

HOMEWOOD Friends Peace and Social Justice Meeting

Minutes of 15 January 2017 *with suggested corrections accepted*

8:45-10:25 am

Present: Stan Becker, Barbara Bezdek (clerk), Jo Brown and Kathryn Munnell attended. Debbie Ramsey (Stony Run) joined us.

Phil Furnas notified us he could not attend as he had just returned from out of town.

The meeting opened with silent worship.

Minutes for September and October 2016: Approved.

Business:

1. **First Friday Movies and Potluck after Vigil.** Should the committee continue the present arrangement as co-sponsor of the movie series? Might we either spend more time and attention to shape the events in line with the committee's considered priorities (per retreats); or separate that series from the committee in some way.

Historically, for about 18 months the group has tried to grapple with whether the movies serve as part of the goals and priorities of the Peace and Justice committee. If it doesn't, what should the committee do? We first sought to establish the basic facts of the present arrangement. Historically: The vigil at Homewood began regularly at the time of the first Gulf War. Movies by Max began at the AFSC office and moved to Homewood around the time the office closed (maybe 2005 or so).

Operationally: Because the committee is a 'co-sponsor,' the movie group does not have a building use contract with the Meeting. The present co-sponsorship requires a Committee member to open and close the building, and by custom to weigh in on movies selected by the other group. Stan and Phil have generally opened/closed, although Kathy and Barbara have also done so multiple times. Max provides a list of possible movies. The committee then ranks them (formerly as an agenda item in committee meetings, and in more recent rounds, by email conveyed to the clerk who conveyed them to Max). Presumably those marked highest by the committee are included. There is no other collaboration as to theme, outreach, or discussion leadership. At some points those assembled share announcements of peace related gatherings.

Discussion:

- The Friday night vigils and the first-Friday movie/potluck are not really a joint effort of Max's peace group and the Peace and Justice committee, although as stated above, two members of the committee (Stan and Phil) do attend and provide the co-sponsorship duties of opening and closing).
- The movie series and the vigil were once connected but are not now. The vigil is under the care of the Meeting who later committed oversight, theme and sign decisions to the

Committee. For some years there was overlap between participation in the vigil and in the potluck/film, but that changed abruptly in 2015 when the Meeting chose the vigil theme to emphasize local violence and Black Lives Matter rather than 'War is Not the Answer' and other peace themes chosen by the previously constituted committee.. From that point Max and members of his group rarely attended. Various other Homewood members attend the movies on occasion. Stan solicited messages from several and presented their notes of support to the committee. Barbara asked the group to consider the goal of the movies series. Friends suggested outreach to bring people into peace work or to the Meeting. Second, what are the intended functions of the present series? Who is the intended audience? Do these align with the Committee's current priorities and undertakings?

Barbara and Kathy recounted their observations that Max would come with his dog on first Fridays and sit in the Meeting's front yard with his back to the vigil, reading. Several committee members found this deeply disturbing.

After a lengthy discussion, the committee summarized three options for resolving this situation:

- a. The committee could continue to co-sponsor the potluck and movie.
- b. The committee and movie series could separate, in which case the Meeting's policies for building use would apply (sign the standard use contract for independent responsibility by Max's group for use the facilities, addressing safety and security, on whatever fee or no-fee basis the Meeting policy allows).
- c. Oversight of the movie and potluck might be taken up by another group like the Quakers for the Arts group of the Meeting.

It was decided that we need to revisit the basic understanding with Max specifying terms such as could be included in a memo of agreement (MOU), and to that end,

- Barbara will write to Max, inviting him to make a short (1-2 page) written proposal for the series. The committee will then consider which option best accommodates our priorities for peace/justice witness, education, outreach and action.

2. **Report and Reflection on Peace Keeper training held January 14, 2017.**

The training was an outgrowth of discussion at the Peaceable Baltimore TED Talks series, anticipating that Friends may have many occasions in the coming Administration to relearn and share Quaker practices of maintaining peaceful presence in mass demonstrations. We asked Gary Gillespie to lead the session in light of his long experience with peace education. We had to relocate the session, from Homewood to Stony Run, due to calendar conflicts. 39 attended, mainly women; 1 woman of color; mostly Quakers but not entirely. It seemed as if many people had never attended a large demonstration like the planned Women's March on Washington, set for January 20, 2017.

Observations: The session had a strong element of strategic nonviolence. Many suggestions for how to react to difficult circumstances were discussed, and some role play took place. Some wished that there had been more physical training. There was wide agreement at the session

and in the committee that we should plan for future trainings, to include more skills and actions to take into different circumstances, and training of trainers.

Women's March: Homewood will take 4 of the large banners we use at the Meeting for vigils current and past. People on the Quaker bus can decide which banners they want to carry.

3. **Friday Vigil- for 20 January 2017.**

A question arose whether we should expand the vigil theme and signage, in light of the US presidential inauguration that will occur earlier that day. After deliberation, the committee concluded that we will:

- Continue to hold **Black Lives Matter/We Are All One People, and Love Thy Neighbor (No Exceptions)** banners during the vigil,
- Do wider outreach to invite others to participate and to hold positive, constructive compatible messages, and
- Hold a Meeting for Worship after the vigil, to which all are invited.

4. **Annual Committee Report for 2016, due to Monthly Meeting.**

The Committee report is due the first First Day in February.

- Barbara will request deferral to March.
- Stan and Barbara will list the activities of the committee the last year.
- Jo will draft the report for the committee's review.

Suggestions for the form of committee reports are on the Homewood web page.

5. **Peaceable Baltimore series – Plan for Review/Reflection.**

Jo reported that there is a felt desire to continue for another 4 weeks or so, the conversational arc that developed in the original 11 week series, in order to further discern what follow-up on the series might be. There is an interest in seeing what develops organically, although the series will remain under the oversight of the Peace and Justice Committee. Jo will write up the series for the Peace and Justice Annual report. Analysis of its accomplishments will come back to the committee as part of its consideration of its Annual Report.

The committee concluded with a brief period of silent worship, at 10:25 a.m.

Recorded by

Kathryn Munnell