



September 8, 2024

Minutes & Reports

Friends Meeting at Cambridge

Meeting for Business in Worship

September 8, 2024

Inside this issue:

<i>Minutes, Sept 8th MBW</i>	1
<i>Process for Coming to Community Agreements</i>	4
<i>1st Draft, Community Agreements</i>	5
<i>Shared Comments on Community Agreements</i>	6

Friends Meeting at Cambridge gathered in a Meeting for Business in Worship on Sunday, September 8, 2024, at 1:15 pm. After a period of silent worship, with 20 people present on Zoom and 38 people in the Friends Room, Ariel Maddocks opened the Meeting. Ariel expressed gratitude for Friends' collective wisdom and participation. Everyone introduced themselves.

Clerks for the Day

2024-029

Ariel Maddocks asked the Meeting for permission for her to serve as Presiding Clerk, and David L Myers to serve as Recording Clerk for today's meeting. Friends approved this service.

Announcements

2024-030

Alberta Guise, for the *Ad Hoc* Adult Spiritual Education Group, announced that she will be leading a program to form and support new small groups at FMC to build personal connections and to strengthen our community. More details will be coming in October; in the meantime, contact Alberta with suggestions and questions at smallgroups@fmcquaker.org.

Springuel-Kirk Marriage Report

2024-031

Elizabeth Claggett-Borne reported that Elise Springuel and Dylan Kirk had a beautiful wedding on August 17 in the Meetinghouse under the care of the Meeting. Nora Sullivan, who was on the Care of Wedding Committee, said, "It was a beautiful day with many loved ones in attendance. Elise and Dylan are avid boaters and followed the ceremony on Saturday with a water-borne exchange of 'paddlers' vows'. Thanks to all who attended and have supported this couple as they embark upon their marriage." We had a moment of prayer for our newlyweds. It was pointed out that the whole Meeting is committed to the support of this marriage and, indeed, of every marriage under our care.

Staffing Report**2024-032**

Lauren Mawe, Staff and Administrative Manager, reported that her Parental Leave is imminent.

It is scheduled to start at the birth of her child or no later than September 13, and to end on March 5, 2025. A detailed coverage plan has been developed and will be implemented when her leave starts.

Lauren reported that Alasdair Post-Quinn and Amanda Marcus have shared the news that their rebuilt condo is nearing completion and they will be able to move from the Friends Center apartment in the coming months. Given a number of factors with various levels of uncertainty, Alasdair has very graciously committed to stay in his present Maintenance Manager role until Lauren returns from Parental Leave. The plan is now for a transition to a new Interim Maintenance Manager for April 1st, 2025. The Blue Sky Group, Trustees Committee and Lauren are engaged in conversations about how to ensure that maintenance work is uninterrupted, while creating opportunities for community reflection on size and shape of the maintenance role and the use of the apartment. They are actively discussing how best to achieve both of these priorities. David White, Co-Clerk of Trustees Committee, has graciously accepted to lead this process while Lauren is on leave. The community will be kept up to date as the conversation evolves. If Friends have specific ideas, questions or suggestions, please email trustees@fmcquaker.org

Finally, Lauren reported that staff evaluation comments from community members and staff were received in the spring for Lauren Mawe (Staff and Administrative Manager), Alasdair Post-Quinn (Maintenance Manger), Zoe Zurad (Youth Ministries and Education Coordinator) and Amy Mercure (Office Manager). Each met with their supervisor or supervisory committee to discuss strengths and growing edges. All four are in good standing, and their employment is continued.

The Meeting held Lauren, the rest of our staff, and the imminent child in the Light.

Those who want to pray with others for Lauren, the baby, and our staff transitions may contact Elizabeth Claggett-Borne.

Blue Sky Recommendation for Community Agreements**2024-033**

After a period of worship, Jennifer Hogue, for the Blue Sky Group (which consists of Jennifer Hogue, Clerk; David Myers; Anne Thompson; TylaAnn Burger; Tom Sander; Zoe Zurad; Lauren Mawe; Gail Rogers; Betsy Roper; and MaryGrace Menner), emphasized that Blue Sky Group's meetings are open, and all are welcome to help the Group in their deliberations. Jennifer pointed out the welcome presence in our community of new Friends with little background in Quaker ways and the erosion of our practices as a result of our daily exposure to partisan politics and contentious debates in society at large. As a result, she said, it is time for us to reacquaint ourselves and recommit to practices which have stood Quakers in good stead over the centuries. We will always bump into one another, but with mutual understanding we should be more able to find our way.

To accomplish this, Blue Sky recommends the following program:

- Blue Sky Group will introduce draft community agreements (in the next item on this agenda), with advices and queries to follow.
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- Committees, small groups, affinity groups, etc., will be asked to take time to discuss, season, and practice with these agreements (using prompts such as, “what does it feel like to have a set of agreements like this?” “what is missing?” “what makes you uncomfortable?”)
- Groups and individuals will be asked to send their feedback to Blue Sky Group at blueskygroup@fmcquaker.org or to anyone in the group.
- Blue Sky Group will hold threshing sessions to further practice with and season the community agreements, starting on September 29.
- The Meeting will be asked to approve the revised set of agreements.
- If and when approved, the Meeting will display these agreements in our meeting spaces. We should remind each other of them. We will refer to them during our time together and amend them as needed.

Questions and comments followed Jennifer’s presentation.

- Friends were appreciative and grateful.
- Does this set of community agreements apply only to business meetings, or can this be expanded to all the other interactions in the community?
- Can this become an intergenerational process, extending to our young people?
- This incorporates the wisdom of the ages and yet recognizes continuing revelation, a fresh view in our time.
- To the question, “Is there a hoped-for timeframe for this process?” Jennifer answered that we’ll work on this during the fall, but we’re waiting for Light to be shed on our further path.
- Note that small-group discussions can continue this fall—before, during and after the threshing sessions.
- How can we ensure that small groups will talk about this? Existing groups will be urged to allot time for this and to send Blue Sky Group their feedback. There also will be threshing sessions, of course.
- People could invite others to come to their homes to discuss the evolving community agreements, especially others who don’t necessarily belong to a group, or come to Business Meeting in Worship; we need to be creative here.
- In 2018, community guidelines were introduced by Ministry & Counsel. They were not adopted at Business Meeting in Worship, but a minute of exercise was written. The issue did not come back for consideration, so this is very welcome. It will be a wonderful experience if we follow what was stated in the earlier document: “We believe in, we celebrate, and are asked to nurture the best in one another, i.e., ‘to answer that of God in everyone.’ We believe that our community is built upon the richness and depth of our relationships with one another. We believe that trust is foundational: we trust that each of us will act with integrity.”

The Clerk asked if we were in unity to enter into this process for developing community agreements. Friends approved. The full text of the draft Blue Sky Group document describing

the concern and the process for developing and approving community agreements will appear in the September issue of *Minutes & Reports*.

Worship-Sharing on First Draft of FMC Community Agreements

2024-034

We read the Blue Sky Group's First Draft of the Community Agreements, one person per item. We entered into a period of reflection, prayer and sharing. It was clear that there was a deep sense of the meeting that proceeding with this process is yearned for and will benefit the Meeting greatly. The text of the draft will appear in the September issue of *Minutes & Reports*, along with notes on what was subsequently shared during the meeting.

The Meeting was adjourned at 3:20 pm, after a time of worship, with the intention to meet again on Sunday, October 6th, 2024 at 1:15 pm.

Ariel Maddocks, Presiding Clerk for the Day
David L. Myers, Recording Clerk for the Day

Process for Developing Community Agreements, Approved at Meeting for Business in Worship, 9/8/24

The Concern

For a long time, our agreements about how to interact in our Quaker community were passed on implicitly- folks picked up on the agreements through osmosis over time. But in recent years, not only have we been joined by many new folks with little background in Quaker ways, but many of our practices have been eroded by the power of the cultural forces that surround us. We live in a time of partisan politics and contentious debates, and these attitudes and behaviors have invaded our Quaker spaces.

Thus, it is time for us to reacquaint ourselves and re-commit to practices which have stood Quakers in good stead over the centuries. If practiced with discipline and love, rather than having a stifling effect on our interactions, these community agreements will permit us to address the conflicts that will naturally arise in ways that encourage trust, openness, and creativity.

Blue Sky Group has compiled this list of agreements, and the advices and queries to follow, from a combination of multiple Yearly Meeting Faith and Practice publications as well as from organizations that build "brave spaces" together. We offer this document as a starting place and look forward to creating something together that works for FMC.

Process for Testing and Approving Community Agreements

- Blue Sky Group introduces draft community agreements (with advices and queries to follow).
 - Committees, small groups, affinity groups, etc., take time to discuss, season, and practice with these agreements.
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- Groups and individuals are asked to send their feedback to Blue Sky Group at blueskygroup@fmcquaker.org or to any one in the group. Putting it in writing helps.
 - Blue Sky Group holds threshing sessions to further practice with and season the community agreements, starting on September 29.
 - The Meeting is asked to approve the revised set of agreements.
 - If and when approved, the Meeting displays these agreements in our meeting spaces. We remind each other of them. We refer to them during our time together and amend them as needed.
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Blue Sky Group's First Draft of FMC Community Agreements, 9/8/2024

The Spirit of our Interactions

- We proceed “with the understanding that everyone is acting with sincerity and based on their understanding of the leadings of the spirit.”
- We speak for ourselves - from our experience, from the Light we are given, and from our hearts; we express our views faithfully, but refrain from pressing them unduly.
- After speaking, we release our concerns to open ourselves to new Light; we remember that we may be mistaken and stay open to new understandings and the presence of the Spirit moving among us.
- We do not criticize the views of others or work to persuade them; we humbly and respectfully question or challenge ideas, not the individuals who offer them.
- We listen with resilience, “hanging in” when something is hard for us to hear; we are open to having our ideas questioned or challenged respectfully.
- We respect each other’s experiences and feelings by taking responsibility for the effects of our words and actions.
- We take responsibility for holding each other accountable with curiosity, love, and compassion.

Our Interactions in Practice

- We try to speak only once to a particular item and are mindful of sharing time.
- We refrain from repeating what has already been spoken.
- We do not respond immediately to an offered message, but speak from the Light we are given in worship.
- We allow time between speakers for the gift of the message to be received in Spirit.
- When in a clerked meeting, we wait to speak until we are recognized by the Clerk, and we address the Clerk rather than another individual.
- We speak only to the matter under consideration.

- We ask questions to check out our assumptions, understandings, and sources of disagreement.
 - We hold all serving F/friends and their work in the Light with gratitude and respect.
 - When the Meeting comes to a decision, we accept it as “ours” rather than “theirs”.
 - We abide by these agreements in all of our interactions: during meetings, in small groups, face-to-face, and online.
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Notes on What was Shared After Hearing the First Draft Community Agreements, 9/8/2024

- Hearing these read was very moving and I am very grateful.
 - Missing is the idea of seeking help during conflict that goes beyond human help (reliance on Spirit, God, the wisdom of ancestors, not just us).
 - The ground feels very insecure among us, which makes it hard to worship together sometimes.
 - Something else needs to be included: conflicts and better ways to deal with them.
 - The spirit in this document is very strong. We need to say that we prepare for Meeting for Business in Worship and discussions by reading and respecting each other’s work.
 - I haven’t been sure that doing discernment is a gift of mine, but this has restored some of my faith that healing has begun.
 - Bringing items to Meeting for Business in Worship: advance documents should be available a week in advance, at least; some of us need time to absorb them.
 - This feels like balm. We need to ask, “how can I support this particular Meeting for Business in Worship?”
 - I have felt here the whole Meeting, a resurgence of us as a community, coming out of pain and pandemic. I celebrate this.
 - We need to know what we are trying to achieve through these agreements. How will we know that we have accomplished what we want to accomplish? How will we feel during disagreements and conflict, given these agreements?
 - I feel great gratitude for this. We should lift up explicitly how this relates to our traditions.
 - As a new attender, I have appreciated this very much. I wonder, though: there is a posted set of community guidelines; will there be confusion with this new set of community agreements? What is their relationship to each other?
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- We need to think how to apply these to newcomers, those who have never come to Meeting for Business in Worship, those who feel the community is hard or impossible to break into. We need to figure out how to get their support and input.
- I recommend that we peruse the draft queries from the new *New England Faith and Practice* about business discernment.
- This was a Meeting for Worship in which a little business was done, rather than a Meeting for Business in which little worship was done. This works better.

Friends Meeting at Cambridge

5 Longfellow Park, Cambridge, MA 02138-4816 www.FMCQuaker.org

Blue Sky Group: TylaAnn Burger, Jennifer Hogue (Clerk),
MaryGrace Menner, David L Myers, Gail Rogers, Betsy
Roper, Tom Sander, Anne Thompson
blueskygroup@FMCQuaker.org

Lauren Mawe, Staff and Administrative Manager (on family leave)
adminmanager@FMCQuaker.org
617-876-1868
During Lauren's leave, send Programmatic/Staffing Inquiries to
supervisory@FMCQuaker.org

Amy Mercure, Office Manager
office@FMCQuaker.org
617-876-6883

Zoe Zurad, Youth Ministries and Education Coordinator
youthministries@FMCQuaker.org
413-251-6512

Alasdair Post-Quinn, Maintenance Manger
maintenance@FMCQuaker.org
617-354-3383

To receive links to publications or to join the community listserv, email: office@FMCQuaker.org

Meetings for Worship at FMC

5 Longfellow Park, Cambridge

Sundays 10:30 am
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
Harriet Kaufman
781-862-2386

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

Mill City Quakers, millcityquakers@gmail.com

Nashoba Worship Group, nashobaquakers@gmail.com

Sundays 10:30 am

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

Sundays 10:00 am

Three Rivers Monthly Mtg, info@threeriversmeeting.org

Alternate Thursdays 9:30 am

Wellesley Friends Meeting, 26 Benvenue St., Wellesley

Sundays 10:30 am