



March 14, 2021

Minutes & Reports

Friends Meeting at Cambridge

Meeting for Business in Worship

March 14, 2021

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Friends Meeting at Cambridge (FMC) gathered in a Meeting for Business in Worship, virtually on Zoom, on Sunday, March 14, 2021. The Meeting was convened by Richard Ristow, Co-Presiding Clerk, after a period of silent worship, with 36 people present. The Clerk opened the meeting with a reading on stewardship—Advice #42 from *Quaker Faith and Practice* of Britain Yearly Meeting,

“We do not own the world, and its riches are not ours to dispose of at will. Show a loving consideration for all creatures, and seek to maintain the beauty and variety of the world. Work to ensure that our increasing power over nature is used responsibly, with reverence for life. Rejoice in the splendour of God’s continuing creation.”

Richard welcomed Friends and asked for prayers for his clerking and the work of the Meeting for Business in Worship. Ariel Maddocks, Co-Presiding Clerk, invited people to introduce themselves aloud as part of opening our time together.

Announcements

2021-012

The following announcements were made:

- A Memorial Meeting for Hugh Barbour, a former Resident Friend at FMC, will take place on April 3 at 2:00 pm. More information will follow via the Announcement Sheet and on the FMC website.
- Greg Woods will be leaving his position as Youth Ministries and Education Coordinator effective April 21. Greg and Jenn (Bonsall) have found a house in Minneapolis, MN. FMC is in the process of identifying someone to take on the responsibilities of coordinating First Day School and Youth Programs on an interim part-time basis. As a community, we will have an opportunity to say good-bye to Greg and his family in a Zoom farewell celebration which will take place on Sunday, April 18, from 6:30 to 8:00 pm.

- David White for the Reopening Working Group announced that a discussion session focused on reopening the Meetinghouse will be held on the FMC open Zoom channel on March 27, from 10:00 am to noon.

Letter of Introduction for the Ehler Family**2021-013**

Jan Nisenbaum, on behalf of the Clerks Team, shared a letter of introduction for Ben and Anna Ehler and their daughter Rory, who recently moved to Milwaukee, WI. FMC has been blessed by their presence, their joy as a family, and their vital participation in our community. Their care and commitment have deeply enriched us all. We will miss their presence at FMC and we send them off with much love and good wishes as they embark on this adventure of work and life closer to family members. A few changes to the letter were suggested and accepted. The full text of the revised letter can be found in the March 14 edition of *Minutes & Reports*.

Letter of Support for a Salem Quarterly Meeting Grant Application**2021-014**

Deborah Colgan, on behalf of Clerks Team, read a letter of support for a Salem Quarter grant application from Cathryn Oliva-Simmons (member of Fresh Pond Friends Meeting and Clerk of the Quaker Life and Outreach Committee of the Cambridge Friends School Board). The application is for a grant of \$3,000 for the 2021-2022 school year that will pay for training in Quaker faith and practice for Cambridge Friends School (CFS) staff, faculty, and families. The CFS Quaker Life and Outreach Committee has worked closely with David Tierney, CFS Head of School, and with the CFS Board of Trustees in developing this grant proposal. Feedback reveals that staff, faculty, and Board members are eager to see more education in this area, especially focusing on the “how to do it” of Quaker process.

Currently, seven members of FMC serve on the CFS Board of Trustees. More importantly, all FMC members are members of the Cambridge Friends School Corporation. Thus, CFS is under the care of FMC. Out of our love and care for CFS, the Meeting for Business approved sending this letter of support on behalf of the whole of FMC. The full text of the letter can be found in the March 14 edition of *Minutes & Reports*.

Avison Fund Committee 2021 Grant Recommendations**2021-015**

Cynthia Knowles, Clerk of the Avison Fund Committee, read the names of those serving on the Committee—*Erin Bumgarner-Harris, Lance Drane, Elizabeth Dyer, Betsy Hewitt, Cynthia Knowles and Diana Lopez*. Cynthia expressed appreciation for the Committee’s work in discerning this year’s grants. She also expressed gratitude for the Fund itself—the Kathryn and Charles Avison–Miriam Avison Charitable Fund—and FMC’s collaboration with The Boston Foundation in distributing these yearly grants.

Cynthia reminded those gathered that due to COVID-19 and other factors, the Committee used a streamlined process for this year’s granting process, while remaining in compliance with the Fund’s mission and restrictions and staying faithful to Quaker process. The Committee focused on finding organizations mostly in the wider Boston area and serving communities hardest hit by COVID-19, with a deep concern for communities of color and for food security for children.

In addition to making certain of each organization’s financial soundness and their clarity on how they will use the monies, the Committee gave attention to a number of factors in their discernment, all detailed in their full report. Three of the organizations chosen have been highlighted in *The Boston Globe* for their creative and effective work.

The recommended grants total \$100,000 and were originally spread among ten grantees. One group was not able to receive the grant; thus, the Committee decided to increase the grant to Food Link to \$20,000, given their important work with food security.

The recommended grantees are as follows:

- Two Quaker Groups — Friends Center New Haven and Friends Camp in Maine were each recommended to receive \$10,000 (abiding by the Avison Fund requirement that Quaker groups receive no more than 20% of a given year's distribution.)
- Seven Boston-area organizations — Six to receive \$10,000, with Food Link to receive \$20,000, for a total of \$80,000.
 - Boston Alliance of Lesbian and Gay + Youth (BAGLY)
 - Community Learning Collaborative (CLC)
 - Food For Free
 - Food Link
 - La Colaborativa (formerly the Chelsea Collaborative)
 - Massachusetts Center for Native American Awareness
 - UTEC (United Teen Equality Center)

Full details about the organizations, their work, and how they will be using these funds can be found in the March 14 edition of *Minutes & Reports*.

Friends approved these recommendations with gratitude for the Committee's faithful discernment, especially their effort to be guided by members of the communities that will be benefited by the grants.

Cynthia also shared that by March 2021, all eight of last year's grantees sent in progress reports (see a list on the FMC website and in the full report).

Good Friday Witness for Peace and Justice Flyer—Peace & Social Justice (P&SJ) 2021-016

Gail Rogers, Co-Clerk of Ministry and Counsel (M&C), reported that M&C has appointed a Meeting for Worship with attention to peace witness on the Boston Common for Friday, April 2, 2021 from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm.

Raymond Aucoin, Co-Clerk of Peace & Social Justice Committee (P&SJ), shared that last year (2020), because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the FMC-hosted Good Friday Witness for Peace and Justice Witness was suspended for the first time in over 50 years. Raymond and all Friends on P&SJ are deeply grateful that FMC can hold the Witness for Peace and Justice this year on the Boston Common.

Ray read this year's proposed flyer aloud. Friends expressed appreciation for the Committee's work and offered some suggested edits. Friends approved the edits and the flyer for use at this year's Good Friday Witness for Peace & Justice. The full text will appear in the March 14 edition of *Minutes & Reports*.

Report on March 6 Threshing on the Budget as a Moral Document

2021-017

Patricia Wild shared a synopsis of the March 6 threshing session on the FMC budget as a moral document. She read the queries which guided the discussion and noted some of the themes and questions lifted up, including a possible "alternative budget" that might better

express who we are and what matters to us. (Notes from the threshing session are included in the March 14 edition of *Minutes & Reports*.)

Patricia noted that this work will continue with particular attention to hearing from as many people across FMC as possible. The Meeting for Business in Worship recommended that Clerks Team in collaboration with other committees and working groups across the meeting should discern what groups should have care for continuing these discussions.

The Meeting for Business in Worship adjourned at 3:00 pm, with Friends intending to gather next in a Meeting for Business in Worship on Sunday, April 11, at 1:15 pm on Zoom.

Richard Ristow, Co-Presiding Clerk
Polly Attwood, Assistant Recording Clerk

Letter of Introduction for the Ehler Family

Clerk of Milwaukee Monthly Meeting
Milwaukee Friends Meeting
3224 N. Gordon Place
Milwaukee, WI 53212

Dear Clerk:

It is with great pleasure I write a letter of introduction to commend into your care our dear Friends, Ben and Anna Ehler, and their daughter Rory who recently moved to Milwaukee. Ben, Anna, and Rory have been very active within our meeting community participating in the full life of the meeting. Ben was a former Quaker Voluntary Service Fellow participating in the Boston Quaker Voluntary Service program. Anna has served on our First Day School and Youth Program Committees. Ben and Anna have been faithful attenders and vital members of our FMC community. Since infancy, Rory has been a delight in our First Day School program and an endearing presence at Family Worship.

We are blessed to have had them worship among us. Their care and commitment to community life have enriched us all. We are deeply sorry to see them leave but recognize the wonderful opportunity and adventure of work and life closer to family members. Although we will miss their presence in our community, we wish them well.

We hope you will open your arms and embrace this wonderful family and grow to love them as much as we do.

On behalf of the Clerks Team, Friends Meeting at Cambridge

Jan Nisenbaum, Co-Presiding Clerk

Letter of Support for Salem Quarter Grant Application

March 14, 2021

Dear Members of the Salem Quarterly Grants Committee:

Friends Meeting at Cambridge is writing in support of Cathryn Oliva-Simmons's leading to provide training for Cambridge Friends School staff, faculty, and families in Quaker Faith and Practice. She is submitting an application to the Salem Quarter for a \$ 3,000 grant to expand this endeavor for the school year 2021-2022. Cathryn is a member of Fresh Pond Meeting and currently is Clerk of the Quaker Life and Outreach Committee of Cambridge Friends School Board. She has led the Quaker Life and Outreach Committee in presenting three separate forums on Quaker history and testimonies this year to the CFS school community. Her leading is to expand these in-depth educational programs by drawing upon the wisdom and practices of seasoned Friends within Salem Quarter and New England Yearly Meeting. We believe this is a timely effort to undertake since the School hired a new Head two years ago, new faculty for this school year, and anticipates more new faculty this upcoming school year.

The Quaker Life and Outreach Committee has worked closely with David Tierney, Head of School, and the Cambridge Friends School Trustees. Feedback is that staff, faculty, and Board members are eager to see more education in this area, especially focusing on the "how to do it" of Quaker process. In addition the inclusion of seasoned Friends from other meetings within Salem Quarter and New England Yearly Meeting as presenters will increase CFS family, staff, and faculty awareness of the diversity of thought and practice among New England Friends.

All of the members of Friends Meeting at Cambridge are members of the Cambridge Friends School Corporation. Currently seven members of Friends Meeting at Cambridge serve on the Board of Trustees for Cambridge Friends School. Our community loves this school and wants it to flourish within the Quaker tradition. This letter of support was approved by Friends Meeting at Cambridge Monthly Meeting on Sunday, March 14, 2021.

In the Light;

FMC Clerks Team: Polly Attwood, Deborah Colgan, Ariel Maddocks, David Myers, Jan Nisenbaum, Richard Ristow, Jonathan Vogel-Borne

Avison Committee Grant Recommendations

The Avison Fund Committee researched 29 organizations. In our discernment process, we gave attention to:

- Whether the organization's work would have a direct relationship to the mission and purpose of the Avison Fund.
 - As possible, the organizations were run by people who reflected the community they serve.
 - Clarity about how the grant would be spent.
-

- Grant amounts would be significant to organizations that receive them and whose work will have widening impact.
- The financial soundness of organizations receiving grants.
- Serving immediate needs amplified by COVID-19, including feeding children.
- We researched each group through past information, social media, GuideStar (a public website for non-profit information), and in consultation with The Boston Foundation, which provided additional information on the finances of non-profits led by Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). Three of the organizations we chose were later highlighted in *The Boston Globe* for their creative and effective work.

The recommendations are for a total of \$100,000. There are nine grant recommendations. (The grants were approved by Meeting for Business in Worship on March 14, 2021.)

QUAKER GROUPS: As outlined by the Fund, up to 20% of each year's distribution may go to Quaker organizations.

- Friends Center for Children, New Haven, CT \$10,000
- Friends Camp in South China, ME \$10,000

WIDER COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

- Boston Alliance of Lesbian and Gay + Youth (BAGLY) \$10,000
- Community Learning Collaborative (CLC) \$10,000
- Food Link \$20,000
- Food For Free \$10,000
- La Colaborativa \$10,000
- Massachusetts Center for Native American Awareness \$10,000
- UTEC (United Teen Equality Center) \$10,000

DETAILED INFORMATION ON EACH GRANTEE ORGANIZATION

The Boston Alliance of LGBTQ+ Youth (BAGLY) is a resource for LGBTQ+ youth in Boston Area Communities. Funding will be used to provide leadership development, programs, health services including mental health, and direct services including grocery store gift cards, clothing and hygiene care packages. BAGLY will provide services to homeless and housing insecure LGBTQ+ youth, especially youth of color.

Community Learning Collaborative (CLC) is a collaboration of Inquilinos Boricuas en Acción, The BASE, the YMCA, and Latinos for Education under the umbrella of the Boston YMCA and was founded to build an integrated, multi-pronged continuum of services for children of low-income working families. Funding will specifically support the continued operation of 12 learning pods, which provide full day care and support with remote learning. Youth are organized in pods of 13 students per staff person. The learning pods are located within walking distance of children's homes or close to families' workplaces. Students start their day with a healthy breakfast and participate in an opening circle activity, then log on to remote learning led by their schoolteacher from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm, with program staff

playing a supporting role. Following the school day, students engage in coaching, mentoring, enrichment (e.g., dance, music), and/or gross motor activities (e.g., sports, yoga) provided by a diverse and experienced staff. In addition to breakfast, children also receive a healthy lunch and afternoon snack. CLC currently serves 798 students. When in-person schooling resumes, CLC will address the massive impact on students' learning during the pandemic. The YMCA will transition the hours that they offer their programs, but will use funding to provide the higher level of academic and social/emotional support that will be required.

Food For Free, Cambridge, MA: When the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) cut deliveries for its "Farmers to Families" food box program in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, it left greater Boston food pantries without critically needed food. Food For Free responded by creating its own food box program, the "Just Eats Grocery Box" program. They partner with the Boston Area Gleaners and the Boston Housing Authority to deliver approximately 500 boxes weekly to food pantries and community organizations in Cambridge, Chelsea, East Boston, Somerville, and other communities. The organization is supported by other donors through The Boston Foundation.

Food Link, Arlington MA: Food Links is a food rescue organization serving 20 communities in Eastern Massachusetts. Food Link recovers fresh, nutritious, and wholesome surplus food and distributes the food to food pantries, afterschool programs and low-income housing facilities. In 2020, 36,000 children received food from Food Link.

Friends Camp, South China, ME: Friends Camp is part of New England Yearly Meeting. It serves New England youth and beyond with affordable summer camp embodying Friends testimonies and values. They anticipate giving at least \$40,000 in campership funds and discounted tuition this year. In addition to the need for scholarship funding, they are making a number of improvements to the camp property required by pandemic restrictions—for example, installing additional windows and ventilation in nine cabins, building two brand new cabins in order to space out camper sleeping quarters more, modifying their laundry room, creating an isolation space at camp, and significantly increasing their number of small outdoor gathering spaces such as picnic tables and fire circles.

Friends Center for Children, New Haven, CT: During the pandemic, Friends Center for Children (FCfC) kept open its two New Haven locations by implementing extraordinary protocols, building a new outdoor classroom, and strengthening existing community partnerships.

Since March 2019, Friends Center for Children built upon its long-standing partnership with Food Rescue, the community program run by Haven's Harvest, to donate surplus and near-expiring groceries to organizations and families in need. Working in collaboration with Haven's Harvest in the lead up to Thanksgiving, they were able to produce emergency food boxes for 25 Friends Center for Children families and staff each week. Friends Center for Children is writing letters to landlords regarding rent suspension; and has created a COVID-19 support fund which to date has paid out \$16,580 in rental fees.

Previous Avison funding four years ago allowed transformational progress in their "Adverse Childhood Experiences Program," which allowed for additional training and staff to support children with adverse experiences, all too common in the population served.

La Colaborativa, Chelsea, MA, was begun in 1998. Formerly the Chelsea Collaborative, it expanded in 2002 to work with youth by starting a year-round, paid youth employment program for 200 people aged 15-21 from Chelsea and surrounding towns. They are given

mentorship and youth readiness training while being paid in jobs based on their interest, skills, and ability to commit. La Colaborativa also helps develop leadership skills in these youth around organizing for housing justice in the Chelsea housing crisis. This has been especially critical during this time of pandemic in keeping youth engaged, healthy, productive, and working towards their educational, professional, and leadership goals, given hardships including remote learning and widespread isolation.

Avison Fund monies would not directly be supporting the following services, but La Colaborativa also distributes food and diapers through their food pantry. They do housing advocacy to keep families in their homes, provide cash assistance, and offer support applying for public benefits. They help people pursue citizenship, access COVID-19 testing, and seek medical care. They provide multilingual information and other resources to parents to help support families and children.

Massachusetts Center for Native American Awareness (MCNAA), Danvers, MA, works with Native as well as non-Native children and youth. They are virtually presenting interactive workshops and talking circles led by people with expertise benefiting children 8-18 years old on Native American values, philosophy, and traditional ways that help address issues of low self-esteem, and not feeling validated or welcomed. The children are given emotional support and practical assistance to help develop leadership skills and find opportunities to succeed. The workshops help Native youth and young adults validate their indigenous identity in a dominant culture that devalues an Indigenous way of life. Board members and practitioners help create hands-on traditional approaches to understand the social effects of COVID-19 and build emotional, mental, and spiritual resilience during this time.

Additionally, they purchase and distribute grocery store gift cards and offer scholarships for college-age students between 18-22 by providing assistance with room, board, books, travel, and other college-related expenses.

UTEC (United Teen Equality Center) in the Lowell, MA area (including Haverhill and Lawrence) serves young adults and their families. The organization focuses on issues of social justice, peacemaking, and gang violence prevention with justice-involved adults 18-24 years old. Our grant would be used for childcare, transportation, and parenting skills at 2Gen Center for impoverished preschool children of young adults in their programs.

PROGRESS REPORTS from grantee organizations in 2020

By March, all eight of last year's grantees sent in their progress reports, all of which encouraged and inspired us with the ways they have put the Avison monies to good use. They are listed on the FMC website under the Avison Committee (fmcquaker.org/outreach/avison-fund). They are: Boston Project Ministries, Cambridge Community Center, Cambridge Friends School, Cambridge School Volunteers, Convergence Ensemble, Edinburgh Center, Food For Free, and Friends Peace Libraries.

Contents of the Good Friday Witness for Peace and Justice Flyer

[This was approved by the Meeting for Business in Worship, March 14, 2021.]

**Please Join In Our
Good Friday Witness
for Peace and Justice**

2021

Today members of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) stand in silent worship on Boston Common, as we have for over 50 years. We passionately believe in “that of God in everyone” and bear witness to the notion of

ESTABLISHING LASTING PEACE IN OUR TIME.

We represent Quakers around the world who know that systemic racism, environmental degradation, hyper-militarism, xenophobia, religious intolerance, gender expression and sexual orientation-based preference discrimination, as well as other such destructive concerns, are detrimental to the establishment of lasting peace and justice.

We understand that Quakers cannot promote peace alone and that peace cannot exist without justice.

So, we are asking you to join us in our witness for peace and justice this Good Friday by visiting some like-minded organizations’ websites. Think about how you might be inspired to support their efforts intended to advance the cause of peace and justice for us all:

- *The Friends Committee on National Legislation (fcnl.org) 800-630-1300*
- *Massachusetts Peace Action (masspeaceaction.org) 617-354-2169*
- *Louis D. Brown Peace Institute (ldbpeaceinstitute.org) 617-825-1917*

This witness was planned and organized by

**Friends Meeting at Cambridge
(617-876-6883 - fmcquaker.org)**

Here are more organizations you can support to help peace grow!

Racial Justice Organizations:

Black Lives Matter: [BlackLivesMatter.com](https://blacklivesmatter.com)

BMA Ten Point: 617-445-2737 - BMATenPoint.org

Boston Ujima Project: UjimaBoston.com

Community Change Inc: 617-523-0555 - CommunityChangeInc.org

Jobs Not Jails: 617-491-3729 - JobsNotJails.org

Union of Minority Neighborhoods: 617-942-7577 - UnionOfMinorityNeighborhoods.org

United American Indians of New England - UAINED.org

YMCA Cambridge: 617-661-9622 - CambridgeYMCA.org

YWCA Boston: 617-585-5400 - YWBoston.org

Environmental, Peace, and Justice Organizations:

350.org: 350.org

Extinction Rebellion Massachusetts: XRMass.org

Global Zero: GlobalZero.org

Mothers Out Front: 617-520-4970 - MothersOutFront.org

Sunrise Movement Boston: facebook.com/SunriseBoston

Religious Organizations:

American Friends Service Committee: 617-661-6130 - AFSC.org

Cooperative Metropolitan Ministries: 617-244-3650 - CoopMet.org

Fellowship of Reconciliation: 845-358-4601- FoRUSA.org

Greater Boston Interfaith Organization: 857-350-2373- GBIO.org

Jewish Peace Fellowship: 845-358-4601 - JewishPeaceFellowship.org

Muslim Peace Fellowship: 215-635-0636- MuslimPeaceFellowship.org

Pax Christi Massachusetts: 508-655-7739 - PaxChristiMA.d

We grieve for all violence in the name of religion and are mindful of the historic use of Good Friday as a day of violence against Jews.

Notes on Threshing Session on the Budget as a Moral Document

Opening Words/Framing:

Patricia Wild welcomed all on behalf of the Clerks Team, Imagining Faithful Structures Working Group, and the Interim Coordinating Team—the three groups co-sponsoring and supporting this time together. After all those present introduced themselves aloud, Patricia provided the following questions and reminders.

Does Friends Meeting at Cambridge (FMC) tithe? (She was not asking us to answer; rather this question invites us to seek new and different ways to look at and understand the budget.)

What does looking at the budget through a spiritual framework help us explore?

She noted that FMC spends about 16% of our total budget for support of MAAP, NEYM, discounts for rentals by groups, and small grants to a number of groups each year.

She reminded us that we have been in a pandemic for a year now and that has had a tremendous impact on all of us and influences how we come to these questions now.

Jan Nisenbaum then acknowledged that talking about money and budgets can be challenging. We spent time in worship with the prompts:

- *What brought you here this morning?*
- *What do you/we hope to learn as we listen to Spirit, and to each other?*

Patricia read the following queries, on which we shared in small groups:

- *What is your biggest fear about talking about the budget?*
- *What makes you uncomfortable about discussing FMC's budget?*
- *What does "the budget as a moral document" mean to you?*

Sharing back what rose up in groups:

I'm unsure that I understand the underlying question or concern that prompted this threshing session. Is it about whether our budget is moral, or a more specific issue(s) (selling property), both, or another issue? Apologies if I overlooked this info.

Not terribly phobic about the budget. Tithing is useful in talking about social equity issues, but it doesn't make sense in our budget. FMC is like a ping-pong table; good players stand far back from the table, but it's still central to the game. Some examples of what FMC, as the table, has supported include: Sanctuary, draft counseling, and Cambridge Friends School. FMC allows people to go out and follow their leadings and come back for rejuvenation and spiritual guidance. The budget is important to enable FMC to be there, but tithing is about each person, not about FMC itself. The Meeting's existence is what FMC's budget is about, and is what is essential for each of us.

I have a hard time talking about the budget, because I'm low income. In our culture, money partly determines our identity. Talk about the deficit makes me sad and fearful because to eliminate the deficit—it feels like that means eliminating me. I know these thoughts are not rational but that is what comes up for me in response to the query.

Financial discussions are personal; we bring our own experiences and resources to them.

The ping-pong metaphor makes sense to me, and the tithing idea seems personal. We can bounce off FMC only if we ensure that it's there.

Can the budget be a moral document? Yes and no. The amount spent on something does not reflect its importance. If we call the budget a moral document, then the opposite is an immoral document—do we mean to set up this dichotomy? It is a moral document in that we want to include things we care about. Is balancing the budget a moral question? Some say yes, some no. The question of moral or not is just part of our judgment of the goodness of the budget.

There seems to be two ways to look at the budget as a moral document: is it a question of generosity, or is it a question of justice?

In thinking about generosity and justice, I think these are not really opposed; I'm wondering what different assumptions are at play and what is called out from us, as individuals and community, from these two points of view.

Asking what does Justice require of us is different than asking what does Love require of us. These two measures are both within God and Justice is moral and Love isn't always.

What do you do if your organization is given "dirty" money? Does it matter where it comes from (PPP loan, for example)?

Why am I here? For me, I feel a responsibility to listen for God's guidance; that's what this part of the session is about: how do we use/share our resources?

Next, we moved into small groups to focus on questions of stewardship:

- *What values do you want to see reflected in our budget?*
- *How do you see the testimony of stewardship and other testimonies reflected in our current budget?*

Discussion afterward:

Simplicity is a big issue for us; our big buildings are far from simple.

We should consider a different way of organizing the budget. Typical business-like budgets are not simple; they do not allow us to see why we have allocated resources in the way we have. Instead of first thinking of the nitty-gritty details of where money comes from and where it goes, we might first consider our goals and how we should divide our resources to try to achieve them. This would be more of a top-down approach, which will allow us to keep in mind what the budget is for, what we value, and who we are. Simplicity is a starting point. Typical budgets aren't simple, and they make it very hard to know how to change things. If you start with goals, you can change how we understand the budget and how we can make meaningful changes. Such a practice simplifies our thinking: what will the money do?

Stewardship is an obvious value that the budget calls for. I consider stewardship as involving all our gifts—spiritual and material. They are not owned by us, but are given us by Spirit; they come through us. Spirit leads us to see how to care for, sustain, and invest these resources.

Money is a tool; it does not in itself have moral value. The value it does have is shaped by both the capitalist system we live in and then by how we use it as guided by our values and by Spirit.

What's the institution of FMC good for? Is it important to protect the institution? How does owning property and buildings fit in? Would we rather be in a meeting unburdened by property? Or do we need institutional stability? We have different responses to these questions.

A budget should be inspirational. (Ours emphasizes staff/buildings, not witness). The institution of FMC is about the love between us, not buildings, especially big buildings. I want a budget that reflects our being present for each other and for the larger community, not a hamlet at the end of a circular driveway. The recent Sanctuary work was interpersonal, interfaith, and inspirational. Those are the values I want to see. We shouldn't operate from the basis of fear; we aren't going to run out of resources if we operate on the basis of faith. There is a holding on that we are experiencing; we need to find a way to let go, be willing to go forward, to learn.

There is a conflict of values; we often come to the same divide in meetings like this threshing session. To welcome folks to Quakerism, we need more staff and we need to pay staff well, resulting in more expense. On the other hand, there is value in spending less. The building makes a lot possible, but is very old and expensive, reflecting upper middle-class, old white Quakerism, and maybe we aren't like that anymore. We really need to look at our relationship to the building.

Lots of my energy has gone into working on issues of the building, staff, and how decisions about those things are Spirit-led. We have wanted simplicity, but there are complications coming from a need for inclusivity and accessibility (ramps, elevators, sound systems). Now

we are planning reopening in an accessible way. There is a real challenge in these conflicts. It's personally important to me to consider all these details, which reflect care for each other.

Money is required in our society for us to live. That fact influences every level of morality; and money can also be manipulative, an incentive. On the other hand, it could be enabling, rather than an incentive. How can we provide work that is empowering. We need to avoid the stark divide. Make sure staff can thrive. Money influences our priorities—clear resources being spent on my work, and we need money to live. The other side is listening to Spirit; how does Spirit call us out of this system? How can we thrive in a system that promotes/exploits scarcity?

Jan showed a **slide on the current fiscal year budget**: 53% on staff and benefits, 22% on buildings and grounds, 5% office and administration, 18% to outreach/inreach, 2% committee expenses.

Worship sharing on this:

Budget is nitty-gritty and doesn't reflect what we're doing. For example, the staff expenses are separated from the different slices of the pie chart. (Office manager should be part of office expenses; facilities manager part of buildings and grounds expenses). NEYM giving is different from other contributions. The budget isn't immoral, it's amoral—doesn't show what we care about and what we're really doing.

It's important to wrestle with this and with the work we put into making this small amount of money work for us.; We're so frugal—it's not about morality. It's amazing that we do what we manage to do with this small of a total budget. We could never rent facilities like what we have for so little. And it's pretty clear that our staff is living close to the bone.

I'd like to see another document that reflects our goals and how much money and resources go into each goal. A budget can't easily show this. We probably need a conventional budget, but a second document, analyzing from the point of view of goals, would perhaps help.

I think we need another form of budget, an aspirational budget. There are about 120 people coming to Meeting for worship on Zoom. Maybe we should give each \$100, to do with what they see fit. We would be saying we believe in you, you speak for us, we trust you. Tell us, if you will, how you spent the money. What would we learn from that? Imagine how far-reaching we would find ourselves, how we would be enabling our attenders/members to do what they are led to do. It would be interesting to find out what we could learn from this.

We should include time volunteered in the budget. Have we asked people how they feel their time has been used; would they like to be used better; how much do people volunteer anyway? What would a volunteering pie chart look like? Sometimes time is harder to give than money. Need to take both into account. Aspiring to connect with other communities is a time thing—we need to know where we are now if we ever want to move out. Sometimes we don't look at how our time is apportioned. We should discern about where we are led as a Meeting.

In addition to what are our goals, what do love, justice, Spirit (as intertwined) call us to live into?

Currently, the budget doesn't reflect investment in nurturing gifts and leadings.

I realize that my feelings are often guided by memories of what's been important to me, spiritually. So does that mean the value of "nostalgia" is big for me?

Recently we have approached the budget from an attitude of scarcity rather than abundance, which constrains our ability to be generous. Stewardship includes consideration of support for our spiritual gifts as well as managing our money.

How does our budget reflect “faith”?

The budget is not the whole picture. We need to include the resources volunteered to us to identify how we are really using all of our resources.

Perhaps we need another “budget” (perhaps called by another name) to reflect our goals, short-term achievements, progress toward long-term ones, and more. We could compare/calibrate the two better.

Wondering about the both/and— that for different ones of us, time is our resource, and for others, money is our resource . . . this can change over time. So what is “easier to give” varies tremendously and examining these assumptions, not as good or bad but as influential, is also part of this work.

Can we see that our budget is a living moving thing, that is also in a large part giving?

There is an ocean of giving and receiving. Can we not hold onto money? Can we know that all resources are the Earth’s—not human?

LOOKING FORWARD (Patricia): We’re committed to having more conversations about all this. We’ve learned some new ways to look at where we are going.

I like the idea of a program-based budget. Who will do that? It’s a big, difficult job (we usually just roll over one budget to the next with small tweaks). We would need input of time from all of us.

Thank you to all the people who do the financial work on the budget. The budget is ours, it’s not something that is imposed on us.

In future threshing about the budget, we need people who work on it to be included in the planning.

Having paid staff enables some Friends who couldn’t afford to give their time for free to participate in the work of the Meeting.

Before closing in worship, Patricia clarified: Imagining Faithful Structures Working Group was part of the planning of this, and they will continue, and will definitely include Trustees and other financial people in planning future events. More work to come.

Notes by David L Myers and Polly Attwood

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Return Service Requested

Meetings for Worship at FMC

5 Longfellow Park, Cambridge

Sundays 10:30 am
5:00 pm
Wednesdays 8:30 am to 10 am

South Shore Preparative Meeting

155 Washington St. (Rt. 53), Pembroke
Sundays 10:00 am
Jim deVeer
781-982-0653

Worship Group at Brookhaven

1010 Waltham Street, Lexington
Sundays 10:30 am
Elisabeth Cotten
781-862-7578

Other Nearby Worship Opportunities

Acton Friends Meeting,

Contact Clerk, acton@neym.org

Amesbury Monthly Meeting, 120 Friend St., Amesbury

Sundays 10:00 am

Beacon Hill Friends Meeting, 6 Chestnut St., Boston

Sundays 10:30 am

Cambridge Friends School, 5 Cadbury Rd., Cambridge

Tuesdays 8:30 to 9:00 am

Framingham Friends Meeting, 841 Edmands Rd., Framingham

Sundays 10:00 am

Fresh Pond Monthly Meeting, CFS Cambridge

Sundays 10:00 am

Lawrence Monthly Meeting, 15 Forest St., Methuen

Sundays 6:30 pm

Nashoba Worship Group, nashobaquakers@gmail.com

Sundays 10:30 am

North Shore Monthly Meeting, 74 Hart St., Beverly Farms

Sundays 10:00 am

Wellesley Friends Meeting, 26 Benvenue St., Wellesley

Sundays 10:30 am