

FRIENDLY CONNECTIONS



State College Friends Meeting
October 2015
Newsletter



*State College Friends Meeting
611 East Prospect Ave.
State College, PA 16801
Phone (814) 237-7051*

A Note from the Editor

Page | 2 October begins, as always, in the uneasy transition between summer green and autumn gold.

The colors are late this year, nudging rather than surging. The warm late-summer days lingered well into late September and confused us. Sweaters or shorts? Windows open or closed?

By the time this newsletter comes to your inbox, we will certainly be in “real” autumn, leaves will have begun to accumulate on sidewalks and lawns, and the mountains will be glowing softly in their palette of reds and yellows.

Stay well and warm and have a safe Halloween.

I will be leaving the post of Editor after putting out the January issue, so please consider joining the Newsletter team as a co-editor or associate editor or any kind of editor at all!

As always, contributions are welcomed for the Newsletter. Please send items to me at SCFMnewsletter@gmail.com

Your editor, *Deryn Verity*

Announcements

Meeting for Worship with concern for Business will be held First Day (Sunday) at 9am on October 4, 2015. An informal potluck lunch will follow.

Refreshments in October are overseen by the Finance Committee.

Early notice: On Saturday, Nov. 7th, 5 pm, we are hosting the first State College Friends Meeting Fall Harvest Celebration, 88 Years of Friends in our Community.

This will be our first fundraising dinner for our Meeting as well as a Celebration to honor our remarkable history and our place in the State College community.

We are inviting everyone we can who has participated in the life of State College Friends Meeting. Don't miss it! Put it on your calendar! It will be a lot of fun.

If you want to volunteer to help with this joyous occasion, please contact: Kerry Wiessmann, <mailto:kgw11@scasd.org> kgw11@scasd.org or 814-571-8909

or

Dorothy Habecker, <mailto:dorothyhab@gmail.com> dorothyhab@gmail.com or 814-574-0606

Baltimore Yearly Meeting

Page | 4 *The Peace Testimony*

Do you endeavor to live "in virtue of that life and power which takes away the occasion of all wars"? Do you work to make your peace testimony a reality in your life and in your world? Do you weigh your day-to-day activities for their effect on peace-keeping, conflict resolution and the elimination of violence? Are you working toward eliminating aggression at all levels, from the personal to the international?

QUERIES
QUERIES

Philadelphia Yearly Meeting

Stewardship of the Environment

Is the Meeting concerned that human interaction with nature be responsible, guided by a reverence for life and a sense of the splendor of God's continuing creation?

Are the decisions of the Meeting and its committees relating to the uses of property, goods, services, and energy made with sensitivity

Page | 5 toward the environmental impact of those choices?

How does our Meeting learn about environmental concerns and then act in the community on its concerns?

How am I helping to develop a social, economic, and political system which will nurture an environment which sustains and enriches life for all?

Am I aware of the place of water, air, and soil in my life? Do I consider with care the necessity of purchasing substances hazardous to the environment? Do I act as a faithful steward of the environment in the use and disposal of such hazardous substances?

Do I choose with care the use of technology and devices that truly simplify and add quality to my life without adding an undue burden to essential resources?

THINKING ABOUT RACE

Page | 6 THINKING ABOUT RACE (October 2015) – Serena Williams

I asked how winning felt for her. I was imagining winning as a free space, one where the unconscious racist shenanigans of umpires, or the narratives about her body, her “unnatural” power, her perceived crassness no longer mattered. Unless racism destroyed the moment of winning so completely, as it did at Indian Wells, I thought it had to be the rare space free of all the stresses of black life. But Serena made it clear that she doesn’t desire to dissociate from her history and her culture. She understands that even when she’s focused only on winning, she is still representing. “I play for me,” Serena told me, “but I also play and represent something much greater than me. I embrace that. I love that. I want that. So ultimately, when I am out there on the court, I am playing for me.”

....

Because just as important to me as her victories is her willingness to be an emotionally complete person while also being black. She wins, yes, but she also loses it. She jokes around, gets angry, is frustrated or joyous, and on and on. She is fearlessly on the side of Serena, in a culture that that has responded to living while black with death.

From **The New York Times Magazine**, August 25, 2015, “The Meaning of Serena Williams: On tennis and black excellence,” by Claudia Rankine.

The *Baltimore-Area Working Group on Racism* usually meets 7 – 9 pm on the 2nd Sunday of the month in the Stony Run dining room. We consider issues around racial justice, share personal experiences, and plan and host special events. All are welcome to attend.

Memorial Minute for Eunice Merriss

Page | 7 Eunice Merriss was born on February 4, 1913 in Waterbury, CT, the oldest child of Eric Wilson Benedict and Edith Mason Benedict. Eunice was a graduate of the Bunker Hill School and the Classical High School in Waterbury, CT, and she received her degree in Library Science from Simmons College in Boston. For six years she worked as a junior high school librarian in Meriden, CT, before transferring to the Greenwich Public Library in Greenwich, CT.

While working in Greenwich, she met and, on July 7, 1952, married William Ellery Merriss, a Master Teacher in English and Latin at Greenwich Country Day School. William was a widower, so Eunice took on being a wife and a mother to William's young children, Richard and Dilys, while she continued working. Soon after their wedding, William suggested they visit the Quaker Meeting in Stamford, CT . Their visit turned into convincement, and they soon became members of Stamford Monthly Meeting.

Once the children were grown and out of college, she and William were able to travel. They visited England, Scotland, France, Portugal, and Costa Rica, often for month-long stays. When they retired they moved to a home they had purchased on Cape Cod. After ten years there, they decided to move to Foxdale Village, a Quaker CCRC in State College, PA. Unfortunately, William became ill and passed in 1990, before they were able to make the move. In 1992, Eunice moved into Foxdale Village and transferred her membership from the Stamford Monthly Meeting to State College Monthly Meeting.

She attended Meeting regularly for a while, but the focus of her volunteering was at Foxdale, as a member of the Rhodes Readers group, and as Correspondence Secretary for the Foxdale Residents' Association.

Eunice was always pleasant, but never drew attention to herself. As her biographer, Myles Bane wrote, “ It was once said that, ‘To be truly great, one must stand with people, not above them.’ Eunice fits this description.” Eunice Benedict Merriss passed peacefully at the age of 102 on Sunday, 6/26/15 at Foxdale Village, in State College, PA, her home for the last 23 years. Eunice was predeceased by her brother, Douglas, and is survived by son Richard Merriss and daughter Dilys Staaterman, seven grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.



Minutes

STATE COLLEGE FRIENDS MEETING MEETING FOR WORSHIP FOR BUSINESS SEPTEMBER 13, 2015

Meeting began with silent worship and a reading of the Queries on Ministry of Outreach from Philadelphia Yearly Meeting:

Outreach

What are we doing as a Meeting to communicate our presence and our principles to the community around us?

Does our Meeting's ministry of outreach lead Friends to share their spiritual experiences with others?

What are we doing to invite persons not in membership to attend our meetings for worship and to encourage their continued attendance?

How does the Meeting welcome visitors?

Are we sensitive to the needs and hesitations of each visitor?

Are we tender to the needs of isolated Friends and Meetings, and to nearby Meetings seeking support?

How do I ground myself in the understandings of my faith?

Am I clear about my beliefs?

How do I prepare myself to share my faith and beliefs with others?

Does my manner of life as a Friend attract others to our religious society?

Do I seize opportunities to tell others about the Religious Society of Friends and invite them to worship with us?

Is my manner with visitors and attenders to our Meeting one of welcome?

Collaboration

In what ways does our Meeting respond to opportunities to join with other faiths in worship, in social action, and in spiritual dialogue?

How does our Meeting encourage its members to seek opportunities to meet and work with Friends worldwide?

What opportunities have I taken to know people from different religious and cultural backgrounds, to worship with them, and to work with them on common concerns?

What opportunities have I taken to know, to work, and to worship with Friends outside of my own Meeting?

There were numerous responses to the Queries. One Friend said that we are doing outreach in several ways, such as supporting Centre LGBTQA Support Network on campus. Another said that since the concept is close to proselytizing, it is new and more difficult to do. In response to opportunities to worship with Friends outside our own Meeting, one Friend noted that we have isolated Meetings in central PA with dedicated Friends, and participating in Upper Susquehanna Quarter is a way to support Friends in isolated pockets. "Words like proselytization are loaded," said another, "Jesus said don't hide your light under a basket but let it shine." That is the essence of outreach on a daily basis. Someone else added that you should put your light on a lamppost and that our new solar panels are almost literally doing that. Another person added that it also is making it more possible for the light to come in.

The Baptist Church that was on University Drive keeps expanding and building, with literally thousands attending. One Friend went to one of their services at Eisenhower and asked someone why their attendance is so high. "They just love you up," was the response. One way they do that is giving "stuff." But they are also into each other's lives and supporting each other. The Friend continued that she is intrigued by their outreach, and how they let their light shine. There seems to be a key element we are missing despite all the lovely people in our Meeting.

We need to look at what we do, and do it better. Another Friend said her discipline calls that "appreciative inquiry" and it can be used to move forward.

Generally being a Quaker is more challenging, said one Friend. We are more independent and strive to be stronger individuals. Others go to religion looking for support. Can we balance the two? Added another, we attract people who want to help and to fix things. We also need to be helped but we don't open up to that as well, and it's a missed opportunity.

Someone suggested that having some type of regular gathering, something the community does on a regular basis, would be helpful.

Our language is different and we could explain ourselves better, said another Friend. She and her family did an exchange and her family attended Calvary Baptist while the other family attended Meeting. However, the other family also attended Calvary Baptist the same morning because they did not want to miss it. Calvary Baptist, in her experience, made religion easy, modern, and accessible. We are not that, and she did not know how we could make it more so.

Another Friend reminded us that the largest religious segment is the "Nones." They tend to believe in a spirit but don't like structure or being told how to do it. That fits with the Religious Society of Friends. Maybe we need better marketing. Chimed in another Friend, "The few, the proud the Quakers."

Responses to the queries ended with, "It's how we live our lives that makes the difference." Another added, "Person-to-person connections put our light out there."

REVIEW OF AGENDA

Several items were added: a response to the Foxdale discussion from last Business Meeting and a Memorial Minute.

COMMITTEE REPORTS AND DISCUSSION

Religious Education: Report and Extended Discussion

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12 The RE Committee had a long discussion of issues faced by the Committee and those dedicated to it. They felt this discussion needed to be brought to the full Meeting.

Kerry Wiessmann started off by reporting about the issues. One ongoing concern has been the way information has been passed on about jobs and roles in RE. Since it has been done person-to-person, there have been inevitable changes in what people think their job/role is supposed to be. The RE Coordinator position was created about 20 years ago. Our last Coordinator did the job for several years and when she started school the Committee agreed that her role could change to purchasing needed supplies. This led to the RE Clerks trying to do too much and the job becoming more than anyone could do. Becky Misangyi's resignation as Clerk has led RE to do some self-examination. How can we grow the First Day School, and how can we serve our children? There are not enough teachers and not enough children. The legal requirements have changed and grown and that added another category of work and level of difficulty. How do we move forward? For now, RE is putting middle and high school children together, and putting all elementary children together. We need a Coordinator for RE for outreach and help, but do we have the number of children to support the position?

A long discussion ensued that included current perspectives and long-term perspectives. It began with one Friend noting that parents have been the main support of RE when that is really a time for parents and children to not have to be together. It can give exposure to other children and grownups that are not their parents. To what extent can we move in that direction?

Yuri Plowden offered some history of the RE Coordinator position. The first was Mardi Fry-Dunklebarger who brought a lot of energy to the position. There were about 120 children in the Meeting at that time. Those who followed her also were very active, but the numbers of children began to decline. The numbers wax and wane over time, but it is important to keep First Day School alive so when visitors come they can participate. Someone currently on RE offered that now there are 20 children max, and regularly about 8 attend First Day School. Someone else added that when there were so many children it was because the Boomers were having children so the demographics were different everywhere.

One Friend asked how feasible it would be to reinstate the Coordinator position. Kerry responded that the Meeting's current income could not do it. The Ferguson Fund would be available to support the position for a while.

Campbell Plowden said it feels like we don't have a choice. This discussion mirrors our opening discussion on the need to energize the Meeting. Could we hire someone and combine RE and outreach as a way to reach new families and adults. Another person responded that we are in a "Catch 22." We could try combining RE Coordinator and outreach. We should commit the funds for a finite period and then re-evaluate our situation.

Becky Misangyi responded that both positions require a different skill set. She added that another thing that needs to be done is childcare scheduling and making sure they show up and are kept informed. We need a paid RE Coordinator, but having that person try to draw adults is too much. She wondered if we needed to look at what could be cut back, such as the weekend in Black Moshannon. In response to Becky, another Friend said she is comfortable about using the Ferguson Fund to hire a Coordinator.

Jennifer Nicholas said she would volunteer her services for recruitment and retention of a Coordinator. But all of us are the ambassadors when a family walks in. If we all welcome them it makes a big difference. Dan

Hendey said Friends School and Foxdale both have persons whose job is recruitment and maybe they could be some help. Another Friend stated that two years would not be enough to fund the position.

It is essential to have an RE Clerk, said Gary Fosmire from Nominating Committee. Having an RE Coordinator would help, but he cannot see who could be Clerk of RE. We need to do something.

One of the problems, Kerry said, has been unclear expectations of who does what. There is also too much questioning of what people in those positions are doing. Everyone seems to want it done his or her way. We need to be supportive and shower them with love and not criticism.

One Friend said she is not clear whether we are discussing the money or what we want. Selden Smith, Clerk, said today's discussion is our vision for the RE program. Cy Merriwether-deVries said she has been RE Clerk or co-clerk three times. The core of the process is who is here and what we hold dear as a Meeting. It takes all of us to take responsibility for RE. Martin noted that he is hearing a clear affirmation of RE as an essential part of a healthy Meeting.

Ann Sidone questioned whether the long discussions of the queries and RE indicate we should do an Adult Discussion on these subjects. Kerry agreed that while the skill sets are not the same, perhaps we could combine it as a discussion of RE and adult RE.

Karen Anderson said that a difficult question to answer has been: what do families want from RE? You have to beg people to participate and that's disheartening. She noted that she does not want to push her ideas on others. She wants a strong community but is not sure how important other parents think Meeting is for their children's development. She finds herself teaching First Day School when she is not a teacher. But otherwise there would not be anyone to teach. She feels unsure what parents' ideas of RE are, or what is her role.

Campbell responded that there seems to be support here for something, and that seems to be a paid person. He suggested a committee be established to look at this, with someone from RE, someone from Care and Concern, and others. Becky said she agreed with having a committee, and looking for a person. But the important thing is support for RE and the children. Lack of support was why she resigned. The job was very isolating. Meeting needs to think about what we can all do to support RE. Something needs to change.

The Clerk said he was hearing suggestions for a committee and suggestions for a special meeting and wondered what Friends would like to do. Cy suggested a special meeting at the rise of meeting to discuss concerns and visions for RE. Another Friend reminded us to remember to thank people for what they do. Becky said we should include young Friends in any meeting we have. The Clerk agreed that was important.

Gary Fosmire said that Dorothy Habecker has felt led to develop an adult RE program, and she planned to begin with a deep listening process to find out what people want. That might be a good model to use with parents and children. Another Friend reminded us that it takes all of us. Yuri said there are people here who are dedicated, but if we open it up to all ideas we need to be prepared to hear things we may not be able to or want to provide.

Karen informed us that RE made a long list of what they do, but if people don't want to do the work then we can't or shouldn't try to do it all. Lynne Grutzeck said that she taught First Day School years ago and the teachers taught what they wanted to teach. You don't need to please everyone and teachers should be free to teach what they want.

It was suggested that we hold a special meeting on RE at the rise of meeting in two weeks, on September 27th. Judy Melville recommended that email is not enough and the information should be sent on a postcard as well.

Those present asked for a minute of appreciation for Becky Misangyi for serving as clerk of RE.

Worship and Ministry

Ann Sidone reported. We're planning to hold meeting for worship at Friends School in the fall instead of the spring this year; the tentative date is October 25. A Quaker Q&A will be held before the meeting for Friends School families and staff, and tours of the school will be given after meeting for SCFM members and attenders.

Worship and Ministry continues to work on developing adult religious education opportunities, as do Religious Education and Advancement and Outreach. We plan to hold a session on giving and responding to vocal ministry in the near future.

In an effort to decrease disruptions in meetings for worship, we will be working with greeters to reserve the two rows of benches just inside the meeting room door for those who are unable to get here by 11:00.

We're looking into ways to bolster our relationships with yearly meetings. Inter-visitation is one opportunity we're exploring; our goal is to set up some carpools to other meetings, particularly when they're holding special events.

Renee Crauder added to the report. In response to Ollie Jones' concern last month, she wanted Friends to know that there is a Quaker committee at Foxdale.

Finance Committee

Kerry Wiessmann reported. Donations for the year total \$23,000. We need to raise \$50,000 by the end of the year. Finance Committee is planning a fundraising event for November 7th. It will be a dinner based on the 88

years since the first meeting house was built in State College and many people are being contacted with hopes they will attend.

Friends School

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Dan Hendey reported. The coordination between teachers, the Meeting, and the installer of the solar panels went very well. That was important since the work began during the first week of school.

Friends School began with 119 students (not counting pre-K). That is the most since 2007. While the numbers are good, the school did have to offer extra financial aid to attain those numbers. Finances are at break-even, and there is hope of additional students joining during the year since that has frequently occurred. The pre-K is full on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. There are some Tuesday/Thursday openings.

The Board has been busy. They attended a workshop on boards. They are beginning to update the school bylaws and are especially looking at how board members are appointed. Input and an ear are needed from Meeting to change bylaws since the school is under the care of the Meeting. A process to do this will need to be determined.

Buildings and Grounds

Larry Greenleaf reported. The Committee met August 10, 2015. Attending were Dorothy Habecker, Kerry Wiessmann, and Larry Greenleaf. Meeting began and ended with a moment of silence.

We had a discussion on things that needed to be done before the installation of the solar panels.

1. Contact Envinity about structural work.
2. Sign and deliver the paper work to Envinity
3. Find out from Envinity if there was anything SCFM needed to do to get the appropriate electric meter.

Dorothy reported to the Committee that the pollinator gardens were coming along nicely and that next spring we could look forward to the planting of native grasses.

We are still waiting for an update on the progress of the Garden Level project. A meeting is planned for September 14th to begin to decide who will do the work.

Envinity (the solar company that was chosen to install the panels) worked well with the school. The next step is a hookup to West Penn Power. A suggestion was made to design and install a plaque explaining the solar panels that are on the roof of the Education wing. There will be a monitor in the hall to show the electric input.

Renee Crauder suggested putting an article in Friends Journal about the solar panels. She offered to write the article. Polly Dunn informed everyone that an article was coming out soon in the Centre Daily Times. It may be helpful in writing the article.

Peace and Social Action

Selden Smith, Clerk, reported that he had received notification from a peace church in Huntingdon. They are trying to respond to the large number of confederate flags that have appeared by flying their own flag. It shows a black hand and a white hand together. Selden will send the link to everyone in an email.

Lynne Grutzeck announced that bell ringing for Interfaith Human Services will be on December 18th and 19th at Meyers Dairy. Save the dates!

Martin Melville reported that his graduate work has put him at the intersection of theology and loggers. He is working on a podcast and finds himself socially activated by this endeavor.

Campbell Plowden reported that he has been to visit Mujaddid. He thanked the Meeting for making this happen. He is going to Peru next week and asked to be held in the Light.

Note: Due to time constraints, several items were postponed.

August minutes were approved.

Next Meeting for Worship for Business will be October 4, 2015.

Respectfully submitted,

Selden Smith, Clerk

Margy Frysinger, Recording Clerk

Present:

Kerry Wiessmann

Becky Misangyi

Polly Dunn

Darlene Clark

Campbell Plowden

Cynthia Merriwether-deVries

Yuri Plowden

Dan Hendey

Lynne Grutzeck

Larry Greenleaf

Michael Grutzeck

Karen Anderson

Jennifer Nicholas

Elizabeth Pennock

Judy Melville

Ann Sidone

Martin Melville

Renee Crauder

Beth Resko

Gary Fosmire

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