Introduction of Friend-in-Residence, Diane Randall, Executive Director, Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL)

Diane Randall was introduced by Tom Ewell, a former member of the advisory board of FCNL. He cited her commitment to listening and respect for all involved in political processes, mentoring of young adults in advocacy work, encouraging a growing network of support for FCNL’s work beyond us Quakers, and fund-raising with success.

Presentation by Diane Randall

Speaking out of the silence of worship, Diane quoted from the gospel according to John, chapter 14, verse 27: Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not be afraid.

She asked us to consider what our condition is today? She sees a world of frustration, fear, and disappointment. We feel despair when we hear recent news: the killing of innocent black men by police, the killing of Dallas police officers in the line of duty protecting those who had assembled peacefully; announcement by President Obama that we will be keeping the current troop strength in Afghanistan for the foreseeable future; drone warfare; provision of war materials to others. Our elected officials are avoiding work on major issues of injustice and environmental neglect. Fear leads us to despair. Fear of others results not only in our going to war but also to militarization of our daily lives through the actions of police and our own defensive practices.

Seeing through the lens of love changes our view of the world. The spiritual lens can lead to change in the perception of our political lives. FCNL supports Friends and others who are consistently advocating for Quaker principles regarding issues of war, social justice, and the environment. Our elected representatives are paying attention. FCNL is also involved, along with Mennonite and Church of the Brethren representatives, in meetings with security advisors in the administration regarding issues of drone warfare and the killing of innocent civilians in these strikes. Quakers are not alone in these efforts. Millions of people world-wide are also working toward the same goals. We lead by being sensitive to the still, small voice and discerning the ways to work toward peace.

FCNL sifts, sorts and uses the priorities we at monthly meetings and worship groups send them. They follow the collective priorities arising from this process. The priority decisions are made by representatives from the meetings and worship groups. They also work on multiple issues and show how the issues intersect.

As Friends we can act in three ways. We can speak boldly from our beliefs. We must be engaged citizens beyond simply voting. We can have an impact on the movement of the world toward justice (the direction of the moral arc toward justice). In addition, we can hold our advocates in the Light and pray for them, or, to quote Pope Francis, we can send them good intentions.

She told us that there are many issues for which our members of Congress do not know what their constituents want. The politicians need the input and do listen to it. Therefore, an engaged constituency can influence politics.

Political activism means engaging with people with whom we are in conflict, requires walking into conflict. Listening is paramount. Advocacy teams that are supported and trained by FCNL are one approach being developed and used.

(The full text of her presentation will be available on the NPYM website.)

Reported by Angie Alexander, Recording Clerk