

Visalia Friends Meeting
17208 Ave 296 Visalia, CA 93292

Newsletter

July, 2010



Visalia Friends Meetinghouse

social and civic responsibility

In the words of William Penn, *“True godliness don’t draw men out of the world, but enables them to live better in it and excites their endeavors to mend it.”* Elsewhere he commented: *“It is a reproach to religion and government to suffer so much poverty and excess.”*

Poverty within a wealthy society is unjust, cruel, and often linked to skin color, gender, and language. We must examine our own privilege and role in the economic order that deepens this disparity. Friends should be alert to oppression and injustice, and persistent in working against them.

We value our part in shaping the laws of our country. Our task is to see that laws serve God’s purposes and build a just social order. Our first allegiance should be to God, and if this conflicts with any compulsion of the state, we serve our country best by remaining true to our higher loyalty.

If, by divine leading, our attention is focused on a law that is contrary to God’s law, we must proceed with care. Before acting, Friends should pray for further guidance and speak with the Meeting, family members, and all those who might be affected by the decision. If a decision involves disobedience to the law, we should make the grounds of our action clear to all concerned and be prepared to suffer any penalties without evasion. As a community, we must care for those who suffer for conscience’s sake.

- What am I doing to carry my share of responsibility for the government of our community, nation, and world?
- Am I persistent in my efforts to promote constructive change?
- *How do we attend to the suffering of others in our local community, in our state and nation, and in the world community?*
- *Do we try to understand the causes of suffering, and do we address them as a Meeting?*
- *How do we, individually and as a Meeting, support the organizations that work to bring the testimonies of Friends into reality in our society?*

**Visalia Friends Meeting
Meeting for Business
July 11, 2010**

Members and Attenders Present: Ginger Curtis, Kelsey Curtis, Beth Lovett, Bill Lovett, Patty Howard, Heather Howard, Joanne Dudley, David Dudley, Cayman Howard, Joy Marshall, John Dackawich, Shirley Dackawich, David Chandler, Graciela Martinez, Louis Araujo, Melissa Alberti-Araujo, Jalene Vincent Welch

After reviewing the agenda, Interim Clerk Ginger Curtis read Advices and Queries on Social and Civic Responsibilities from "Faith and Practice". Ginger also read a profile of the recently departed Friend Elise Boulding. She was the author of "Children and Solitude", a Pendle Hill pamphlet amongst other works. Her obituary is posted on the Meeting bulletin board.

The Meeting began in silence.

Mail: Ginger reviewed the mail. All pieces of mail will be available on the back counter in the "TODAY" folder. A request by the MOWA Choctaw Friends Center was presented asking if we wished to remain on their mailing list. The sense of the meeting was that we will discontinue receiving their information. Their recent brochure was given to Joy Marshall.

Reading of the Minutes: Minutes from last month were read. Jalene will continue as recording clerk until next term. The Meeting is grateful to David East for his years of service as recording clerk.

Corrections to the minutes: Olga McAllister resides at 73 Molenstraat, Visalia, CA 93277. Minutes were accepted as corrected.

Business:

Naming Committee: It was decided last year in business meeting to implement a Naming Committee which will select individuals to serve on the Nominating Committee. Discussion followed about the necessity of a Naming Committee in consideration of our small meeting size. The unity of the meeting was to proceed with a Naming Committee which will recommend a Nominating Committee at the August business meeting. Joy Marshall, Melissa Alberti-Araujo, and Graciela Martinez volunteered for the Naming Committee.

Gay Marriage: The clerk read the revisited request by the Claremont Monthly Meeting that we join them in not marrying anyone under the care of our meeting until all marriages are legally recognized in the state of California. Discussion followed. A request was made to hear the opinions of Friends within our Meeting who are affected by Prop 8. Several Friends agreed that the Meeting should remain in support of all marriages regardless of gender and hold to our previously established minute affirming all couples the right to be married under the care of our meeting.

Committee Reports:

Unity with Nature: Committee Clerk Joanne Dudley presented two picture boards depicting our Unity with Nature activities. One was pictures of the wildflower hike in May. The other display board had information about the evening event in April with Jan Spencer on Permaculture and Sustainability. Joanne requested that PYM attendees report on the displays from other Unity with Nature Committees presented at PYM. Also a testimony from Strawberry Creek Monthly Meeting titled Earth Care was read. (see copy included in the minutes). The Unity with Nature committee recommends that VFM adopt this testimony. The Meeting agrees to season the recommendation.

Ministry and Oversight: Olga McAllister resides at 73 Molenstraat in Visalia. She welcomes visitors. A new phone tree is being assembled. Melissa presented a rough draft and asked for participants to double check it for accuracy and placement.

Audit and Budget: The 2009-2010 Budget report for the 9 months of 10/1/09 – 6/30/12010 was presented by David Dudley. It was reviewed and accepted as presented.

Outreach: Committee Clerk Graciela Martinez reported that David Chandler has undertaken the responsibility of maintenance and upkeep of the Visalia Friends Meeting You Tube site. David Chandler indicated that he has made all videos on the site private for meeting members only, until the videos are approved. He also said he posted a picture/video montage made by Sandra Sturdavant. Clerk Ginger asked what the approval process was for the videos. It is unclear from previous Business Minutes if the meeting as a whole or the Outreach Committee would be responsible to review the You Tube videos. Graciela Martinez said that the Outreach Committee would view and approve all videos before any would be posted for public viewing. Luis Araujo felt that some sort of legal disclaimer should be drafted to the effect that “not all videos represent the views of all Friends of Visalia Friends Meeting”. Bill Lovett agreed with the drafting of such a disclaimer. Joy Marshall voiced concern about the licensing of music used in some of the videos and wanted the meeting to be mindful of legal and licensing problems that might arise. After much discussion, Heather Howard suggested that the confidence of the meeting be placed on Graciela Martinez and the Outreach Committee as for the appropriateness of all the videos. Clerk Ginger felt that the sense of the meeting was that the Outreach Committee would be responsible for approval of the videos, drafting of the disclaimer as well as protecting the meeting concerning licensing issues.

Library: no report

Childrens Program: no report

Building and Grounds: no report

The Meeting ended in silence.

Respectfully submitted,
Jalene Vincent Welch, Melissa Alberti-Araujo

Visalia Friends Meeting 2009/2010 Budget Report

9 Months 10/1/2009 through 6/30/2010

Prepared by David Dudley

	Actual	12 Mo. Budget	Difference as of 6/30/2010
INCOME			
Contributions	8,116.00	11,320.00	(3,204.00)
ContributionsPYM Travel	-	30.00	(30.00)
Facility Use	4,602.00	9,000.00	(4,398.00)
Interest	8.98	12.00	(3.02)
Misc. Income	264.00	62.00	202.00
TOTAL INCOME	12,990.98	20,424.00	(7,433.02)
EXPENSES			
<i>Administration</i>			
Accounting	60.00	50.00	(10.00)
Bank charge	-	25.00	25.00
Child Care	2,234.83	2,975.00	740.17
Children's Program	127.23	200.00	72.77
Library	32.94	200.00	167.06
Miscellaneous	195.27	100.00	(95.27)
Monthly Newsletter	49.41	100.00	50.59
Outreach	182.00	200.00	18.00
PYM & Quartly Mtg Assistance	64.00	200.00	136.00
Taxes	526.10	620.00	93.90
TOTAL Administration	3,471.78	4,670.00	1,198.22
<i>Donations Other</i>			
Ad hoc Donations -	80.00	300.00	220.00
CCCO Western Region	200.00	200.00	-
Foodlink Tulare Co.	200.00	200.00	-
Habitat for Humanity	100.00	100.00	-
Quaker Oaks Farm	200.00	200.00	-
Sequoia Mediation Center	200.00	200.00	-
TOTAL Donations Other	980.00	1,200.00	220.00
<i>Donations to Quaker Orgs.</i>			
AFSC	200.00	200.00	-
College Park Qt. Mtg. @\$2	-	64.00	64.00
Earlham School of Religion	100.00	100.00	-
El Salvador Scholarship	550.00	550.00	-
FCNL- FCL	200.00	200.00	-
Friends House Santa Rosa	200.00	200.00	-
Friends of Radio Grito	200.00	200.00	-
Friends World Comm.	100.00	100.00	-
Pro Nica	100.00	100.00	-
PYM	1,216.00	950.00	(266.00)
PYM-Youth Program	1,200.00	-	(1,200.00)
Quaker Bolivia Link	200.00	200.00	-
Quaker Center Ben Lomond	200.00	200.00	-
Quaker House NC	200.00	200.00	-
Ramollah Friends School	200.00	200.00	-
Sierra Friends Center	200.00	200.00	-
United Nations Quaker Office	200.00	200.00	-
Western Friend	682.00	700.00	18.00
TOTAL Donations to Quaker Orgs.	5,948.00	4,564.00	(1,384.00)
<i>Meeting House Operations</i>			
Child Play Area	1,015.25	2,000.00	984.75
Cleaning	2,420.00	2,860.00	440.00
Electricity	717.38	900.00	182.62
Food-Coffee	49.00	100.00	51.00
Garbage Disposal	42.00	84.00	42.00
Heating gas	917.96	800.00	(117.96)
Housekeeping Supplies	102.37	400.00	297.63
Improvements	13.08	200.00	186.92
Insurance	1,465.85	1,650.00	184.15
Pest Control	330.00	396.00	66.00
Repairs	1,080.32	800.00	(280.32)
TOTAL Meeting House Operations	8,153.21	10,190.00	2,036.79
TOTAL EXPENSES	18,552.99	20,624.00	2,071.01
OVERALL TOTAL	(5,562.01)	(200.00)	(5,362.01)

See Other Side

Visalia Friends Meeting Account Balances
As of 6/30/2010

ASSETS

Bank Accounts

Friends Meeting	2,908.79
Off Budget-Other Purposes*	<u>1,425.27</u>
*(AVP 794.27 Heather H. 425.00 Greg/Araujo 125.00 Emer. Fund 81.00)	

TOTAL Bank Accounts 4,334.06

Investment Account

CD	14,214.91
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TOTAL ASSETS 18,548.97

LIABILITIES 0

OVERALL TOTAL 18,548.97

Friends: Below is a copy of a letter to the Meeting from the M and O Committee sent a few years ago. Ministry and Oversight would like to discuss the issues mentioned here at our next Meeting for Business. Would you read through this to prepare. Thank you, Greg

A Letter to Visalia Friends from their Ministry and Oversight Committee

Dear Friends,

We, the Ministry and Oversight Committee, desire that each person has a quality experience as we gather for worship. We'd like to share some thoughts about the environment of our Meetings for Worship to serve as a basis for discussion.

We notice that a few attenders enter the room when they arrive and sit quietly; however, when the door is shut at 10:30, other folks remain awhile in the kitchen, dining room or solarium, and some converse in the vestibule, occasionally with voices audible in the Meeting room. For about ten minutes the door opens and closes as folks quietly straggle in to worship, which makes it difficult for those already there to center down. Consequently, the time for worship is shortened and the overall quality is diminished. Occasionally a person rises to speak before enough time has passed for reflection on the previous ministry. Toward the end of worship, the children enter, which they almost always do quietly and orderly; however, the time of their entry varies. On some Sundays it's at the very end, which deprives them of a worship experience. When minute hands close in on 11:30, there is noticeable fidgeting and glances directed to the Clerk communicating that it's time to close the Meeting.

In light of this, let's think and talk about the following:

~If we all arrived already in a worshipful mood, each of us might go directly into worship, saving conversation and business until after the Meeting. Devotional reading or meditating before we arrive are a couple of things we might do individually to prepare.

~Some Meetings have planned activities prior to worship, such as singing, discussion groups, and Bible study.

~When the door is shut at 10:30, we might delay entry for late arrivals for ten minutes, as some other Meetings do, and then all latecomers can enter at one time, which would cause only one interruption.

~The assumptions of un-programmed silent worship are that a person speaks only from the light of the moment, that a person speaks only after resisting the urge, and that after each spoken ministry a reasonable time is allowed for all to reflect on what was said. Do we agree on these?

~Understanding that the nature of activities affects when the children enter, we might ask the Children's Committee to set a regular time for entry, preferably no later than ten minutes before the end of worship, and then deviate from that time only when necessary. Would it be feasible to extend the worship a few minutes on days the children enter late?

~In the past many Quaker Meetings didn't have a set time to end worship. When a "weighty" member felt from the sense of the Meeting that worship was over, he or she would turn and greet a neighbor, a gesture that then spread through the gathering. Sometime in the past, Visalia Friends Meeting decided that worship would begin at 10:30 and end about an hour later. Our practice has been to make the Clerk responsible for closing. Do we have to end right on the dot of 11:30 (earlier on the day of Meeting for Business)? Does the Clerk always have to be responsible for doing this? Would it be all right for anyone who sensed that worship for the group was over to rise and greet a neighbor?

There may be other concerns about the quality of our worship. If we all look silently into our hearts to dwell for a moment in the light, together we might create optimum conditions for our weekly hour of worship together.

In a spirit of love and peace,

Ministry and Oversight Committee
Visalia Friends Meeting

EARTHCARE

"It would go a long way to caution and direct people in their use of the world, that they were better studied and knowing in the Creation of it. For how could they find the confidence to abuse it while they should see the great Creator stare them in the face in all and every part of it?" William Penn, 1693

"In the distress of the earth, we can hear the calling of God to care, just as in the past we have heard God in the sufferings of the poor...the commonwealth of people and the commonwealth of the earth have become inseparably interrelated and interdependent. Our thinking about God and the world, and the way we live in relation to them, must now give recognition to that fact." Rex Ambler, 1990

We seek to live our lives in reverence for all life on Earth, encompassing the right-sharing of the world's resources amongst all people and all species. Friends are called to enter into right relationship with Earth and the community of life it supports.

Friends see that of God within all life. We celebrate the mystery and wonder of our world and the gifts of nature that sustain and support us. At the same time, we see that human actions are undermining and destroying Earth's capacity to continue to bring forth these gifts. We hold these gifts in deep reverence, respect, and gratitude.

Friends recognize that those who suffer most from the destruction of Earth's gifts are the poor and the powerless. The wealthy, industrialized nations bear the greatest responsibility for this condition. We strive to find solutions to environmental damage that include peace and social justice for those people most affected by unequal sharing of the world's resources.

Much like a household that overspends its budget, humans are rapidly depleting Earth's resources with excessive, unwise consumption and a growing population. We are called to modify our daily, personal choices and to work at the local, national, and global levels to ensure the resilience of Earth. We feel a sense of urgency to bring our lives into right relationship with the community of life on Earth. We are called to be faithful to continuing revelation in these matters, to be transformed in our habits as our hearts and minds are opened.

**Even
The exhausted blade of grass
That breaks through the concrete
Listens
To the Wind's Song
And
Knows that it would be foolish
To do otherwise.**

On April 11, 2010, Strawberry Creek Monthly Meeting approved a testimony on Earthcare after several years of discussion and seasoning. This highly significant action, of course, goes well past a "minute" in committing its members to care of the planet as a fundamental part of their spiritual lives. Joe Morris, PYM Unity with Nature Clerk

The Visalia Friends Unity with Nature Committee recommends Visalia Friends Meeting adopt this Earthcare testimony.