2015 Earthcare Retreat at West Knoxville Meeting begins at 7 pm on Friday 3/13 and ends after First Day worship. The cost is \$20. For further information, contact Kendall Ivie at kendallivie@gmail.com or [865 406 4843](tel:8654064843).

Fund for Quaker Students at Friends School of Atlanta, Submitted by Karen Morris

I retired as Elementary Head at the Friends School of Atlanta (FSA) in June, yet my heart is still very much connected to the school and the opportunities it offers to students. This year FSA is pleased to have six Quaker students enrolled, and more have applied for next year. It so enriches our community to have Quaker students, parents, and teachers be part of the school and grow into goodness together in our diverse community.

Many years ago as we were thinking about starting a Friends School, Atlanta Friends were instrumental in giving us a vision. Spirit-led advice supporting the importance of forming an inclusive diverse community in our new school, spanning the spectrum of socio-economic, religious, racial, ethnic, and family structures was lifted up as a model of a Friends School. The members of the staff and Board of Trustees continue to hold up that vision. Do you know that FSA has a special fund to provide Quaker students additional financial support than may be awarded through the school's regular financial aid process? We seek donations at any time, and we also have one fundraiser, the Pancake Brunch. I hope that you will feel led to contribute to the *Quaker Education Fund* to help make it possible for more children of our Meeting to attend FSA. Checks may be mailed to the school, 862 Columbia Drive, Decatur, GA 30030 (memo line "Quaker Education Fund.")

Quaker Voluntary Service-Atlanta Update by Charlotte Cloyd

When we enter into unfamiliar situations, we rely on the phrase "there's a learning curve." We think that once we get comfortable somewhere and we learn the ins and outs that we'll be able to succeed and handle anything that comes our way. Well, so far, whether at the QVS Atlanta house or at my site placement, Atlanta Habitat for Humanity, I have been unable to find a complete rhythm. And for that I am grateful. Each time I get the feeling that the pace has settled down, something new comes hurtling around the corner to smack me in the face.



At meeting for worship at Atlanta Friends Meeting earlier this month, I was able to successfully center down for most of worship, something usually unattainable for me. And this image of a timeline came into my mind, one that grew and shrank. Change does not mean that we have to suffer, but that we can settle into that uncomfortable space and face that which challenges us. Having the opportunity to face challenges and grapple with the changes helps develop some part of you that accepts change and challenge as a necessary and unavoidable aspect of life.

Before I get too wrapped up in existential thoughts about what life means, I would like to take this opportunity to say that being a member of Quaker Voluntary Service in Atlanta and working at Atlanta Habitat for Humanity continually proves to be one of the most enriching experiences I have had. My initial intention in applying to do QVS in Atlanta was to re-engage with the city in which I grew up. Atlanta is my hometown, and having the opportunity to serve fellow Atlantans every day is truly a gift. Despite the difficulty finding rhythm either at work or at home, the joy of meeting Atlanta from a new perspective continues to push me to find the rhythm and keep up with the pace.

Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business – February 15, 2015

Recorded pending approval

Attendance: Mike Aland, Don Bender, Muireann Brennan, Steve Collins, Jennifer Dickie, Mary Ann Downey, Julia Ewen, Sally Ferguson, Susan Firestone, Julia Foster, Larry Foster, Clive Gordon, Carol Gray, Gabrielle Hammons, Dwight Harriman, Roland Heath, Bill Holland, Chris Kohler, Alison Mawle, Caroline Morris, Ronald Nuse, Erica Schoon, Erin Schroder, Barbara Seal, Bert Skellie, Karen Skellie, Elizabeth Tolmach, Jim Tolmach, Myrna Trapp, Perry Treadwell, Sarah Walton, Ashley Wilcox, Nan O'Connor (Clerk), Elizabeth Lamb (Recording Clerk) (34 Friends).

Query: Bill Holland presented the query: “When you worship with others rather than alone, do you join in expectant waiting so that you may discover a deeper sense of God’s presence? Do you seek a gathered stillness in our meetings for worship so that all may feel the power of God’s love drawing us together and leading us?”

Discernment Items

Ministry and Worship Committee: On behalf of the Ministry and Worship Committee Bill Holland brought forward Clive Gordon for membership in Atlanta Friends Meeting.

- **Minute 02-15-2015-01:** *On the recommendation of the Ministry and Worship Committee, Atlanta Friends Meeting approves Clive Gordon as a member of the Atlanta Friends Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends. We welcome Clive to our fellowship and look forward to our continued growth together in spirit.*

Bill Holland further reported that Quaker Voluntary Service has asked to be included as one of the Wider Quaker Organizations whose ministry and work is supported by Southern Appalachian Yearly Meeting and Association. QVS has written directly to SAYMA, but Atlanta Friends Meeting will be asked to endorse and “sponsor” that request. We wish to highlight now how we have watched the growth of the organization and how it is fostering opportunities for Quaker service by found adults.

- **Minute 02-15-2015-02:** *Atlanta Friends Meeting has witnessed the growth of Quaker Voluntary Service from a leading that emerged among a few young adult Friends to a national movement. Quaker Voluntary Service provides young adults the opportunity for a year of Quaker service, spiritual deepening and community living. There are programs now in Atlanta, Philadelphia and Portland, Oregon working closely with local Quaker meetings. Another program begins in Boston later this year. In our experience, young adults are growing in spirit and commitment, and enriching the Society of Friends. We are confident this new energy will flow back into the Society of Friends and into the world. Atlanta Friends Meeting endorses and supports QVS. Members of meeting are actively involved in practical and spiritual guidance of the program, including financial support, mentoring the local Atlanta volunteers and service on the national board. We share our experience with Southern Appalachian Yearly Meeting and now ask for our yearly meeting to recognize and support QVS financially at a level similar to other wider Quaker organizations.*

State of the Meeting Report: The Clerk of the Meeting presented the final draft of the State of the Meeting Report for approval. She then spoke of the unwritten kindnesses and loving acts that are so much a part of the Meeting. It was asked that a final paragraph be added to the report incorporating that as part of the life of the Meeting. The Report is being published apart from the Minutes and is incorporated herein.

- **Minute 02-15-2015-03:** *Atlanta Friends Meeting approves the State of the Meeting Report with the addendum and asks that it be submitted to SAYMA.*

Reports

Ministry and Worship Committee: On behalf of the Ministry and Worship Committee Bill Holland reported that a subcommittee of Ministry and Worship has been formed to act as a support committee for the local QVS. All Friends who are interested in offering their service in this way are asked to contact Ministry and Worship.

Bill Holland then reported that Cade Curtis and Katie Brown have asked to be married under the care of the AFM. A clearness committee has met with the couple and found them clear. Ministry and Worship has united with this discernment and will recommend in Third Month that the Meeting take this marriage under our care. Working with the clearness committee, Cade and Katie have united in the following vows: "In the presence of God and these our friends I take thee to be my spouse, promising with Divine assistance to be unto thee a loving and faithful partner so long as we both shall live."

Ministry and Worship have received Certificates of Release for two Friends wishing to transfer their membership to Atlanta Friends Meeting. These Friends are Rebecca Sullivan, from Friendship Monthly Meeting in Greensboro, N.C. and Cathy Amani, from Pima Monthly Meeting in Tucson, AZ. Following our practice, a welcoming committee will meet with these Friends and, if all is in right order, we will bring the names for acceptance at Third Month's meeting.

There are scholarships available for those wishing to attend SAYMA. Please let Ministry and Worship know if you are interested.

Administration Committee: Steve Collins reported that the committee is comprised of the Assistant Clerk of Meeting, the staff and the Personnel Liaison, clerks or representations of the Meetinghouse Committee, the Landscape Committee, the Religious Education Committee, the Finance Committee and the Young Friends Support Committee and two at-large members appointed by the Meeting. The meetings, held the second Tuesday of every other month, are open to any who wish to attend. He further reported that the Friend in Residence is entering her third year in service and that the Administration Committee is considering extending her term to a fourth year. This is in part due to the length of time and the difficulty it takes to fill the position and in part because they are pleased with the service Erica Schoon has provided, which includes working on a "how to" guideline for future Friends in Residence.

Minutes of January 2015:

- **Minute 02-15-2015-04:** *The Minutes of the January 2015 Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business were approved with the correction of one typographical error.*

Meeting closed with Silent Worship.

Respectfully submitted by: Elizabeth Lamb, Recording Clerk; and Mary Ann Downing, Acting Clerk.



Please Hold in The Light:

Julia Ewen

Muireann Brennan's mother,
Mrs. Dimphne Brennan

*Those who wish to have
requests for Holding included
in this monthly newsletter
may give the names to any
member of Care & Counsel.*



Atlanta Friends Meeting Contacts

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Calendar for Third Month (March) 2015

Area Meetings for Worship

Every First Day (Sunday)	10:00 a.m. – Meetinghouse, with a smaller group in the Library.
Every Third First Day	12:30 p.m. – Carrollton Friends Worship Group. St. Andrew's UMC Youth Center, 1106 Maple St.; contact Jean Hudson, j hudson3011@yahoo.com or 678-378-3368; carrolltonfriends.org .
Every Second First Day	10:30 a.m. – Macon Friends Worship Group. Contact Diana Day, 478-227-8892; maconquakers.org
Every Fifth Day (Thursday)	12:10 p.m. – East Lake Commons, Decatur. Contact Bert Skellie at bertskellie@gmail.com or 404-680-4799.
Sixth Day (Friday)	(Mid-August through May), 9:00 a.m. – Friends School of Atlanta. Community Meeting Room, 862 Columbia Dr., Decatur, 404-373-8746.
<i>Currently on hiatus</i>	Canton Friends Worship Group. Contact Roy Taylor at 770-720-4669 or wrdpeas@mindspring.com .

Weekly Events at the Meetinghouse

Every First Day (Sunday)	9:00 a.m. Adult Religious Education, Library 9:30 a.m. Singing, Classroom A/B 10:00 a.m. Meeting for Worship
Every Second-Fifth Day (Monday-Thursday)	8:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. Smart Toddlers, Nursery playground
Every Third Day (Tuesday)	7:00 p.m. Silent Meditation, Library
Every Fourth Day (Wednesday)	7:00 p.m. Mid-Week Worship, Library
Every Fifth Day (Thursday)	7:30 p.m. Bible Study, Library

ATLANTA FRIENDS MEETING
701 W. Howard Ave.
Decatur, GA 30030-2902

ATLANTA FRIENDS MEETING
Office: MWF 9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.; 404-377-2474
Web: atlanta.quaker.org atlantaquakers@gmail.com
Clerk: Nan O'Connor, afmclerk1@gmail.com
Treasurer: Lynn Leuszler, afmtreasurer1@gmail.com

If you would like to have a permanent nametag made, leave a request in one of the baskets on the front table. Indicate whether you prefer one that hangs around the neck or that pins. When Carol Gray has made one for you, it will be placed in the black file box on the greeting table.

If you would like to be included in the AFM database and receive the Newsletter by mail and/or appear in future AFM Directories, please send your name and contact information to Emily Lawson at elawson7@gmail.com or 404-200-8479. Please indicate if you want to be in the directory, receive the newsletter by mail, or both.

Contributions to the Atlanta Friends Meeting may be placed in the slot marked "Contributions" in the greeting area of the Meetinghouse or mailed to the Treasurer at the above address. Thank you!

This newsletter is a publication of the Atlanta Friends Meeting. Views expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Meeting.

Readers are encouraged to submit letters, articles, notices and anything else of interest to Friends. Items should be sent directly to atlquaquerltr@gmail.com in plain text (Word, not PDF). Pictures should be in .jpg format. Submissions may be edited for length and format.

THE DEADLINE FOR MONTHLY NEWSLETTER SUBMISSIONS IS THE 20TH DAY OF EACH PRECEDING MONTH.

To receive the Newsletter via e-mail, send a blank e-mail to afmnewsletter-subscribe@yahoogroups.com from the address where you want to receive the newsletter. You will receive a note back from Yahoo asking you to confirm your subscription; hit reply and you will be added to the list at no charge. To receive general announcements and to participate in discussion, follow the same instructions, but address the note to afmdiscussion-subscribe@yahoogroups.com. To receive announcements relating directly to the life of the meeting, send the same note to afmannouncements-subscribe@yahoogroups.com.