

Blue River Quarterly Meeting

Sept. 13-15 (Fri.-Sun.) 2013

DuBois Center, DuBois, IL

Thirty-six of us, 24 adults and 12 children, met over a sunny, early fall weekend in the tranquility of the forest and lakeside at DuBois Center. Our program, "SHARING OUR EXPERIENCES WITH GOD: An Intergenerational Weekend" was facilitated by David Wixom and Pamela Hosler. We had lots of time together as adults and children worshipping, playing, carving walking sticks and staffs, dancing universal dances of peace, and enjoying the usual recreational activities of horseback riding and canoeing.

Minutes of Meeting with a Concern for Business

Sixth Day and Seventh Day, 14-15 September 2013

In attendance:

Michael Batinski (Southern Illinois)	Beth Schobernd (Clear Creek)
Mariellen Gilpin (Urbana-Champaign)	Christina Schultz (Bloomington-Normal)
Barbara Harroun (Macomb Worship Group)	Denice Smith (St. Louis)
Christopher Jones (Southern Illinois)	Sandra Tamari (St. Louis)
Grayce Mesner (Clear Creek)	Steve Tamari (St. Louis) (Recording Clerk)
Neil Mesner (Clear Creek)	Erin Taylor (Macomb Worship Group)
Fariba Murray (Bloomington-Normal)	Sean West (Macomb Worship Group)
Dawn Rubbert (St. Louis) (Clerk)	Judy Woliki (57 th Street) (ILYM Field Secretary)
Mike Ruberton (St. Louis)	

1. Michael Batinski read a letter of appreciation from Southern Illinois Friend Justin Leverett who completed a year of service with Quaker Volunteer Service in Atlanta, GA. A copy of the letter is attached. One Friend commented that it is important to support such opportunities for our young adults for their benefit and for the health of Quakerism more generally.
2. In the absence of our treasurer, Grayce Mesner presented the treasurer's report. It is attached.
3. We had a wide-ranging discussion coming out of this summer's Yearly Meeting sessions concerning the hurt felt by LGBTQI (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, Questioning/Queer, and Intersex) members. We also acknowledge that others, particularly people of color, urged that we recognize that statements of equality do not always have a good track record in terms of transforming words into action.

Christina Schultz read a minute from Bloomington-Normal Meeting affirming our commitment to equality as regards sexual minorities and to offering our places of worship as welcoming and safe places for LGBTQI people.

We approved sending the following minute to the clerk of ILYM meeting with a copy to go to the clerk of Northside Friends Meeting. This minute comes as a message of support as the "Chicago North" meetings prepare for Yearly Meeting sessions which will address the oppression of sexual minorities.

- a. "In Friend's tradition of advocating for justice and equality, members and attenders of Blue River Quarterly welcome all who wish to join us in worship, including LGBTIQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, Intersex, and Questioning/Queer) people. In the wider US, we support same-sex marriage and other forms of equality. We declare Blue River Quarterly a safe space for people who may feel their sexual orientation makes some places of worship unsafe. We encourage Illinois Yearly Meeting likewise to declare ILYM a welcoming and safe place for LGBTIQ people."

We approved the following minute in conjunction with our effort to acknowledge the full breadth of those facing oppression in our communities.

- b. "Blue River Quarterly acknowledges that many in our community have been hurt by oppression, bigotry, bias, and privilege. We seek healing for all those wounded and aspire that our community become a truly safe space for all. We earnestly request prayers, help and patience to overcome our biases and ignorance, often ingrained since birth. We seek to grow into a beloved community that can help transform the world."

We approved the following minute in an effort translate our written commitments into action.

- c. We were saddened to remember the times we had been silent when someone stigmatized another in our presence. We reflected on Jesus' challenge, "Physician, heal thyself." In addition to writing a minute supporting diversity, we wanted to take a baby step toward inner change within ourselves. We invite Friends to a workshop at Spring 2014 Quarterly to help us speak truth--not to power but to our majority privilege--in those difficult conversations about oppressed minorities due to disabilities, gender, national origin, race, sexual orientation, and other experiences and world views. We see this as one baby step of many we intend to take over the next five years to learn:

How to be an active rather than passive ally;
How to become a community of allies welcoming those who feel marginalized;
How to put our testimony of equality into daily practice.

We want to emphasize the word **practice**. It takes practice to heal our own complicity. By practicing active interrupting of systems that devalue, we hope to help transform the world.”

4. ILYM Planning

We are responsible for the F.U.N. program. Jeannie Marvin (Clear Creek) is overall coordinator. Other assignments to date:

Wee Friends (responsible for arranging babysitting): Clear Creek (Grayce Mesner, contact)

3-5 yr. olds: Maurine Pyle (need to confirm) + _____

6-8 yr. olds: Barb Harroun + _____

9-11 yr. olds: Sandra Tamari + _____

12-13 yr. olds Meredith George + volunteer

Snacks: Bloomington-Normal (Fariba Murray, contact)

Support Person: Dawn Rubbert

Craft Tent

Thurs.: ?

Fri.: Sean West, coordinator; Kay Drake

Sat.: Steve Tamari, coordinator

Afternoon Activities

Thurs.: ?

Fri.: Steve Tamari (pool trip)

Sat.: Chris Goode (need to confirm), variety show

Evening Activities

Wed. movie: Chris Jocius

Thurs. campfire: Erin Taylor

Thurs. hayride: Dick Ashdown

Sat. Service Project: Christina Schultz and Heather Evert

5. Michael Batinski of Southern Illinois Meeting is looking for assistance to support Illinois legislators in Springfield who have crafted a law aimed at rehabilitation of elderly prisoners. Contact him for more information about this effort: batinski@siu.edu

6. In the context of smaller and less able to care for children during BRQ sessions, we need to consider new methods of planning our sessions. Mariellen Gilpin also shared the results of a survey of attitudes toward BRQ sessions (a summary of survey results is attached.)

We decided that this spring’s BRQ meeting will include an intergenerational envisioning component with an eye to pursuing new methods of planning our meetings either at a specially called meeting for this purpose or at later regularly scheduled BRQ meeting.

In the meantime, an ad-hoc committee will employ queries we developed from Mariellen's survey for each monthly meetings to consider so monthly meetings can be part of this process. These queries are attached. The queries should be presented to monthly business meetings and the responses collated before the spring quarterly. The following ad-hoc committee will take responsibility for circulating the queries among their respective monthly meetings: Erin Taylor (Macomb), Fariba Murray (Bloomington-Normal), Beth Schobernd (Clear Creek), Mariellen Gilpin (Champaign-Urbana), Steve Tamari (St. Louis), Mike Batinski (Southern Illinois), Creedon Miller (Columbia), Chris Jocius (Rolla Worship Group), Peg Krueger (Springfield). Chris and Peg were volunteered in absentia.

Attachment 1

A note of gratitude to ILYM for a year of service as a QVS volunteer from Justin Leverett, member of Southern Illinois Quaker Meeting

September 9, 2013

Dear Friends,

I didn't know what to expect when I arrived in Atlanta for my year with Quaker Voluntary Service (QVS). For many years I had attended Southern Illinois Quaker meeting, a small meeting in Carbondale, IL, but had been deepening and exploring my interest in Quaker process. When I saw this program posted on my meeting's list-serve, it immediately jumped out as something I wanted to be involved in. I was a big fan of the music that comes from Atlanta, but the city had never previously appeared on my radar as a place I would want to live someday. The interview process went well and I was placed with the non-profit Clarkston Development Foundation, a service placement and organization that appealed to my vocational interest in journalism and communications. So I packed my car with most of my belongings, drove south through Kentucky and Tennessee, and as I drove along the Connector past the brightly-lit skyline of Atlanta for the first time, I knew that this would be an experience I would not forget.

The QVS orientation included an introduction to Christina Repoley, the executive director of the program. She had been thinking the need for a Quaker young adult service program since she wrote her Masters thesis during her time at the Candler School of Theology. QVS has been a program many years in development and 2012-2013 was the inaugural year, with Atlanta as the first house. Christina and other board members helped facilitate ice-breakers with the fellow volunteers. There were 7 of us: Allison, Becca, Kelsey, Lisa, Liz, Rebecca and me. We came from all throughout the United States. Our service placements were for non-profits throughout Atlanta, including Habitat for Humanity and American Friends Service Committee. Kelsey and I served in Clarkston, a community east of Atlanta with a substantial international refugee community speaking more than 40 languages, for an organization whose mission is to build capacity and engagement among these groups. Adapting to my placement proved to be a struggle. I was challenged to use my writing skills and journalistic training to support the promotional interests of my organization, and to learn about folks' experiences in community while also telling a good story. I soon fell in love with the community in Clarkston, and I gained friends and colleagues there that I will never forget.

Through intentional community life in the QVS house, we became very close with each other, and though we had our share of struggles, we also developed strong friendships. The Atlanta Friends Meeting took us under their care, and we always felt that if we ever had a need, a member of the meeting would step up to support us. The meeting was so much larger than any I had ever experienced! More than 100 Quakers gather regularly here in Atlanta. My fellow volunteers had all come from Quaker colleges: Earlham, Haverford, and Guilford, and by knowing them, I came to feel so much more connected with the wider Quaker world. This year I was able to take part in the Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) congressional lobby training, to attend the 50th anniversary of the historic intentional community at Koinonia

Farms in Americus, Georgia, where I saw former president Jimmy Carter speak, and, most precious of all, I was a guest at our director Christina's Quaker wedding ceremony.

Our monthly QVS days also challenged us to wrestle with the significance and the challenges of what we were doing. We compared our habits involving food, our relationships with our privilege, and with our definitions of service in the world. We discussed and studied the role of Jesus in Quakerism and in Christianity, and we talked about vocation and the balance that it takes to maintain responsible budgeting, especially in the context of our very (limited) living stipends (\$300 a month). We discussed the balance of finding a spiritually fulfilling job, with maintaining a healthy home and personal life. And we also were given the opportunity to learn a lot about the role of the non-profit in advancing social justice causes in urban regions similar to Atlanta, and particularly about religious volunteer programs like ours. As my year of service drew to a close, I decided that it felt right to remain in Atlanta, and I am now starting a new intentional community in the Old 4th Ward, and working for a community newspaper started by refugee youth in Clarkston. QVS has transformed me, and I am deeply grateful for this experience.

-- Justin Leverett

TREASURER'S REPORT TO BLUE RIVER QUARTERLY MEETING

14-Sep-13

Balance on Hand April 6, 2013: \$3,339.96

DEBITS

4/8/2013	Camp Cilca Spring '13	<u>2,095.50</u>
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TOTAL DEBITS	2,095.50
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CREDITS

3/31/2013	Interest	1.94
4/8/2013	Spring '13 Fees & Donations	2,251.50
7/30/2013	Donations	632.00
8/29/2013	Donations	144.00
6/30/2013	Interest	<u>1.88</u>

TOTAL CREDITS	3,031.32
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Balance on Hand Sep 8, 2013: \$4,275.78

Apr '13 - Sep '13 Meeting

Contributions:

7/30/2013	St. Louis	\$352
7/30/2013	Urbana-Champaign	\$280
8/29/2013	Clear Creek	\$144

Attachment 3

Results of the BRQ Survey, September 14, 2013

Out of 67 people on the BRQ email list, 9 people responded in time for this collation of the responses. 6 Friends let me know they would not be responding due to various life-situations: job changes; moving to be nearer family. 3 of the respondents have young children, and the rest do not. I will separate out the young parents' responses from those who do not have young children in some of the responses below.

Friends were in general agreement that they come to BRQ because they like the fellowship with Friends from meetings other than their own. Most mentioned enjoying the adult programs:

"I like a nice balance between worship, business, recreation, unstructured social time."

"I enjoy varieties of workshops or ways of addressing a theme, fellowship, quality of worship, and a sense of community."

"The past adult programs have been good; I would appreciate a program for nontheist Friends."

"I like BRQ for the inspiration, learning how Friends other places do things. I like our current program offerings."

Friends were in general agreement that they liked our weekend format, in which we gather on Friday night and stay til after lunch on Sunday.

The question was asked whether Friends would appreciate trying a more retreat-focused quarterly meeting. It was clear that the questionnaire-writer was not clear enough, and several Friends responded saying they didn't know what was meant!! The answers, thus, ranged all over the map:

"I do NOT want more workshops, etc."

"I would like more really excellent questions (queries?), and more hands-on activities."

"I like intergenerational encounters best."

"I would be intrigued to try for a retreat feeling in an urban setting."

"Could I get help developing my sense of purpose in the world from other Friends?"

Questions about what makes the respondent less likely to attend elicited the following comments:

"Cost is a stretch."

Some Friends mentioned distance as a problem, especially for northern BRQ Friends when attending fall quarterly. One Friend said that she would prefer driving for only two hours, or 2 ½ hours for a "really amazing program." A Friend with young children said three hours was a stretch, and would prefer that BRQ happened closer to home. Another Friend was willing to travel four hours, and still another Friend indicated no problems about either distance or the time spent driving to and from Quarterly.

Friends were somewhat divergent about whether business meeting was a hindrance to their deciding to attend. Two Friends like business meetings, two were lukewarm, others less than lukewarm:

"I like business meetings, and wouldn't come otherwise. We need to strengthen the business function; if there's less business, there's less vitality, and BRQ has relatively few business responsibilities."

"I enjoy business meetings, especially hearing reports from the different meetings."

"I don't mind business meetings if they are done well and don't drag on and on."

"Whether we have business meeting or not doesn't affect my decision either way."

One Friend wrote, "I am less likely to attend if there's business meeting. I spend so much time with kids, I hardly ever sit in Business Meeting. I think I prefer a spiritual focus for retreats more than a business focus. But I'm not as disciplined a Quaker as many other Friends. ☺ Our traditions are not as engrained in me, so it's not that hard to see losing this component. No disrespect intended."

We asked whether Friends would be interested in trying an urban location.

"It's okay to be urban once in awhile, but I prefer a rural setting."

"Nature is nice but not essential."

"I would be intrigued by a retreat feeling in an urban setting. Lo-tech settings put a crimp in planning engaging Young Friends activities more meaningful than just crafts. Service projects in a community retreat would be attractive; do all three Quaker gatherings have to be in a rural setting? Rural settings reinforce kids' sense of Quakerism as a not-well-known and potentially anonymous religion."

"I would be okay about both a rural and an urban setting."

We asked what sort of children's activities would be attractive.

One Friend wrote, "Having fun, making music, moving around, listening and interacting with stories; great questions for kids; hands-on indoors activities for kids as well as outdoor activities; intergenerational dancing; a sense of a grounded and enriching community."

A young parent recommended a children's program using professional help or guest leaders for kids. "The same people do all the work each time, while also helping with their local First Day School. The obligations keep people away from Friends gatherings."

Another young parent wrote, "I want a stronger, age-appropriate Quaker religious education for kids. An entirely age-segregated gathering makes me feel that the kids are just going to be babysat."

"It would be nice if kids could learn more about Quakerism, but learning about nature and getting along with other people is a good thing too. All the work involved in preparing program keeps people away."

Another Friend wanted "vibrant" children's programs.

About whether Friends would be interested in helping plan a new look for BRQ, most Friends indicated either they did not welcome any additional work, or that they were lukewarm about working on a new look. One Friend suggested we hold one afternoon session on BRQ planning.

Attachment 4

Survey Questions to Take to Monthly Meetings

Have you attended any Quaker gatherings besides your home meeting? (e.g., Blue River Quarterly Meeting or Illinois Yearly Meeting)

- a. If not, what has kept you from attending? (e.g., physical limitations, no children's program, not an interesting adult program, etc.)
- b. If you have, what did you enjoy most about wider Quaker event(s)?

What would make easier for you and your family to attend Blue River Quarterly Meeting?

Typically, Blue River Quarterly Meeting has met from Friday evening to Sunday after lunch. Is this schedule good for you? How would you change it?

Given the current weekend format, how far are you willing to travel in order to arrive?

Do you prefer an urban setting or a setting in nature?

What kinds of programs do YOU need? What would make BRQ more of what you enjoy most about being with Quakers?

Would you be interested in a more retreat-focused format?

What kinds of **children's** programs do you want?

Blue River Quarterly Meeting includes a business meeting. Does this make you more or less likely to attend?

Are you willing to help plan a new kind of quarterly meeting? (if so, be sure to give your name below)

Name (optional): _____

Meeting: _____