NCFF Business Session

4 March 2023

9:15 am – 11:45 am

Friends gathered in centering worship at First Friends Meeting (about 30) and on Zoom (3).

Welcome

Clerk Richard Wilcox welcomed all Friends and noted the importance of the fellowship time prior to the start of the business session. He encouraged us to be mindful of praises and concerns. One concern was for the wife of Miami Meeting’s pastor who recently had brain surgery.

Worship

Lia Scholl, pastor of First Friends, offered an additional welcome and a message focused on how things do not always go as planned. She referenced Joshua 1:9: “. . . Be strong and of good courage be not frightened or dismayed; for the Lord God is with you wherever you go.” When things do not go as planned, Lia said, it is time to be led by the Spirit. Slow down and listen, look to the community and trust. Or as Brene Brown puts it, “Embrace the suck.” Something better may come.

Open worship followed.

Meeting Roll Call

Representatives were present from the following Meetings: Ararat, Deep River, First Friends, Forsyth, Jamestown, Miami (on Zoom), Mt. Airy, New Garden, Somerton, Springfield, Winston-Salem; and Dottie Hobbs as an individual member from Spring Meeting.

Minutes

The minutes of 12 November, 2022 (see <https://www.ncfriends.org/minutes-of-fall-business-meeting-12-november-2022/>) were approved with one correction.

Strategic Planning Committee Report

Jack Ciancio reported. The Strategic Planning Committee was charged with looking at the relationship of NCFF with North Carolina Yearly Meeting, Inc. (NCYM, Inc.), as NCFF had agreed to assess it 5 years from its beginning, which was 2017. There would be an opportunity at that point to separate into an independent Yearly Meeting if NCFF so desired. (See <https://www.ncfriends.org/strategic-planning-committee-report-spring-2023-business-meeting/>)

**After a short discussion of the options, Friends decided that since the arrangement was working well there was not a reason to change it.** Several points were made: 1) The current relationship allows our fellowship to interact positively with Friends Church of North Carolina in certain shared programs and projects (such as Friends Disaster Service and Friends Emergency Material Aids Program); small meetings are enabled to contribute together for greater impact on missions and projects; 3) a consequence of splits is that financial support drops dramatically**. It was approved that this decision be revisited again in 5 years.**

The suggestion was made that member Meetings make a bigger effort to communicate with each other about our activities and to hopefully bring more Meetings into the fold. Richard reminded us that we have a paid webmaster, Mike Shaw, who can help us promote these activities. **An efficient system of sharing information with Mike will be put in place and communicated to member Meetings.**

Job Descriptions Report

Richard called attention to this report (see <https://www.ncfriends.org/job-descriptions-report-spring-2023-business-meeting/>), which details the expectations for each of the positions held in NCFF, and expressed great appreciation to Cassandra Israel for gathering the information and writing the report.

Anti-Racism Working Group Report

Margaret Rowlett reported (see <https://www.ncfriends.org/anti-racism-working-group-report-spring-2023-business-meeting/>). She noted that a draft Anti-Racism minute had been sent to member Meetings and the group needs more feedback before finalizing it. It will be presented again later for approval.

The group, which meets on Zoom, will have meetings on March 30 and April 27. The book to be discussed is entitled *To Drink from the Well: the Struggle for Racial Equality at the Nation’s Oldest Public University* by Geeta Kapur. The author, a civil rights and criminal defense lawyer, who was once a student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, examines how our state denied access to students of color there. 20 copies of the book were ordered to be distributed today. **Approval was given for $400 from undesignated funds to be used to pay for the books.**

Income & Expense Report

Richard invited us to look over this report (see <https://www.ncfriends.org/income-expense-report-spring-2023-business-meeting/>). The Finance Committee, which has not met recently, will gather before the August meeting.

Grant Request from Springfield Meeting

Josh Brown, pastor of Springfield Meeting, presented a request for Church Extension funds to replace a furnace for the historic Allen Jay House (see <https://www.ncfriends.org/grant-request-for-allen-jay-house-furnace-spring-2023-business-meeting/>). Springfield inherited the care of this house, which was built for a school teacher, perhaps was a stop on the Underground Railroad and became the home of Allen Jay. Currently it serves as the headquarters for FEMAP (Friends Emergency Material Aids Program), which distributes hygiene kits to migrant workers, prisoners, and victims of disasters. The old and dying furnace currently runs on oil and they would like to replace it with a gas one. The estimated cost is $6000-7000. Suggestions were made to replace it with an electric one – to move away from fossil fuels, using some federal funding, and to combine a heating and air-conditioning system for a better overall price longterm. Josh indicated that these were cost prohibitive at this time. Church Extension funds available are $4000, but there is $18,000 in the undesignated line. **It was approved to fully fund the furnace immediately, but since FCNC also participates in FEMAP, that group be asked to contribute half of the cost. Richard agreed to seek this contribution from FCNC.**

Theatrical Production in progress

Max Carter reported that playwright Frank Levering is currently doing research in the Guilford College Quaker Archives in preparation for writing a play about the visit of George Fox and William Edmundson to Hertford, NC in 1672. Theatre students at Guilford will perform the play at a later time. Frank is in need of some funding. Brent McKinney, from FCNC, has been approached, as has the Community Foundation here in Greensboro. **Approval for $1000 toward this project was granted, and Max will keep us informed about when to expect the play.**

Reminder from NCYM, Inc. Cemetery Committee

Richard reminded us that the Cemetery Committee is requesting that Meetings, or NCFF adopt old, neglected cemeteries that are listed in their report (see <https://www.ncfriends.org/ncym-inc-cemeteries-report-2022/>). **If interested, please respond to the Cemetery Committee by June 30, 2023.**

FUM Triennials

The FUM Triennials this year will be in Kenya, and NCFF is invited to designate representatives. Three Friends are interested in attending: Alicia Sharp, Dottie Hobbs and Bill Eagles. **These three were approved to represent us and each will be given $2000 in travel funding.**

Faith & Practice Committee Update

Richard expressed gratitude for the opportunity he and the other Faith & Practice Committee members (Bill Davis and Cassandra Israel) had to travel to Miami and meet with our Meeting there. This congregation really values our fellowship and sent greetings to us through the committee.

Bill Davis reported that there are three Meetings left to visit: Bethel, Springfield and Statesville. In order to ensure that the project is completed in a reasonable time, the committee has set a deadline of June 30, 2023 for these meetings. Stage two of the process will be to distribute a set of queries that each Meeting should answer in writing.

It was noted that Statesville Meeting has been inactive recently. **Max Carter offered to contact someone there to see how they are feeling about our fellowship.**

Askings Report

All Meetings have contributed 100 % of their askings except for Statesville (see <https://www.ncfriends.org/askings-report-spring-2023-business-meeting/>). A question arose as to how more Friends could reach out to this meeting. The suggestion was made that if they are still having a Meeting for Worship, Friends might go and visit then. Once Dorothy Mason visited there for Piedmont Friends Fellowship and found Statesville Friends to be very appreciative.

Retired Pastor Assistance Report

In followup to NCFF’s approval to assist a retired pastor with a much needed bathroom upgrade, a report was provided (see <https://www.ncfriends.org/retired-pastor-assistance-report-spring-business-meeting-4-march-2023/>). In total, $13,000 was spent, $1000 of which came from FCNC. **$2121 remains, and there was a recommendation made to purchase hearing aids with this money for the pastor. This was approved.**

Upcoming NCFF Gatherings

The Annual Meeting (focus on fellowship rather than business) is scheduled for August 19 at Quaker Lake. Volunteers for planning guest speaker(s) and food were sought, and two were found: Cassandra Israel and Marcie Newell. One Friend noted that the USFW Meeting is the same day (not at Quaker Lake). **Richard will check available dates with Quaker Lake and inform the membership of the options.**

The Fall gathering on November 18 will be at Somerton Meeting.

Announcements

* Kathy Adams had brochures from Friends Homes regarding a grant program to waive the entrance fee (which has increased) for those with financial need.
* Wallace Sills advised Friends that the AFSC representative tentatively approved at the last meeting has declined to serve, and others approached since have also declined. One is still needed. Please tell Wallace if interested. **There was a request for Richard to include in his message about the August gathering a list of positions needing to be filled.**
* Josh Brown invited Friends to attend the 250th Birthday Celebration of Springfield Meeting on May 7, 2023. Tom Hamm of Earlham College will speak in the 11:00am worship service that day. The evening before there will be a special concert, featuring musicians who are current or former members of the Meeting, such as Warren Jones and Joseph Terrell. It will be at 6:30pm.
* Max Carter announced that there is still space in the *Living Letters Service Learning Trip* to Palestine and Israel, which he and his wife Jane lead annually. It will be from June 6-24, 2023.
* Lia Scholl encouraged Friends to make use of Godly Play and Faith & Play curriculum.

The meeting ended with a moment of silence.

Respectfully submitted,

Kate Hood Seel, Recording Clerk