

Minutes of
Blue River Quarterly Meeting
held Fourth Month 21, 2007
at Camp Menno Haven near Tiskilwa, Illinois

The following Friends from our monthly meetings were in attendance:

Clear Creek Monthly Meeting: Grayce Mesner, Neil Mesner, Ruth Raffensperger, Beth Schobernd

Columbia Monthly Meeting: David Finke, Nancy Finke

Peoria-Galesburg Monthly Meeting: Elke Narkiewicz

Saint Louis Monthly Meeting: Steve Hinson, Richard L. Robey

Southern Illinois Monthly Meeting: Mark Amos

Urbana-Champaign Monthly Meeting: Ellen Baranowski, Hugh Bridgeford, Becky Dey, Anne Donovan, Mariellen Gilpin, Margie Haworth, Sharon Haworth, Peter Lasersohn, Bobbi Trist

Also with us were Susan Lee Barton, FWCC and Clear Creek Monthly Meeting of Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting; Heidi Blocher, New England Yearly Meeting, sojourning at Chicago Monthly Meeting; Maurine Pyle, IYM Field Secretary; Martha Turner, South Bend Monthly Meeting

1. The meeting opened with silence.
2. The clerk read a traveling minute for Susan Lee Barton from Clear Creek Monthly Meeting of Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting. We are grateful for Susan Lee's presence and service here.
3. State of Society reports or informal oral reports were given from the monthly meetings. Written reports are appended to these minutes.
4. Mariellen Gilpin reported for the Nominating Committee. They propose Dawn Rubbert as recording clerk and Margie Haworth as treasurer. These appointments were approved. No nomination was made for clerk. We are grateful that Peter Lasersohn will continue until the position is filled.
5. Grayce Mesner gave the treasurer's report, showing a balance of \$2406.14 (attached). Excess food supplies from last fall's quarterly are available for sale: Friends should contact Grayce if they are interested. Any remainder after this meeting will be donated to Clear Creek Meeting.
6. Mark Amos requested financial support from Blue River Quarterly for his family's participation in a workcamp organized by the African Great Lakes Initiative in Kenya. Friends approve a donation of \$750, and instruct the clerk to provide the Amoses with a letter expressing the quarterly meeting's support.
7. David Finke reported that he and Dawn Rubbert had not gathered information on Friends'

views regarding the possibility of revising the system for planning Blue River Quarterly gatherings. Elke Narkiewicz agreed to take up this work and report in the fall. Friends who have had experience planning quarterly meetings are invited to share that with Elke.

8. Steven Hinson tendered his resignation as convener of the Green Burial Committee. Bobbi Trist and Margie Haworth volunteered to join the committee. Following this, Steve agreed to continue as convener.

9. The meeting closed with silence.

State of Society Reports

Bloomington-Normal Monthly Meeting

We welcomed three new members—two convinced and one birthright member—into our Meeting in September of 2006, and our Meeting has enjoyed welcoming visitors who have become regular attenders. As a result, Friends who were present at the time this report was drafted agreed that our small Meeting feels considerably less precarious than in recent years.

Our Meetings for worship have a good, deep silence and relatively little vocal ministry. Those present get something out of the silence, including Gwenyth Suess, the aforementioned newest birthright member of the Bloomington-Normal Society of Friends.

Our Meeting has reintroduced Sharing Sessions to provide non-silent ministry. Recent Sharing Sessions have included the Care and Nurturing of Our Meeting, Simplicity, Environmental Concerns, and the Marriage Section of *Faith and Practice*.

Meetings for Worship with a Concern for Business are a third way we address the spiritual need of our Meeting.

Over potlucks, during discussions, and through communication between Meetings, we help one another put our faith into practice in the wider community.

Clear Creek Monthly Meeting

This year Clear Creek took time to rest, be comforted and give comfort.

It was a year of twelve blankets, gathering around a fireplace, reconnecting with our internal focus and finding a haven within the home of Helen Jean Nelson who passed away during the Fall.

August set the tone for our year as we decided to cancel everything during this month except for Meeting on Sundays. After IYM we were content as when a job is completed and well done but also exhausted. So we rested and we realized that the restoration was complete. It is done! Strange to feel the energy around us not moving so quickly. It felt calm, more quiet and peaceful. We could rest.

By September our energy had recovered somewhat and we began First Day School with the building of wooden tool boxes that Dick Ashdown pre-cut for the Young Friends. Within the last five years Clear Creek has worked often with tools and it seems to have become a part of our identity. As the Young Friends hammered the wood pieces of their boxes, they learned patience and determination. They also learned that different styles of tackling a task are just fine. Some pounded their nails in with short but determined taps while others pounded their nails in with long movements and loud bangs. The job was completed either way.

Now that the Meeting House restoration is complete we have the energy to pursue activities outside of Clear Creek. Our members discovered that they were being led to finish personal projects and start new ones in their life. This was at first a strange and novel place for us.

When Helen Jean died in the Fall, it felt unreal, as if it had not happened. Perhaps this was because her children and grandchildren filled our Meeting with their presence. Perhaps she visited us still. Certainly we felt her hand and kindness when Winter set in and we were invited to gather within her home. Throughout this very cold winter we were embraced by her family's hospitality and blessed warmth.

By this time our Young Friends were working on blankets to deliver to Quakerdale in Iowa. The blankets are intended to comfort the young girls who live there. So throughout most of the Winter they laid out the fleece material along Helen Jean's kitchen floor and tables, cutting and tying the blankets together.

They learned to work and communicate quietly with each other as the adults were meeting in the next room. The Young Friends care so much about helping animals and the people around them. It is a blessing to listen to them speak, to learn and just be in their presence.

This year we made an effort to revive our Adult Sunday discussion group. We divided the topics between a Faith and Practice discussion on the second Sunday and a discussion on 1st Corinthians on the fourth Sunday of each month. We had mixed results on our faithfulness to these subjects but it feels as if we are beginning to generate the energy to continue a practice that Clancy Wilson's presence seemed to anchor so effortlessly.

Some of our concerns this winter involved discerning the present and future needs and care for Becky. Another issue was our role within the transition of the IYM trusteeship.

I cannot mention our Spiritual Direction group without telling about the elements that were our

background surrounding us. These were swirling snow, a warm fireplace and cheese cake! To be precise, Dick Ashdown's fireplace and cheese cake, although the cheese cake is purchased at Lacon's newest favorite restaurant, "Asher's Apron." We sat around Dick's fireplace, in the glow of fire light, sharing our thoughts and messages. Afterwards there was cheese cake, each time a different kind! Returning home with the memory of laughter and the taste of caramel and chocolate cheese cake on our lips was a blissful comfort.

This year it is Clear Creek's turn to plan the program! Our Spring began with the culmination of IYM planning. Beth Shobernd became our leader in this effort. Throughout the Winter Beth, Grayce Haworth and Carol Bartles worked to discern a theme and search for potential speakers and workshops for our IYM week. They have succeeded well, and surprisingly, our theme already resonates with other groups this year.

Besides our predilection for working with tools, Clear Creek seems to attract Friends who travel — OFTEN! Last year Kris Simon joined us and she began traveling to places all around the U.S, Norway and Europe. This year Rebecca Conant and Ruth Raffensperger joined our ranks and promptly departed for exotic and exciting places like Thailand and Portugal. We get to read their blogs and listen to their stories of adventures in far away places. Andrew Bartles, son of Carol and Bob Bartles, is spending his final school semester in Oman. If you want to look that one up, it is on the east coast of the Arabian Peninsula. These young people seem filled with an energy to connect with other cultures and to a better understanding of the hearts of people beyond our cultural sphere.

Camp Mennohaven has been a gathering place this year for the IYM Winter retreat and now again during Blue River Quarterly Meeting.

During the Winter retreat, as Rachel Mershon showed me how to spot eagles (we saw three magnificent ones!) and shared her love for the life of birds. I marveled at the blessing of this place. This place was envisioned by a courageous group of Mennonites who wanted to create a place for retreats, a haven to leave for future generations. The first time I saw this place was during a Winter Site Envisioning meeting to research retreat centers. On my visit I learned of their history and heard the contentment and gratitude of the current Mennonites who now work there. This was love passed down to future generations and continues to nurture, grow and hold a place within their midst.

As we hold Blue River Quarterly Meeting at Camp Mennohaven, the promise of one day being able to meet within our own haven on IYM grounds, will not be far from our minds.

Jeannie Marvin, Clerk

Columbia Monthly Meeting

Our weekly attendance remains high, hovering in the range of 15 to 30 persons. For some, our

growing realization that we cannot put off major decisions any longer has plunged the state of our meeting into valleys of discontent and restlessness. The two issues that were put on hold during our Sabbath “Year” were: 1) whether to remain in our current meetinghouse and make improvements or to move to a less remote location; 2) to determine if our meeting is supportive of same gender marriages. Other areas of concern include: Do we trust one another? Do we feel free to address each other with candor? Do we express love to one another? Is there prejudice in our meeting? Do we have a true spiritual community at present, or a pseudo-community? At present, transportation and support of our aging members are also concerns.

To help us begin to address some of these problems, Janet Means Underhill, with the help of Margaret Katranides, conducted a workshop for us in January 2007. We are continuing the work done in this workshop by having four small groups which will be meeting three times by the end of May 2007. These groups are to help us get to know each other better and deepen our communication so that we may be able to further consider our varying needs and viewpoints in a loving and productive way. We are hopeful that this unsettling period of looking at our differences can bring us closer to each other and to God.

On an optimistic note, we have and are continuing to make some headway in discerning the fruits of our efforts in holding a Sabbath “Year.” This period of reflection began in June 2004 in order to allow greater freedom to develop spiritually without the constraints of committee work which many of us had begun to find burdensome. To become organized again proved somewhat difficult, especially with regard to what form we could agree to, resulting in delay in agreeing on the organization of our meeting and in reviewing our terminology. With the help of two workshops facilitated by Maurine Pyle, assisted by Margaret Katranides (our IYM M & A visitor), we reorganized our meeting structure in June 2006. This structure has proved fruitful and more efficient, rejuvenated by the appearance of newer faces as well as the rotation of those more established.

Active membership has remained more or less stable during this past year. We welcomed Sheila and Jeff Brotemarkle back into town. They subsequently welcomed us into their home for a mid-week worship of which some did indeed joyfully partake. In 2007, we sent off member Heidi and her husband Nick Bezzerides on their move to Pennsylvania. We suffered two deaths in the fall of 2006: that of our long time member, Maryanne Thomas at the age of 94, and of our dear Hadley Finke who died peacefully in his sleep at the age of 97. His life was warmly celebrated with a memorial meeting on the following Valentine’s Day. The memorial meeting for Maryanne was held that fall in Stephens College Chapel because a bigger place than our meeting house was needed to accommodate the large number of family and friends who came to honor her.

Our long dormant First Day School was revived this winter because of the attendance of Zak and Nicole Watson with their 3 children as well as the occasional visitation of Creedon & Deb Miller’s grandson. We are grateful for the return of young ones who add so much to the vitality of our meeting. We now have a newly appointed First Day School committee.

Other areas of our meeting where we continue to grow and shine are our newsletter, adult education, and continuing peace presence. The newsletter has been recently expanded to include more sharing of our beliefs and therefore has been helpful in understanding one another better. Our adult religious education has been more informal during much of this time period, inviting more input from our community. Those involved in various aspects of social concerns have continued to ensure that Quakers remain a vital presence in mid-Missouri's efforts for a more peaceful, just, and sustainable world. This was exemplified perhaps most movingly by our response to the F.B.I. raid on a Muslim neighbor. Many of us mobilized to have a significant Friends presence at press conferences held in support of this fellow activist as well as writing letters on his behalf.

Though we feel we are preoccupied by challenging transitions in our meeting at this time, we remain hopeful in our perseverance to not only endure but to gradually soar with the healing love given to all those who seek it.

Peoria-Galesburg Meeting

We have moved our meeting place from Galesburg to Monmouth, as most of our members live in Monmouth now. In the fall we had a very helpful visit from our Field Secretary Maurine Pyle to help us explore how to grow both inwardly and outwardly in our meeting. We have since put our names in 6 area newspapers. This has generated interest from a few people, and our clerk has been approached by people in town, curious about us. As a result of being in the paper we were also invited by the Knox County Peace and Justice Coalition in Galesburg to speak to them about the Quaker response to war. Carol Bartles of Clear Creek Friends graciously agreed to speak on our behalf, as a long-time Friend and member of the AFSC board. Carol introduced the group- largely unfamiliar with Quakers- with Friends' values and practices, then discussed Quaker service, the importance of discernment of leadings, and how Quakers approach these decisions individually, not corporately. She gave a history of AFSC's work over the past 90 years, which was quite compelling. The presentation was well-received, appreciated, and enjoyed.

We have business meeting the second First day of each month, followed by a warm meal together, and plan to start a discussion group each fourth First day. We will select a discussion packet from FGC to help us learn more about each others' spiritual journey. We hope to put an invitation in area papers for seekers to join us. Nora Vera-Godwin from Keokuk, IA, has been joining us for worship monthly and we have enjoyed her presence greatly.

We have two children in our Meeting (ages 2 and 4½) and take turns during meeting to give each other a chance for worship. Our children love this special time with people from our meeting and they are getting to know each other well. First Day school with our 4½ year-old is catch-as-catch-can, but plans are in the works to have a more organized curriculum. In our newspaper ads, we are welcoming to children, so we want to be prepared if children should come to meeting.

Urbana-Champaign Monthly Meeting

Urbana-Champaign Meeting is in a state of relative good health and spiritual vigor. Maurine Pyle, IYM Field Secretary, and Martha Turner, IYM representative from Ministry and Advancement committee, presented a workshop on vocal ministry in the fall. Friends shared their hesitations about delivering vocal ministry, and participated in an extended period of worship. A number of ministries came forth in that time, and since the workshop there has been more ministry in our midst. Maurine returned March 10 to present a workshop on outreach, and will present another on prayer and discernment April 29. We look forward to her return. We have had a number of reasons to ask for prayers: Eli Nathaniel Hannah, Chris Baker, Terri Mittenthal, Don Chenoweth, Reuben Golden-Trist, and Merlin Taber had health challenges this winter. We first instituted a prayer circle when Eli Hannah was born, and Sarah Jacobs, an inquirer, came to prayer circles. Prayer circles became times for sharing of soup and conversation as well as concerns. At our silent retreat in January, we took turns holding sick Friends in the Light throughout the retreat.

We successfully completed a Mortgage Challenge, leaving us only \$4000 left to pay on our mortgage. The Spirit moved at our Meeting for Brainstorming, held to decide our spending priorities, and we later approved a mission statement for meeting. One Friend was so inspired at the Meeting for Brainstorming she went home and wrote a letter requesting membership. Deborah Jadhav, Kim Thoren, Barbara Kessel, and Charlotte Green have all become members. We have two new birthright Friends, Eli Nathaniel Hannah and Evan Carter Ching, and a number of new young attenders. One of our disaffected Friends has returned, and we continue to hope the others will return eventually.

We approved a brochure welcoming lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Friends, and approved the word marriage for both same sex and different sex ceremonies of commitment. Business meetings have been reflective, mutually supportive, even (dare we say it?) efficient: on three memorable occasions, business meeting concluded in 40 minutes.

Religious Education has childcare on 2nd and 4th Sundays, and Quaker programming on other Sundays. Our Tween Friends had a party, just hanging out and getting to know each other better. We had a Game Night and Pizza Party, and we also decorated the Christmas tree and had a potluck, for which the Tweens made soup. We had a Christmas Eve carol sing and candlelight worship. RE arranged a Friendly Dance March 9. These occasions for intergenerational fun mean all ages know each other better now. New life, new faces, and new efforts for the betterment of our Society proceed in Urbana-Champaign Meeting.