

25.02.2017

First large group gathering for “New Thing.”

**Called by:** Reps at mid-year boards

**Coordinated by:** Krissi Carson (Hillsboro), Julie Peyton (West Hills), Catherine Olson (North Valley), David Peyton (West Hills), Rachel Hampton (West Hills), Gil George (Hillsboro), Helen May (Camas), Norma Silliman (Camas)

**Location:** Hillsboro Friends Church

**In attendance:** (See list)

Acting Clerk: David Peyton

Acting Recording Clerk: Krissi Carson

I. Opening:

- A. Julie gives a brief opening introduction
- B. Catherine introduces those who lead this meeting
- C. David gives an explanation of the role of Presiding Clerk
- D. Krissi introduces herself as recording clerk
- E. Elders introduce themselves: Bernie Bosnjak (Hillsboro), Gil George (Hillsboro), Lynn Holt (North Valley), Jim Miller (Camas), Greg Morgan (West Hills), Catherine Olson (North Valley) and Elijah Walker (West Hills)
  1. Catherine explains what elders are here for today

II. Catherine opens us in a time of listening followed by brief introductions of each person in the room.

- A. Meetings represented: North Valley, West Hills, North Seattle, Camas, Hillsboro, Eugene, Newberg, Reedwood, InBetweeners (YA group), Bridge City (North Pacific), South Salem, Tigard, Silverton, Spokane, Freedom Friends
- B. Words people are bringing or feeling (spoken during introductions): hope; curiosity; excitement; interest; “turning a corner;” optimism; a new hope; baby steps, tears and hope, mixed feelings, relationships; “my entire self;” grief and excitement (roller coaster); a sense that today we’re on holy ground; a broken heart; a hope of reformers; new life; openness to a spirit that is entirely wide and entirely inclusive; open heart; thankful; a waiting and anticipation and much hopefulness; listening heart; seek calm, love, and understanding; anxiety; thankfulness and seeking; solidarity; here to witness and listen; waiting; wonder; open heart and open mind; “a visual representation” (Bob Henry); wide eyes; a big heart; peace after rejection; a certain sense of satisfaction; anticipation; sadness and service; hoping we can “love one another as I have loved you”; everlasting love and eagerness; sanctuary; positive energy; listening; excitement about positive energy I’m feeling here; cheerfully optimistic; hoping people who have been rejected feel welcome; bring the nurturing of the mother (Spokane Friends member); bring a bridge I’ve been dragging around my entire life (Lawson); laboring under a gospel message that I hope I can get out when the time is right (Peggy, Freedom Friends); open ears and open heart

- III. Lorraine Watson talks about the process of listening to God.
- A. Most important work we can do together today is to listen in community to God who is present. God is inviting us to pause and listen. We listen best when we set aside our agendas.
  - B. David moves to sit in the middle of group and gives brief practical reminder on the structure of waiting.
- IV. Time of listening:
- A. Thomas Magee asks what is the purpose behind 'speak to the clerk'?
  - B. member encourages people to ask God to come into their grief.
  - C. Gil George reads out the Beatitudes.
  - D. David Peyton speaks: Asks the meeting to go again into a time of silent worship with the question, "Is there a question we are called this afternoon to address?" Let us sit with that.
  - E. Julie Peyton: We need to be willing to make mistakes. "How long can I wait until I know? How do I *not* try to control this?"
  - F. Spokane member: When we go back as information bearers, it would be an encouragement to have suggestions about next steps.
  - G. member: I long for a yearly meeting that can treasure unity and diversity. My question: "Can we agree to disagree?"
  - H. Peggy (Freedom Friends), gives message: I felt I should call out the name Charlotte Macy for several reasons. Probably not everyone here knows her history. She was birthright Quaker, recorded, founder of Silverton Friends. There is no evidence that Charlotte was heterosexual. I can also say that she loved Dorothy Barrett for many years. I can say nothing about that love, but I know their ministry was very blessed. Their ministry was welcomed and celebrated as long as they did not talk about the nature of their love. But that's not why I bring her up today. I bring her up because she knew a thing or two about building a building. She built the original Silverton Friends Church with her own hands. So many stories, but this is the one I feel led to tell. When they were putting up that building, Charlotte, who had a keen eye, walked into the building one morning and looked at a beam and said, Fred that beam looks off plumb to me. He said, I just used a level. She said, "It's about 3° to the south, Fred." She put that level up and darned if it wasn't off 3° to the south. (Shows us a plumb bob). That plumb bob is pointing directly to the center of the earth right now. The force that's doing that is gravity, magnetism. The center is so strong that the forces of gravity will make this string point directly to the center at all times. That's plumb. That's true. I can't hold it still, but as I move about, it adjusts and points straight and true to the center. There are very few things that are straight and true, and in spiritual things there is exactly one thing and only one thing that is plumb. If God is the center, the force that draws anything toward the center is love. Love is always true. Love is always plumb. It will never fluctuate or let go. It draws all things unto itself, and everything is attracted to it. Gravity doesn't pick and choose which bodies it calls. Gravity calls everything unto itself. So does love. (has

someone hold out a board and make it level. Measures board with level.) If I have things right, and it's entirely possible I don't, I would be perpendicular to plumb. We're always building things. We build tabernacles, we build edifices, we build churches. We try to lay down a nice solid foundation. We might call that Christ. We might call that Quakerism. We build a foundation and we try and make it level. We try and make it plumb. The minute we put down that foundation, it's going to be slightly off plumb. It's never going to be perfect. It's going to be slightly off. There is no institution, no edifice, no house, nothing in this world built by human beings that isn't a little bit off plumb. (Now tries to hold a piece of wood perpendicular to the board.) We may try and make that 90°, but it's going to be a little off. (Adds a second perpendicular piece of wood.) We try to make these parallel, but I guarantee you Charlotte would say it's off a little. Let's put a board on top of it. If you keep doing this, the fancier this building gets, everything's going to be off kilter. We have all been in a situation where we have all been in something built by humans and we know it's crooked as all get out, and we find ourselves getting dizzy. We get sick. Eventually, we just knock the whole thing down. And we try again, because that's what we do. But the most critical piece of equipment is a plumb bob. My soul has one, and your soul has one, and when you're near someone else who is aligned to God, you're drawn to them and sometimes you walk into a house and you say, "Well this house is a little too crooked for me." You may walk into another and love it. But we do not worship houses. Charlotte built houses because she loved NWYM. Here's what Jesus has had to say to me recently, "I don't really care about our edifices, denomination, etc. I care about love." He doesn't give a fig for what we're going to build except as it might be a place where people can love. So as you get ready to start, to think about building something, think about simplicity, simplicity. Keep it simple. Maybe not a cathedral, maybe not a house. Maybe a gazebo would be nice, a gathering place, where people pull out a plumb bob of God's love and the only thing they judge is how plumb or not plumb they, themselves are to that line.

- I. Cherice Bock: offers a query: What does it mean for us to be the friends of Jesus in the Pacific Northwest in 2017? What's the foundation we want to build on? What directs us to the plumb line? What are the things we no longer need to hold onto?
- J. Lynn Holt: What compels me—us—to form a new yearly meeting? Seems it needs to be more than just because we've been told we have to.
- K. Bernie Bosnjak: intuition says slow down, slow down, slow down. Picture that came to me, "I have a beautiful new home being built, but I'm in the home I'm in right now and there's a difference on whether I have been evicted from my home or whether I've made the choice to leave my home and can therefore take my time to leave. Either way, even if what I'm going to is wonderful, I have to empty my home. It's kind of arduous and bothersome and burdensome. My release to leave my home and go to my new home has to feel as if I'm finished. Wrestling with not feeling ready to leave my own home. I have something to do with my old home to

make leaving it an OK thing to release. Are we free and ready to move on and how individual a decision is that?

- L. Greg: I have no sense of what we are in the process of becoming, and I don't need to know that. I'm deeply moved by the desire to be a community of love and to show I'm also deeply moved by what different places we find ourselves in. In response to that, only questions I can think of are, "In this community of love as we sense it, what do we have--each of us as individuals--that we can offer and what do we need?"
- M. Paul Frankenburger: What is it that we need to keep in mind as we move forward? Scripture: 1 Cor 12, which defines the body. What you see in there is just because you don't feel adequate doesn't mean you're not part of the body. Just because you want to send someone else out doesn't mean they are no longer part of the body. We are constrained to find complete unity without throwing anybody away. When Jesus was calling Levi and the pharisees were asking why are you meeting with these people, Jesus responds, go and learn what this means. I desire mercy and not sacrifice. Matt. 12:30 Whoever is not with me is against me and whoever does not gather with me scatters. I think things we need to keep in mind, we do need to be focused on love, totally inclusive, to be together, to invite others in a way that isn't exclusive. If you have a spirit of divisiveness, you don't have a spirit that's holding. The body of Christ is not ours to tear apart.
- N. Jade Souza: What work still needs to happen before we move forward? I'm mindful of those who will be left behind if we move before working. Can we take time to intentionally hear from those who have a strong sense that there's more work to be done around our relationship to YM.
- O. Anna Baker: Challenge of possibly be members of two meetings?
- P. member: How do we view, feel about, and treat the people who are forcing us to move?
- Q. Bethany Muhr: Something happens when you get pushed out. You start meeting those you never really knew were there. You start seeing the places where the building was hurting people.
- R. David summarizes thus far: What I'm perceiving from the meeting at this point are a couple of things: 1. There is a certain group within us which is looking back at NWYM and saying I'm still a part of that, or even if I'm leaving I still have business there. I can't leave yet. Then there's a certain amount of movement for I want to move forward but I don't know where that is. YM says we need to move forward because there is business to do. But this meeting is saying, we're not ready. So that's where we are, unless the meeting tells me differently in the next 45 minutes or so.
- S. David answers Thomas's question: In meetings where people haven't spoken "to the clerk," that has turned into a business meeting and not a meeting for worship in the manner of business.
- T. After summary from David, member asks: It feels like an institution, a body, a bully, went and told somebody, well you don't like our YM then make your own.

Are we listening to the bullies? Are we thinking we'll make a new YM because we don't want to be ousted.

- U. [Break for 10 minutes]
- V. A.J. Mendoza: Every LGBTQ person in this room is perfect, is not sinful. I have a message that's going to be hard: I don't feel very much in unity with the sense of the meeting that's been articulated, because I would describe a lot of it as a straight sense of the meeting. I have been categorically removed from NWYM after 4 years of my agency and presence being denied. It's an indignity I wouldn't visit upon anyone. So to hear people talk about not wanting to hurry to their new home while they're sleeping in their own house, while I'm sleeping on the street, is not good medicine. It tastes bad. Do you think I would feel welcome walking into a dually affiliated meeting? Do you think I would feel welcome after being categorically cut out? If so, you would be wrong. I'm asking you to adopt the position of somebody who can't go back. That's a hard ask, but Quakerism should have consequences. For Christ's sake, it needs to have consequences.
- W. Elijah Walker: When we arrived, I said that I was bringing my whole self. That includes my gender identity as a trans person and my sexuality as a queer person. I have a concern that in our conversations today and in our meeting for worship, we are thinking a lot about, as A.J. said, the straight sense of the room. I want to be sure that whatever we do, my hope and prayer is we choose to make a safe and welcoming space for every LGBTQ person. When I first settled in for worship today, I was thinking, why are we here? We're here because we were forced out. A handful of communities said, we want to be a safe place. Whatever we do next, we need to hold that leading in mind.
- X. member: In the New Testament of the Bible, Jesus keeps company with what are considered some of the most sinful, awful people. Those are the people he goes to, reaches out to, searches for. Because he wants to introduce them to love. I've been asexual for the past ten years, but prior to that I was bisexual. I was hurt by a lot of people and I thought that was God hurting me, hating me, and not wanting me. I don't ever want to be that person. That is not showing God's love.
- Y. Gil George: There's a saying that what you see depends on where you sit. I've been on the margins for a year and a half and the view is very different from the edges, or as I like to call it, the true center. Where did we find Christ? On the edges, away from where everyone thought was the center. When I was pastoring, I also found a whole bunch of people who were previously a part of the YM and no longer had a spiritual place to rest their head. And by God's grace, I was able to receive healing from the grace of others who were wounded. I'd like to share some healing: The view from the margins is incredibly different. There are people here who don't have a choice of whether or not there is a next step. Wherever we are, the folks on the margins have a much different view of what's going on. The folks that are on the receiving end of a much shorter stick have a much different view, and I think we have to, as Christians and followers of Jesus, defer to the margins. I'd like to declare my solidarity with the four churches who are forced to

leave. My leading is to remain committed to you as my family of faith, however this plays out.

- Z. Courtney Bither: At the break I was asked how this is going for me. At first I said good and then actually it wasn't so good. But after the last few people spoke, I've been feeling better. I've never, in the presence of a body of believers been told that as an LGBTQ person, I matter.
- AA. Becky Ankeny: I have a lot of things to say and some questions to ask. I just want to say that going forward the biggest question to ask is why? If there's a good answer to that then so be it, but if it's just because it's the way it's been done than not. I've become a little averse to the idea of membership. I'm really sorry for being blind. I've always wanted the church to be a place where there was space for anyone who wanted to know Jesus better, but I admit that I have been unable to see the cost when you're not allowed in or not allowed to be fully yourself inside. I'm sorry for it, and I'm sorry for my part in it. I thought I could do some good from the inside, but I undoubtedly also did harm, and I'm sorry. And I don't want to go back. What God has said to me is, "Shake the dust off your feet." I want to be part of a congregation that says people are welcome and their gifts are welcome and we want to walk alongside people getting closer to Jesus, just like we want to walk alongside and not be judged and dismissed. As part of the next steps, I'm part of a congregation that is tearing themselves apart. There's manipulation behind the scenes and ugliness in front of the scenes and I can't stop it. I can't fix it. But I've seen grace is the important thing and I can't go back to rules and laws. And knowing Jesus is the important thing. And I want just to ask the congregations represented here to spend time with Jesus to know what our calling is as congregations. If we need to do things together then that's what we do next. I just want to ask Jesus to help us know the next thing to do and to open our hearts.
- BB. Carla: I remember this passage meant a lot to me, "When one member of the body suffers in pain, the whole body suffers with it." What we've been hearing here attests to that. What is keeping us from discerning [...] from everyone in this process.
- CC. Lynsley: I'm hearing there are four congregations out and others that have not conversed about it and others who are really desperately hurt because they were targeted by NWYM. How long will this process take? If you have a congregation that might be interested, go home and talk about it. Don't wait another year and come back and say we didn't get around to it.
- DD. Elizabeth Price: I have a very short true story. I had a car. I loved the car. It was costing me more than I could afford in maintenance. So John said let's buy a new car. But I wasn't ready, so I repaired the car. Some repairs were put off. And then this December a tree fell on my car and totaled it. And I said, how about we take the insurance money and repair it. And John said, "No." Folks, for those of us in Eugene and the other churches, for the LGBTQ community, the tree has

fallen on the car! Please let us move forward. If you aren't ready, yet, that's OK, but please don't hold us back.

EE. member: I've heard some say we aren't sure, and then I've heard others from the LGBTQ community and others who are being forced out. What's happened to those people is they've been forced to go out on their own. They've been scattered. And now we're invited to join their community. If we don't move forward with a solid stable space, we're telling our LGBTQ people they deserve to be scattered and alone. We do whatever we can as parents to make sure our children are cared for. Let's make sure when the LGBTQ leaves here, they know they have a body they are loved in and welcomed in.

FF. Ben Climer: I just want to say, "Hallelujah!" It felt incredible, and I heard quaking in the voice of A.J., and that was incredible and moving. And I heard some quaking in the voice of my wife (directly above), and that was amazing.

GG. Clyde Parker: I want to offer a little bit of insight into the process that's taking place. YM has said there will be a restructuring specifically for the four churches. That is process. Whether or not churches feel they want to align themselves, there are people among those four churches who want a sense of community. There was a meeting on Feb. 18<sup>th</sup>. Not a lot came from that meeting. Another meeting of the transition team is set for March 18. On Apr. 22nd there will be a meeting at Eugene. (He invited people to come to the meeting in Eugene to continue the conversation started here.)

HH. Jim Miller: This week I have put a lot of thought into our situation. Prior to that I was looking toward YM with hope that we could address the issue, the issue being rules and regulations. I abhor all of that. We're at a place to redo, to reform. My thinking has been the dynamics of reformations—Luther, Fox, Elias Hicks. And the issue was how do we read the Bible? Who do we choose as authority? At Camas for the past two years we've had a righteous discernment process, and we were put on probation for it. We were in violation of a man-made doctrine. Faith & Practice, a thing we made up, it's rigid. I keep hearing we want to get back to home base. Well, we don't have a home base. Ed Bacon said, I will die for my belief but I will kill for my doctrine. Fifty years from now, I don't want our grandchildren doing that again.

V. David begins to close: What we got from the second portion was a call to remember that we're not all the same and our question is who we are. And some of us have relationships and some of us have been hurt beyond belief. Two questions from Babylon 5: "Who are you and what do you want?" And they're two sides of the same coin.

A. Connor: I'd like to request a minute: We commit that this meeting (the meeting today) is a safe space for the LGBTQ community whatever other decisions are made and recognize that we have not been in the past.

1. Bob Henry asked to write minute on board so we can see it.

2. **Final minute:** This meeting commits to being a safe place for the LGBTQ+ community no matter if it becomes a yearly meeting or not. We recognize it has not been a safe place in the past.

- VI. Catherine wraps up: Our work here is not done. Our work is never done because part of our work is knowing each other. We are all doing work in our own communities, so I am going to ask, “Right now I feel Christ calling me to... and I want people to shout out an answer.
- A. Right now I feel Christ calling me to...
    - 1. Pray
    - 2. Serve
    - (Catherine asks for more specificity)
    - 3. be an awesome stay at home dad
    - 4. serving the housebound elderly
    - 5. teach English
    - 6. serve the youth of this community
    - 7. to offer a ride for people going to Eugene, April 22<sup>nd</sup>. I would love the LGBTQ+ community to ride with me so I can get to know you better
    - 8. keep talking about institutional racism
    - 9. finding the needs of your community
    - 10. chit-chatting with my congress people
    - 11. assembling Evangelical Quaker affirming work in NE Portland
  - B. Catherine announces that further gatherings amongst this group will happen only as people feel called to organize one.
- VII. Tiz Walker closes in prayer and opens dinner.
- VIII. Dinner begins at 5:30 and continues until everyone had disbursed.