

Blue River Quarterly Meeting

Held Fourth Month 11, 2015 at Camp CILCA

1. The meeting opened in silence amid beautiful surroundings and fine weather. Twenty Friends were present.
2. The recording clerk being absent, Peter Lasersohn was appointed to act in that capacity for this session.
3. Michael Ruberton reported for the Nominating Committee. They nominate the following to serve through our Fall 2015 session: Clerk – Dawn Rubbert; Recording Clerk – Michael Ruberton; Treasurer – Margie Haworth-Davis. The committee proposes to continue meeting, to identify Friends to serve beyond Fall 2015, and poses the following three queries:
 - How are we encouraging new leadership among adult young Friends?
 - What efforts are being made to expand our outreach to new people who have not yet served?
 - Would it help to develop a job description for each office?

All three nominees expressing willingness to serve a full two-year term, Friends approved their appointments to the positions to which they have been nominated, effective at the rise of this meeting and continuing through our Spring 2017 session.

4. Blue River Quarterly Meeting encourages Friends to return home and report to their meetings with as much enthusiasm as possible their experiences at quarterly meeting, thus encouraging wider participation in future sessions. Reporting by younger Friends is especially recommended.

Additionally, we appoint a working group including Dawn Rubbert, Michael Ruberton, Bobbi Trist, Mariellen Gilpin, and other Friends as opportunity arises, to support this process, and to develop job descriptions for the offices of Blue River Quarterly Meeting, including Clerk, Recording Clerk, Treasurer, and Website Manager.

5. Friends expressed gratitude to Dawn (Amos) Crimson and Peter Lasersohn for their work on the BRQ website and other contributions to the quarterly meeting. The website is at <http://www.blueriverquarterly.org>.
6. Margie Haworth-Davis presented the Treasurer's report (attached). Since our Fall 2014 session, our expenditures have totaled \$3075.33 and our income \$4222.84, for a balance on hand of \$6285.10. Friends accept the report with thanks.
7. Friends approve a donation of \$500 to the African Great Lakes Initiative of Friends Peace Teams.
8. It was reported that the Friends New Underground Railroad has assisted in transporting 977 people out of Uganda, and currently has 38 people on its waiting list. The effort is approaching its one-year anniversary, and is under the care of Olympia Friends Meeting. Friends approve a donation of \$1000 to the Friends New Underground Railroad. Their website is at <http://www.friendsnewundergroundrailroad.org>.

9. Margie Haworth-Davis read a letter from Southern Illinois Meeting reporting on Friends' ministerial work under their care and with their support, including that of Justin Leverett, Maurine Pyle and Arie Weiss. Friends approve a donation of \$200 to the Southern Illinois Quaker Meeting Ministry Fund.
10. Mariellen Gilpin read a draft letter expressing appreciation to ILYM Adult Young Friends and to Evanston Monthly Meeting for Carl Sherrod and Noah Leverett's work in developing and conducting the program at our retreat this weekend, and encouraging more Adult Young Friends to attend future Blue River Quarterly sessions. Friends approved the letter as read. (attached).
11. It was noted that the registration fees for Illinois Yearly Meeting do not cover the costs of the sessions. Friends are encouraged to donate to the yearly meeting, particularly to offset the costs of attendance by young people who attend without paying registration fees. Friends should be aware that it may be proposed to change the housing fees for yearly meeting attendance according to whether the housing is in Clear Creek House or the cabins. Friends are asked to express their views on these matters to Field Secretary Judy Wolicki.
12. Peter Lasersohn noted that the 200th anniversary of Blue River Quarterly Meeting is approaching in four years. He encouraged Friends to think about how we might mark this anniversary.
13. Mariellen Gilpin announced two retreats at the Quaker Hill Retreat Center in Richmond, Indiana: "Touching God Together: The Third Annual Gathering of Quaker Mystics," June 12–16, 2015; and "Spiritual Sustenance: Supporting Early Steps on the Spiritual Path," June 19–21, 2015.
14. The meeting adjourned for an activity with the children followed by dinner.
15. On reconvening, State of Society reports were read from Urbana-Champaign, St. Louis, Columbia, and Bloomington-Normal Meetings (attached).
16. The meeting closed in silence.

Minute of Appreciation

To Illinois Yearly Meeting Adult Young Friends and Evanston Friends Meeting
From Blue River Quarterly

April 11, 2015

Dear Friends,

Thank you to Illinois Yearly Meeting Adult Young Friends for sending Carl Sherrod to spearhead the program for Blue River Quarterly Meeting (BRQ) the weekend of April 10-12, 2015, and to Noah Leverett for enduring an almost-fourteen hour bus trip from Carbondale to participate in some of the presentations.

We appreciated the activities Carl offered, and the queries he challenged us with during the Fishbowl—we also appreciated the Fishbowl format, which most of us had not experienced

before. Carl not only sensitized us about stereotyping one another based on age, but also taught us some new ways to help us move beyond our habits of thought. He and Noah, with Noah's mystical sense of what is Real, inspired some fresh ministries from some of us older Friends during our times of worship. Thank you for sending forth Carl and Noah in ministry to Friends in BRQ. We had a wonderful time together.

We want to renew our original invitation to Adult Young Friends: please come *en masse* to our quarterly meetings. You are all welcome, and you should all ask for whatever financial assistance you need to attend. We worry that perhaps our original invitation to present the program may have been overwhelming (or maybe underwhelming!) Just please understand that we want very much to hang out with you and get to know you all at a deeper level. We also want to minute our standing invitation: any representative from Adult Young Friends who feels moved to join in planning and presenting programs for future sessions of BRQ is always welcome. Fall BRQ will be _____, 2015, at Camp Dubois, near Mt. Vernon. Let Clerk Dawn Rubbert know if Carl or others are led to work with BRQ Friends to plan Fall BRQ.

We also want to minute our appreciation to ILYM AYF and Evanston Friends Meeting for supporting Carl and Noah, and thus enabling them to take on this ministry. We also thank Hal Meade for providing transportation for Carl and participating fully in our activities. Please understand that being outside the geographic boundaries of BRQ does not disqualify any Friend from coming to BRQ sessions. Y'all come!

In other words: Thank you for a good program, for sending Carl to lead it, and you are all invited to future BRQs. Y'all come!

Dawn Rubbert, Clerk
Blue River Quarterly

State of Society Report Urbana-Champaign Friends Meeting Spring 2015

The spiritual health of a Quaker meeting is always a work in progress. This is especially true in a Meeting in a college town, with older Friends dying and younger Friends graduating or moving to follow the job market. We think we are learning a few things currently about how to keep a meeting vital. This report seems to fall naturally into naming the problems we're recognizing and the ways we are responding.

One of the ways we are celebrating our tenth anniversary in our new meetinghouse is by making concerted efforts to deal with the hearing issues many Friends experience. The bare walls and concrete floor and the expanse of windows make our worship space beautifully Quakerly, but also make for lots of echoing. Ministry and Oversight committee has been researching possible solutions, ranging from wall coverings and cork flooring, to various electronic ways of amplifying sound. They have set up different sound systems on a trial basis and specially invited Friends with hearing issues to come to worship and report what works for them. We have been impressed with the increase in attendance during these trials. We notice that Friends who cannot hear the ministry feel less incentive to come to worship, and we also

appreciate how much our worship and fellowship is enhanced by the presence of our dear hearing-impaired Friends.

Ministry and Oversight moved the chairs from the perimeter of the worship room into smaller concentric circles in the center. They also phoned Friends to alert them, not only that the room would look different, but to encourage us to model sitting in the inmost circle. We notice that it is not only easier for us to hear spoken ministry, but also Friends are more likely to speak in worship, and more likely to stand when they speak. We wonder if the greater intimacy possible in the smaller circle makes speaking in worship, and standing to speak, less intimidating.

Along with these changes in our worship room, Ministry and Oversight is also encouraging Friends to wear their nametags, including replacing old and tattered nametags, and also walking over to Friends already in worship and smilingly handing them their nametags. This, plus the smaller worship circle, does much to increase our sense of community. A small sign of that growing community may be that it now seems more likely after worship that Friends will share joys and sorrows and volunteer thoughts that came up for them during the silence. Another aspect of growing community among us is that not only our Clerk, but also members of Ministry and Oversight, take turns closing worship and making introductions and announcements. Members of Ministry and Oversight who happen to be present in worship are invited to stand, and Friends are encouraged to share their concerns with Ministry and Oversight members after worship. Just being reminded regularly about who is on Ministry and Oversight and what they are there for helps to make Ministry and Oversight feel more accessible to the rest of us.

Other problems the Meeting faces include three committees which currently aren't meeting regularly: Advancement, Youth Religious Education, and Library committees. If there is no children's program and curriculum, parents and grandparents feel discouraged from bringing children—and themselves—to Meeting. We are the poorer on both scores. Again Ministry and Oversight members have been proactive. They have organized a convivial meal and discussion. Now on three Sundays of the month, we have a paid childcare worker, at least, and in March our young teen Friends went on an outing together to the Fab Lab—a community DIY electronics/computer lab on campus. Adult Religious Education committee has sponsored a very well-attended series of discussions and has begun sponsoring a Friday Night at the Movies series, based on anti-war movies about World War I, which were filmed after World War II.

Anyone who has attended marathon Quaker business meetings will know how hard it is to get excited about attending still another one, yet our method of decision making has the potential to grow the spiritual life of the meeting. When is it that a business meeting really needs to be a marathon? We are happy to report that our business meetings of late have benefited from advance consultations between our Clerk and Recording Clerk, who prepare the agenda beforehand as much as possible and also disseminate the minutes as soon as possible afterward.

A bright spot in our Meeting's spiritual life continues to be our very active Peace and Service committee. We continue to make sandwiches for the Daily Bread Soup Kitchen. We also have been part of the (successful!) national Quaker effort to persuade PNC Bank to stop supporting mountaintop removal through loans to coal companies, whose mining practices have already destroyed more than 2000 miles of rivers. Our Young Friends planned and carried out a pancake brunch and raised \$331 for our student in Uganda's continued education. As part of the brunch, for which Friends turned out in amazing numbers, we all signed a card to our student. Friends are actively involved in local efforts to encourage the Champaign County Board not to

militarize the Sheriff's Department through accepting cast-off Department of Defense equipment, and to discourage a multimillion dollar addition to the county jail (instead of increasing services to keep the mentally ill in the community, rather than warehousing them in the jail). Friends continue to be involved in the Education Justice Project at the Danville Correctional Center through the University of Illinois and support volunteer Friends.

We celebrate that Karen Linder has become a member of our Meeting, and that the Yearly Meeting teens helped create our Faith in Place butterfly garden. Sylvia Haas has returned from a gap year in Germany; she is studying at the U of I and providing childcare for our Meeting. Casey Kashnig has finished an education degree. He is teaching at a local school and joins us for worship. We are delighted that Jason Ebaugh has returned from spending two years helping his older brother (who has MS) find a better living situation. And last but not least, we look forward to two weddings this summer under our care, one for Anya Hamrick-Nevinglovskaya and Chris Zabrocki, and the other for Jean Marie Marron-Beebe and Ed Hertenstein.

We have two problems for which we still have not discerned a way forward. At least half of a typical week's attenders arrive late for worship. We would welcome Friends in other meetings sharing their successful solutions to Friends arriving late. Also, our financial contributions are lagging, although the contributions from other groups using the Meeting House have so far covered the gap. We can hope that growing our sense of community, meeting the needs of our hearing-impaired Friends, and increasing the number of Friends moved to speak in worship may soon impact our finances for the better. Perhaps the letter requesting donations recently sent to Friends by the Finance Committee will help in that regard.

St. Louis Monthly Meeting State of Society Report, April 3, 2015

The violence and injustice in our community and our world has stimulated reflection, learning, growth and action in our meeting this year. Members looked for ways of living the Peace Testimony, practicing civility and listening in a polarized conflict, and examining roots of racism and injustice in our own lives.

In response to the shooting of Michael Brown and the many issues of racism and injustice which the Ferguson protests highlighted, members of meeting formed a task force which has organized a "Witnessing Whiteness" study group with leaders from the YWCA, organized distribution of "Black Lives Matter" signs, and helped coordinate members participating in protests, demonstrations, educational activities, and political actions. These have been opportunities for serious self-reflection, learning and growth.

Three young people from meeting participated in the American Friends Service Committee Freedom School, and others provided food and other support. Meeting has also hosted programs on racism, discrimination and injustice presented by other organizations including Palestinians for Ferguson with a panel discussion comparing Palestinian and Ferguson experiences.

In addition, meeting for the fourth year served as an emergency homeless shelter on Monday and Tuesday nights when the temperature was below 20 degrees. We were assisted by volunteers from three other congregations. However, we still had a shortage of volunteers,

particularly for staying overnight. Several members and attenders made almost heroic efforts to keep the shelter open.

After one of the guests broke into the meetinghouse and was arrested, meeting members worked with the criminal justice system to practice restorative justice. One member wrote, “It is a real-life example of Quaker principles in action.”

Our meeting also hosts the office of Friends Peace Teams and supports the African Great Lakes Initiative with “Burundi Sunday” lunch once a month. Meeting also serves as home for the Lakota Project and hosted a Board meeting of the Bolivian Quaker Education Fund.

These deep concerns for community and global issues have brought new people to our meetinghouse, but many people are stretched and it has become harder to carry on regular business. Many Friends had little time or energy to work on the needs of the Meeting community to ensure that it continues to function well. While most members are joyous that we are being a positive presence in our physical community, there are concerns that we are not putting enough effort into maintaining a functioning Meeting. Members expressed concern that we are unable to stir up more participation in the work of the Meeting, such as attendance at Meeting for Business and folks willing to clerk committees. Some committees, particularly Ministry and Caring, are functioning well. However, some committees have lack clerks and have been less active than in previous years. One member noted, “We cannot seem to keep on track with things happening at the time when they are supposed to take place.”

Everyone’s life is so busy. How can we nurture our relationship with God, fulfill our various responsibilities, and be actively involved with Meeting? How can we help each other do this?

2014 Columbia Friends Meeting State of Society Report

2014 was generally a good year for Columbia Friends Meeting. We decided to keep our “Little House in the Woods” rather than continue to look at other properties. While this progress was unifying, it led to the next step — looking at ways to renovate, which has given us the challenge of working out our differences. We have already made one improvement — the conversion of a storage room into a second bathroom with ADA compliant fixtures. We have also worked with a contractor in developing two options for extensive renovations.

The overall mood continues to be positive. We share a loving and caring community, and work together to make improvements. When a problematic incident occurred last year, rather than focusing solely on individual behavior, we addressed the meetinghouse environmental aspects as well. Our First Day and Midweek Meetings for Worship bring us together in “expectant waiting.” After worship, Friends often comment about the uplifting nature of spoken ministry. Our new Presiding Clerk leads Meetings for Business with a sense of calmness, which encourages us to stay open to the Spirit.

Our Meeting has also been blessed with growing numbers. Although we lost a few attenders (one moved out of state), we have seen more attenders and visitors this past year, and have gained a new member. A newly retired husband and wife who came back to Meeting after a long absence are both birthright Quakers. Among the new attenders is a family with two

children. One family with a young child moved to Germany last year but will soon be back with a second child who was born in October. We have been seeing a general trend of younger attenders and visitors as well, which gives us hope that our “aging Meeting” will survive into the future.

We had four Friends in nursing facilities last year, one of whom experienced an increase of health problems after the loss of her husband. One Friend was hospitalized, had surgery and learned he had cancer. Another lost his mother to cancer. The Meeting has provided assistance and support to these Friends in various ways. When we couldn't get people to the meetinghouse for Meetings for Worship, we at times gathered at their places of residence.

A new practice we began last year, and named “barn-raising” (like the Amish do), has been put to work a couple of times. The first barn-raising event gathered Friends at an elderly Friend's house where we cleaned and weeded helping him prepare for a move to a nursing facility.

Other small changes seem to have had positive impact as well. In an attempt to lessen responsibilities and anxiety, the number of people assigned to committees was reduced, so most people had only one main thing to do. However, more people were added to our newsletter staff; hoping this would make the newsletter creation less demanding. Also a formal back-up list was assigned to help the property manager. Training for committee work was provided and encouraged as well. Another change came about after a period of experimentation and discussion about closing Meeting for Worship. Modest changes of how we close meeting and how we use the time following worship have resulted in a calmer, more Spirit-felt transition from worship.

Toward the end of 2014, Columbia Friends Meeting was given the opportunity to join other local churches in a project called “Loaves & Fishes.” We prepare a meal for up to 150 people once every two months. Other activities continued from past years included writing letters to our representatives concerning social justice issues and advocacy for peace; having a presence at a weekly peace vigil, as well as the yearly local CROP Hunger Walk; and staffing a booth at the Columbia Earth Day Festival. We regularly collect non-perishable food and other items for several local agencies.

On the more social side, we engaged in a lot of fun activities, too. In February, two young Friends were married under the care of the Meeting. The Meeting helped them and their families prepare for the wedding, participated in the couple's ceremony, and celebrated with food, dance and friendship. Another gathering that took place later in the year celebrated the 90th birthday of one of our Meeting's oldest members (who passed away in early 2015). As in years before, we also came together for monthly “Friday Fun Nights” for food, and games or crafts.

Our Meeting for Learning Committee engaged us in discussions about current matters of concern, re-introduced the curriculum “Exploring Quakerism,” and started using the DVD “Quaker Speak” to open up new conversations. We continued to hold our monthly Friendly Bible Study as well.

Several Friends visited an intentional community near LaPlata, Missouri, where Quaker worship is held. A couple of Friends also traveled to the annual Gathering of Friendly Mystics. We had a visit from our ILYM Field Secretary, a visitor from the St. Louis Friends Meeting, and occasional travelers from other parts of the country. With the challenges that have come up regarding renovations, we have invited some of our “extended family” for guidance, so we will soon be seeing more of them.

We have some new and exciting adventures ahead of us. There will be joy and there will be pain. Before or after renovations (or regardless of renovations), we welcome anyone and everyone to come and visit us!

State of the Meeting 2014–15, Bloomington-Normal Friends Meeting

Our Meetings for Worship have been enriched by the presence of visitors during the past year. Late 2014–early 2015 are blessed with increased energy and participation by a wider group of meeting members and visitors, added to the solid base of Bob Broad and Heather Evert.

B-N Friends have continued to be a support for each other as they struggle with health issues and losses of family members. Unfortunately, loss has touched every household in the Meeting recently. The Hile-Broad family has found the Meeting to be a source of strength during Dylan’s surgeries, recoveries and ongoing health concerns. Some of the women in our meeting also find Friendly fellowship, sustenance and loving support at the monthly Women’s Meeting for Eating.

Some members attended Yearly Meeting annual sessions and Blue River Quarterly gatherings, connecting us with other Quakers in our area. Fariba Murray has participated in continuing committee meetings and Christina Schulz served on the Religious Education Committee. Christina Schulz and Heather Evert also organized the Young Friends Service Project at ILYM annual sessions in 2014.

Our Meeting has maintained contact with the caretakers of our area’s first meetinghouse at Bentown, and we hold our Meetings for Worship there a few times a year.

In response to ongoing concerns for First Day School opportunities for our youngest Friends, we met for a First Day School kit-making session, at which a pair of young Quaker pirates participated.

BNFM Members and visitors attempted to participate in Friends Committee on National Legislation’s effort to encourage our Members of Congress to end the Authorization on the Use of Military Force (AUMF) after Fariba Murray, her son Shahin and Dylan Hile-Broad made a trip to Washington, D.C. to participate in FCNL-facilitated lobbying at the U.S. Capitol.

The Meeting’s priorities for the upcoming year are centered on caring for and sustaining the Meeting, creating a Friendly presence in the world beyond the Meeting, and reaching out to Seekers.