



Homewood Friends Meeting

Peace Committee -- informal report December 4, 2016

1. Peace Vigil continues each Friday, 5-6 pm in front of the meetinghouse, with primary banners *Black Lives Matter* and *We are All One People*.

Responses continue to be overwhelmingly positive, and appreciation voiced to vigilers.

We continue to enjoy the faithful participation of some Stony Run Friends and some new faces from time to time from Homewood. This week 12/2 we were joined by ~ 15 William Penn Fellows from Friends School of Baltimore (who also held their annual retreat overnight in our meeting house, and who joined in the court watch earlier in the day).

This year's Christmas Vigil will take place on December 16, 5-6 pm, prior to the pageant and potluck. Some thematic variants are planned, perhaps adding *LOVE THY NEIGHBOR – No Exceptions*. Please join us – weather permitting we will have candles too, and also a peace tree on which to hang your wishes for creating a resilient loving and peaceful reality. As is a beloved Homewood tradition, following the vigil the children will perform a seasonal pageant (carol singing may be involved), followed by a potluck meal in the social hall downstairs. There will also be *letter writing to prisoners of conscience* during the potluck after the pageant.

2. Pre Trial Justice – Equality Testimony

Court watch: court watch has been ongoing for over a year now, and is continuing, with Kathy Munnell in the lead. We have learned a great deal, observing many kinds of cases, learning much about the variant paths into the court system in Baltimore, and its collateral systems that create multiple warrants and court dates, and financial burdens. Many kinds of unequal treatment are observed. The court watch has gained a much deeper understanding of the role of money bail and judicial discretion in what we observe.

The court watchers' group is collaborating both with MAJR which is aiming to get legislation introduced to end money bail; and also with law professor Doug Colbert – he and his students have been instrumental in achieving the right to counsel at bail hearings, and they advocate for removing the unfair treatment of poor people when the court system sets bails they cannot possibly meet. The use of money bail in this way works injustice, and great violence on the wellbeing of families and individuals, as poorer people are jailed, and lose income, jobs, housing and children – whereas wealthier people charged with equally serious crimes pay to go free.

Bail Reform; Public Panel Event: This fall the Maryland State Attorney General, Brian Frosh, issued an opinion that Money Bail might be unconstitutional. The committee discussed actions we might take to better inform ourselves and others about this issue. The Joint Committee has determined that we will host a panel at HFM, date tbd – designed to inform Friends and the wider public of the issues that concern us in money bail (inequality in terms of class and race), MAJR's legislation (with many other organizations, including those led by most-impacted communities), public questions about equity and safety, and approaches used in neighboring states (Pa and DC). We aim to hold the meeting in mid to late January so that there would be time to contact legislators during the 2017 Legislative session.

3. Peace Building:

Peaceable Baltimore TED Talks series at Homewood, which began in October, continues each Tuesday night, at which from 8-30 members, attenders and visitors have gathered to view a clip on an aspect of violence, and efforts undertaken in different places to curb the tides of violence in American life. Discussions have been lightly facilitated by Jo Brown of the Peace Committee. The series ends on December 20. Regular participants are starting to develop a directory of local helping actions to share with the Meeting community.

BQPSJ Committee, 'Peaceable Baltimore' Subcommittee has been working this fall. Initially formed to consider ways that the committee/Friends might recognize and address gun violence in the city of Baltimore. Stay tuned for more.

Peaceable Practices: we are beginning to discuss how we might offer study opportunities and trainings in the coming months in ways to be active peace builders – for example in protest events, in conflict-laden conversations.

4. Budget recommendations – HFM PSJ committee considered this matter from August through October, and presented recommendations to Trustees mid-October. We sought to articulate appropriate principles and to apply them, while performing due diligence on recipients long in our budget, and proposing to add new ones. The recipients selected were summarized in Notes to accompany the Budget.

The Joint Committee also agreed on principles for selecting recipients of Wicker Basket gifts, who are not generally in the Meeting budget. We will post on the bulletin board by the coffee & tea table.

Events:

Tubman House Benefit Concert – was held on November 6, at 2640 St Paul Street --organized by the arts committee at Homewood with manual labor from members of Peace Committees. Eddie Conway reports that receipts exceeded the group's hopes to net \$2500 for Tubman House (which engages youth in/around Gilmore Homes).

Peace Tax Fund speaker: at Stony Run, 9 a.m., December 4. Objective: to legalize a form of conscientious objection to military taxation. If you missed it, see <http://www.peacetaxfund.org/>

Redressing Violence learning opportunities: December 10:

- Open Society Institute (OSI) is hosting a solutions-oriented program on Criminal Justice Reform, from 9-4.
- Roots Action – Strength in Synergy Summit/An Intersectional Approach to Ending Gun Violence, at American University, 10-5

****FCNL Action Alert: Islamophobia -- Call to oppose a Religious Registry (see separate flyer)**

Submitted by Barbara Bezdek, Clerk