



Chapel Hill Friends Meeting Newsletter

January 2008

Monthly Query:

Is our Meeting a loving community in which respect and care for one another are so deep that we recognize and respond to one another's needs? Is the Meeting a joyful place where members and attenders feel they belong, and willingly share in the work of the meeting community?

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Chapel Hill Friends Meeting

Compassionate Listening Group

Compassionate Listening is a tool for conflict resolution, reconciliation, and the prevention of violence. Listening compassionately, however, is not limited to formal groups. It is something which can be practiced in all relationships. It is always challenging to listen in the midst of conflict and emotional intensity, especially when it is our own. The objectives of compassionate listening are to deepen our understanding of the perspectives and suffering of people on all sides of a disagreement or conflict, and to build bridges between them.

Compassionate listening requires suspending our judgments and listening from an open heart. “The listening requires a particular attitude. It is non-judgmental, non-adversarial, and seeks the truth of the person queried; it also seeks to see through any masks of hostility and fear to the sacredness of the individual and to discern the wounds suffered by all parties.” (Gene Knudsen Hoffman) The skills can be learned by young and old alike, and require a willingness to move towards peace, and wholeness.

Compassionate Listening is a phrase coined by Gene Knudsen Hoffman, international Quaker peacemaker who fostered the concept based on her experience with Quaker clearness committees. She developed this tool after realizing that all parties in a conflict were wounded and needed to be heard. Her guiding principle is that hearing each other’s story reveals unhealed wounds and allows for mutual compassion and understanding. In particular, she speaks of listening with our “spiritual ear”. A poignant quote from Hoffman is **“An enemy is someone, whose story we haven’t heard.”** Indeed, she often quotes from the poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow: **“If we could read the secret history of our enemies, we should find in each person’s life sorrow and suffering enough to disarm all hostility.”**

The evolution of compassionate listening skills came in 1996 when Leah Green, at that time the founder/director of ‘Mideast Citizen Diplomacy’ contacted Gene Knudsen Hoffman to use these compassionate listening skills

with her delegation to Israel and Palestine. Leah Green later established the Compassionate Listening Project as an independent non-profit organization. (www.compassionatelistening.org)

I am proposing to form a compassionate listening practice group, which would be under the care of the Chapel Hill Friends Meeting Care and Counsel Committee. **Compassionate listening is first and foremost a practice. It takes repeated, focused, and intentional efforts to integrate the skills, principles and practices into our lives.** Participating in a practice group is a vital and essential way to cultivate the skills and capacity to:

1. deepen skills in compassionate listening;
2. offer guidance and reflection on how to apply compassionate listening at the personal, interpersonal and collective levels;
3. afford opportunities to “sit in the fire” with individuals and groups, in both our everyday lives, in our Chapel Hill Friends Meeting, and our larger community.

The compassionate listening skill set allows us to shift from our usual ways of listening to and being with other people in our daily lives. It may appear easy but it is, in fact, quite hard to do, especially when we do not agree with, or dislike the beliefs, values, or opinions being expressed by the speaker. It takes considerable practice to set our own judgments and emotional reactions aside in order to be completely present to another human being who may be very different from us. Using compassionate listening, we are not problem-solving, we are listening others (and, indeed, ourselves) into “wholeness.” It is not therapy or a cure-all. Those invested in the compassionate listening process have found that ongoing participation in a practice group is a gift to one’s continuing growth and commitment to living as a peacemaker, on all levels, in our lives. The fodder for our exercises will be our own stories.

My personal contact with the Compassionate Listening Program (CLP) dates to November, 2006 and a powerful experience in an intensive weekend workshop offered by two certified facilitators. Soon afterwards, I made the decision to participate in ten days of the ‘Compassionate Listening Advanced

Training Series,' entailing two trips to Seattle, WA in 2007. I have, recently, been notified that my application to the CLP Certified Facilitator Track has been accepted. Because one of the program certification requirements is facilitating a practice group, I am initiating this group. The group would be no larger than 30 people with a focus on doing practice exercises, "listening" to each other, and bringing in outside guests from our local community for listening sessions.

Quaker Douglas Steere lived his life with the intent of "**confirming what was deepest in other persons, arousing the hope that was in them.**" I hope that creating a CLP practice group would offer this opportunity to people of all stripes, including ourselves, who need to be heard.

The practice group is scheduled to begin on Saturday, February 2, 2008 with an introductory training session from 9 am to 2:30 pm (Chapel Hill Friends Meeting Schoolhouse.) The group will, initially, meet twice a month from February through April, and then move to a once a month gathering beginning in May. Scheduled Thursday evening times (7- 9 pm), in the Schoolhouse, are: 2/7, 2/21, 3/13, 3/27, 4/10, and 4/24. I am requesting that participants attend the preliminary training and ensuing sessions (February through April) to, as much as possible, immerse themselves in the progressive exercises that are the underpinnings of compassionate listening. Please contact me with your questions, and to sign up. **I would appreciate knowing by January 21 whether you plan to join us.**

In peace,

Jan Hutton

janhutton@earthlink.net, 967-1959

View Documentary on the Environment and Global Warming

There is a second opportunity to view the important documentary, “What a Way To Go, Life At The End of Empire.” Lauren Carreto and The Center For Sustainable Living invite all to attend a screening of the movie. This movie offers an in depth and thorough understanding of Peak Oil, Global Climate Change, Mass Extinction, and the Stories of our Culture that have fueled the planet’s unprecedented predicament that now faces the entire community of life on Earth.

With many parallels to Quaker understanding of the “seeds of war,” this documentary offers crucial consciousness-raising about the “run-away train” of the culture of Empire. The documentary screening will be followed by a circle dialogue.

If you are interested in childcare for this event, please let Lauren know ahead of time at laurencarreto@earthlink.net. Please join us on Saturday, January 19th, 2008, in the Schoolhouse. Movie begins at 6:00pm (run time 2 hours).

Please Help: Misplaced Book

Terry Mehlman is missing a special book and thinks it may have gone home with someone. The book is called “Christmas City,” and Sam brought it to share at FDS on December 23. Finn gave it to a grownup after he finished reading it.

This book is dear to Terry and Sam and they’re hoping that someone knows of its whereabouts and can return it soon!

Mid-Winter Gathering of Friends for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Concerns

Twice a year, Friends for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Concerns (FLGBTQC) gather to worship, conduct business, pray, and play. In July, our numbers are large, and we are a visible and valued presence at the Friends General Conference Gathering. Each February, we meet for a long weekend dedicated to FLGBTQC work and play. There we retreat together to attend to old relationships and deepen new ones.

In 2008, the FLGBTQC Mid-Winter Gathering will take place February 15-18 in Maple Lake, Minnesota (near the Twin Cities). Details about the Gathering, registration forms and deadlines, and scholarship information are available at <http://flgbtqc.quaker.org/gatherings.html> or by calling John Skinner (612-371-4769) or Nordis Heyerdahl (952-927-5765) of the 2008 Mid-Winter Gathering Committee. You may also speak with Terry Mehlman from our meeting, who is active in the FLGBTQC community. You may reach her at 919.644.6491 or tdmehlman@gmail.com.

All are welcome to Mid-Winter Gathering. Please join us!

Notary Services

A reminder that Asta Crowe is a notary public and will be happy to notarize documents. Please contact her direct at astacrowe@gmail.com or 933-4564 if you are in need of notary services.

Upcoming Forums

January 6 -- The Psalms, Marsha Green

January 13 -- End of Life Issues, Catherine Elkins and Buffy Weber

January 27 -- TBA (Brian Schafer's forum has been postponed.)

February 3 -- Contemporary Quaker Authors, Matt Drake

February 10 -- What Can the Meeting Offer Me; What Can I Offer the Meeting, Rene Prillaman (Ministry & Worship)

February 24 -- Is there Hope for Peace and Justice in Election Year Gridlock?, Nancy Milio

March 3 -- North Carolina Quakers, Max Carter (Guilford College)

Report from Jennifer Leeman on the Pendle Hill Workshop on Clerking

In November, with the financial support of the Meeting, I attended a clerking workshop at Pendle Hill under the leadership of Arthur Larrabee. I would like to share with you my conception of the role of the clerk, a conception that gained greater clarity during that workshop. First, I do not believe that there is a preordained Truth or correct answer to any of the questions we struggle with in Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business. I believe we gather to collectively create Truth. The more of us who gather and the more openly we share our differing perceptions, the deeper and richer the truth we create. Throughout this process of sharing and listening we are each led both individually and collectively by the Inner Light. Arthur shared a reading that offers a wonderful image of the relationship between Spirit (in this reading referred to as God) and the meeting. "...meetings for business can be instruments that God uses to discover for herself what a Godly outcome might be. According to this way of looking at things, God could be seen pictured as sitting with us in our meeting for business. She has willingly taken on our limitations as well as our gifts. She is there with us; perhaps a little tired, but still knitting patiently and very much willing to learn something new...Always she is with us, hoping that she can work with us to make something useful and beautiful (Watt, 2005)."

The clerk serves key functions before, during, and after business meeting. Before

and after the meeting, my role is primarily administrative. I create an agenda by communicating with committee clerks and reviewing prior meeting meetings. Sometimes I suggest that an agenda item be developed further prior to coming to business meeting. Following the business meeting, I review the minutes and follow-up as needed on items of business. The most challenging and humbling work of the clerk, however, occurs during the business meeting. I believe the role of the clerk during business meeting is to facilitate interactions among those attending to ensure that (1) everyone's piece of the truth is spoken and heard and (2) the collective remains connected with the Inner Light. The closer the Meeting comes to achieving these objectives, the more "useful and beautiful" the truth we create. I greatly appreciate knowing that many Quakers wiser and weightier than I are holding me in the Light as I put into practice what I learned from Arthur Larrabee together with the leadings of my Inner Light.

Book Review

Sue Fletcher, Library Committee

We are all too familiar with the view that Islamic countries are America's enemies, a problem requiring a military solution. Rarely do we read of peaceful ways to solve problems in Central Asia, of ways to give young people in that area an alternative to militancy.

Three Cups of Tea (by Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin) is the story of Greg Mortenson, who in his failed attempt to climb K – 2 in Pakistan's Karakoram mountain range, accidentally stumbles into a small poverty-stricken village where he is generously and kindly cared for by the mountain people. During his stay he become convinced that the only way to peace in that part of the world is to educate the children so that they can have meaningful work to support themselves and their families. Months later, when he is well enough to return to the United States, he vows to make possible the building of a small school for the village girls and boys.

In *Three Cups of Tea* we read of Mortenson's work, the Central Asia Institute formed to support that work, and the many residents of the northern regions of

Pakistan and Afghanistan who come to know Mortenson and continue to build village schools despite numerous challenges. The students of Carolina Friends School gifted the book to the meeting. This inspirational read can be found in the Meeting library.

Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business
Minutes
12/16/2007
Jennifer Leeman, clerk; Susan Inglis recording clerk

Query: Is our Meeting a loving community in which respect and care for one another are so deep that we recognize and respond to one another's needs? Is the Meeting a joyful place where members and attenders feel they belong, and willingly share in the work of the meeting community?

Friends' messages as they worshiped on the query included:

*This query and the messages at early meeting for worship make me consider what it takes for me to slow down enough to see and care for the people around me.

*There have been recent occasions when members of the meeting have been together, for socializing or for a task, and joy was present; these were wonderful occasions.

*Stories are an important part of this season; share the stories of your life with your family; it provides everyone with connections with relatives and their ancestors and gives the sense that this family will go on forever.

1. The clerk welcomed Friends and reviewed the Agenda. There were no new First-Time Attenders, and no additions to the agenda.
2. Minutes of the November 18 Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business were approved as written.
3. Nominations – Susan Inglis presented a request for approval of Terry Mehlman as a new member of Ministry & Worship Committee. Friends

approved her membership on the committee, with appreciation for her willingness to serve this important function.

4. Update on Piedmont Friends Fellowship Fall Meeting – Terry Mehlman reported on the PFF fall meeting, which was held November 4th at Spring Friends Meeting. During that meeting PFF decided not to meet at Quaker Lake for the annual retreat in May 2008. Instead, the retreat probably will be at Camp New Hope. Last year, FUM rejected Friends for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Concern's (FLGBTQC) application to meet at Quaker Lake in February 2007 stating that they did not approve of FLGBTQC as a group. Members of PFF were not clear that we should stop meeting at Quaker Lake. Some were concerned that no longer meeting at Quaker Lake would be a step back or of separation from FUM, and PFF may be more effective if it remained in dialogue with FUM. However, the decision was made to not meet at Quaker Lake in 2008. A PFF-FUM outreach committee plans to propose at the February PFF meeting that we bring meetings in the Triangle together in a social way, with a gathering of people from the meetings in Raleigh, Durham, Chapel Hill, Spring, Chatham, and Cane Creek tentatively planned in the Chapel Hill area in April. Since the annual gathering of PFF will be held near Chapel Hill, it can be expected that CHFPM will be called upon to help host the event. Plans will be solidified at the February PFF meeting, and needs for logistical support will be clarified. Terry will report back to the meeting at that time. In other PFF news, Virginia Driscoll, having been clerk for several years, is stepping down and names for a replacement are expected to be put forth at the February meeting.

Friends requested that the teens, having been very concerned about FUM-FLGBTQC issue, be updated, which Terry agreed to do.

5. Treasurer's Report – Buffie Webber presented the Treasurer's Report noting the new format. It is attached here. Buffie noted that during this transition time on the committee, they have been dividing some tasks, and that Terry Mehlman has dutifully and regularly put the money in the bank. Donations to the meeting are not far now from where they usually are this time of year, but December contributions are very important and several significant regular donations have not come in yet. Friends discussed whether CHFPM could make its donation to Carolina Friends School in time to have it matched by the matching donor, before the January 15 deadline for matching gifts. We

cannot do so now because we do not have enough money in the bank. However, if donations increase in December as they have in prior years, we would have enough to do so before the deadline. Buffie reported that Judy Purvis is being encouraged to become the meeting's next Treasurer. The report was accepted with appreciation.

6. Request for Consideration for Membership from Anne Smith – The clerk read a letter from Anne Smith requesting acceptance into membership in the Meeting. It is being passed to Ministry & Worship and Care & Counsel committees for formation of a clearness committee.

7. Worship Sharing on Topic of Timing for the Meetings for Worship and Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business – In September, Ministry & Worship outlined the history of the changes in Meeting time and key issues for consideration. M&W requested and has received feedback from members and attenders about the current time of our Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business. The committee is not clear on the next step to take and therefore asked for Friends to share their thoughts on the time of meeting in a worship sharing format to guide M&W's further deliberations. Friends messages included:

- 8:30am is unnecessarily early and the deadline of 11am cramps the Quaker process.
- I have a concern that there is a defined length of time. My experience is that we need to have the freedom of knowing we can sit together as long as necessary. I have felt sometimes that we have all felt pressured by the time constraint in the current schedule.
- My feeling is that we broke away from the Quakerly way in giving ourselves a set amount of time to conduct business. It is just not the Quakerly way. Though we have a mechanism for continuing the meeting for business, there has only been one time this year when we made use of that device and on that occasion the attenders at the first part & the second part were almost completely different.
- It is not easy to be a Quaker, because we have no preacher to tell us what to do.
- As we bring Friends into membership we should put more emphasis on the responsibility of being involved in the business of the meeting.

We all have to come because who else, if not we, will do the work of our meeting, and because we love our meeting. We are called to be participants, and it does not seem to be working just now.

- It has been my sense that this issue has been challenging us for some years, starting with attendance concerns. And it does look like this time has worked for getting people to come and to stay for the duration of the meeting. So I appreciate that aspect of the current schedule. But it is a thorny issue given that it is not, perhaps, allowing for the Spirit to move us completely freely.
- I have attended different business meeting times: Thursday evening, Sunday afternoon, and our current time. I prefer this one because it fits best with my busy work schedule. But I also do not like the sense of having business squeezed in. There are a lot of trade offs to consider and perhaps there is not one answer. I am wondering if we can rotate year to year to suit different people at different stages/times in their lives.
- One friend shared a memo she wrote to Ministry & Worship based on a conversation she had with another friend. Points include: 1) there is an historical precedent for the early meeting time we have, 2) nothing like our business meeting exists in Christendom or any other major religion; it is unique. She noted it is too early to give up on scheduling it at this time, but the meeting should make a concerted effort to get more to come. We should have business meeting during late meeting for a trial year. Benefits might include an acknowledgment of the central place in our practice that this way of doing business holds; increased attendance; we could continue working on our business uninterrupted; unlike early meeting, late meeting has interruptions built in; it would be easier for young people to attend; and early meeting and forum could continue without altered schedule. For the past year early meeting has had to make concessions; it is time other members and attenders to learn the patience and etiquette this has required.
- From my experience, it is early and that 30 minutes more of rest in the morning can matter. Our current schedule also means we have one less forum per month. In terms of practical issues, the challenge of advertising continues. Newcomers will be better welcomed when we

arrive at a plan and are consistent in the message we put out in the wider community.

- Personally I like it at this time because it frees the afternoon. But I do not like the rush of having a limited amount of time.
- I think that what we are trying to do in business meeting is so precious and so difficult: to wait expectantly listening for God's voice. A couple of questions come for me. To do this effectively we need to know each other, to know the people we are worshipping with. There are more participating in this schedule, but the questions are 1) what way of doing this will allow us to know each other better, and come together as a community? and 2) What way/time will allow us to sink down and listen best for the Spirit, to listen more deeply?
- I have only been on the periphery of this discussion, but when it had an impact on First Day School, I noticed there was a lot potentially being asked of them. They put a big effort into making a consistent routine for the children. It is hard to expect them to just incorporate a schedule if the time is moved to later. Having just spent a great deal of time looking at how many people contribute, read the newsletter, etc. I think there is no meeting time that would have a really dramatic effect. I suggest thinking about what is comfortable rather than about what will increase attendance.
- I think the best timing of business meeting depends on where you are in your life, whether you have young children, teens, or no kids at home. Those in attendance here find this time manageable. There are 38 in the room today. That is a good number. We are all going to be giving up something, no matter what the hour is.
- Quakers do listen well, but we also talk and sometimes when we have no stop time set we can talk too much.
- Being rushed on Sunday morning is difficult for me, too, because it is an unknown whether in the morning we will have to meet again in the afternoon. I also appreciate the opportunity to have mid-week social and worshipful time, as a reminder that we do not exist only on Sunday mornings. In another place I knew a meeting that had a weekday evening dessert potluck and then business meeting. Perhaps we could do something like this occasionally, for reports, and other business that is certain to be longer.

- I do not have recommendations, but I do have concerns. Worship is the most important thing in our process. It must be a worshipful process all the way through. There are constraints, but we must not leave out the time for worship, for having that process.
- We must also be careful about the impact that our turning our attention to business has on the quality of our worship.
- My sense is that this is like putting together a giant mosaic. My tile is, as a single mom of small child, it is really hard to come at this time, but I managed to get here, in spite of that inconvenience. My lifestyle would support a completely different time better.

8. Announcements:

*The Christmas Party will be December 16th from 5:00 – 7:00, all are welcome.

*Christmas Eve Worship will be December 24th at 5:30.

*There will be an intergenerational games and pie night at the meeting on Wednesday, December 19th.

*Jan Hutton invited Friends to join a new Compassionate Listening Group. Mike Green and Jan will lay down Plumbing the Depths of Quakerism for a few months, possibly reviving it in the fall. In January, Jan will start a Compassionate Listening Group, a ministry originally designed for people in conflict, which emphasizes mindfulness in how we listen to others when they trigger things in us with what they are saying. The practice is based on Quaker clearness committees, and Jan is in a leader training program that requires that she have a practice group. Attached here are dates and times proposed for the group. Interested Friends should contact Jan.

In attendance: Carolyn Stuart, Margie Brache, Max Drake, Miriam Thompson, Kathryn Flynn, Dirk Spruyt, Perry Martin, John Hite, Jan Hutton, Buffie Webber, Christy Morgan, Mike Green, Marsha Green, Pat Mann, Pam Schwingle, Anne Smith, Nancy Milio, Andrea Kassebaum, Candace Kern, Terry Mehlman, Matt Drake, Lynn Drake, Ken Grogan, Marilyn Dyer, Joyce Munk, Tom Munk, Dottie Heninger, Marnie Clark, Lauren Caneleto, Jeff Brown, Hank Elkins, Nancy Elkins, Lloyd Kramer, Larry Beck??? Susan Inglis, Jennifer Leeman

Chapel Hill Friends Meeting

Chapel Hill Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends
531 Raleigh Road, Chapel Hill, NC 27514

Meetings for Worship at 8:30 and 11:00am

Forum at 9:45am

Child Care from 9:30am-12:15pm

First Day School from 11:15am-12:00pm

Clerk of the Meeting: Jennifer Leeman (929.9135)

Resident: John Hite (929.5377)

This newsletter is published every first Sunday under the care of the Publications and Records Committee. The deadline for submissions is fourth Sunday evening. Please email submissions to news@chapelhillfriends.org, or call James and Robin Harper at 919.768.9870.

To send Meeting News and In The Light announcements via email, contact news@chapelhillfriends.org. This and past issues of the newsletter are available online at www.chapelhillfriends.org.

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Contents

Sun. 1/6/08	8:30am	Meeting for Worship (Early)
	9:45am	Forum: The Psalms - Marsha Green
	11am	Meeting for Worship (Late)
	12pm	Potluck, Schoolhouse
Wed. 1/9/08	10am	Quaker Women's gathering at Marnie Clark's home
Sun. 1/13/08	8:30am	Meeting for Worship (Early)
	9:45am	Forum: End of Life Issues - Catherine Elkins & Buffy Weber
	11am	Meeting for Worship (Late)
Sat. 1/19/08	6pm	Screening of "What a Way to Go," Schoolhouse
Sun. 1/20/08	8:30am	Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business
Wed. 1/23/08	10am	Quaker Women's gathering at Marnie Clark's home
Sun. 1/27/08	8:30am	Meeting for Worship (Early)
	9:45am	Forum: TBA
	11am	Meeting for Worship (Late)
Sat. 2/2/08	9am- 2:30pm	Practice Group for Compassionate Listening, Schoolhouse
Sun. 2/3/08	8:30am	Meeting for Worship (Early)
	9:45am	Forum: Contemporary Quaker Authors - Matt Drake
	11am	Meeting for Worship (Late)
Thurs. 2/7/08	11am- 1pm	CHFM Serves Lunch at Interfaith Shelter