American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)

This presentation was by Caroline Wildflower, Jonathan Betz-Zall, and Kat Northrup, who are our Yearly Meeting’s representatives to AFSC; Allen Stockbridge, a member-at-large of AFSC; and Melissa Stoner, who is on the staff at the Philadelphia office.

Caroline Wildflower talked about her experiences as a child in a family that was active in AFSC. AFSC is collecting stories like this in preparation for its 100th anniversary next year. You can share your own story at the AFSC web site.

Allen Stockbridge read the mission statement for the organization. AFSC’s mission is to promote peace with justice and transform social relations and systems. More specifically, the organization works toward goals such as building peace, advancing immigration rights, reducing or eliminating mass incarceration, building just economies, and ending discrimination and racism.

Jonathan Betz-Zall spoke to the role of our AFSC representatives as people to connect us Friends with AFSC. There has been some criticism that AFSC is no longer sufficiently Quakerly, but, in his experience, that is simply not true. All their practices are truly Quaker. Our representatives connect us to AFSC in both directions. The organizing of projects and public relations are roles largely done by staff members, but volunteers assist in these roles.

There are several ways to be involved with AFSC besides serving as a representative to the board. These include working with staff in fund-raising, volunteering with service organizations to which AFSC has a connection, and participation in the new Quaker social change ministry. The latter is in an early stage of development; two meetings in Washington are participating as a first stage. Meeting liaisons will be needed. If you support AFSC financially and receive their newsletters, you can learn other ways to be involved.

Kat Northrup said that she was impressed with how many people present at this annual session have been involved in AFSC. It is also clear that all of us share the concerns that AFSC addresses.

Local projects in Seattle are the Youth Undoing Institutional Racism program, the Tyree Scott Freedom School, and the Indian Program. The Indian Program shifted its work from its highly successful support of the Canoe Journey toward the new Native Leadership Academy that works to develop leadership skills among Indian youth. In Portland, the AFSC office is involved in the Immigrant Voice Program.

A final remark was that AFSC service involves individuals who do social action in ways that are often unpopular with the population at large.

Quaker Earthcare Witness (eric maya joy)

Quaker Earthcare Witness is involved in many activities, such as:
- Official representation at the United Nations
- Working closely with FCNL on environmental legislation
- Population issues
- Grant programs for Monthly Meetings to encourage energy saving, community gardening, growing and using indigenous plants
- Partnering with Friends General Conference to provide workshops and a nature center at the annual gathering
- Co-organizing Quakers for the People’s March concerning the environment in Washington, DC
• Participating in the recent FWCC gathering in Peru

There are 30 representatives to QEW; some represent yearly meetings, and some are members-at-large.

More information about their activities and connections to other groups can be found on their web site at www.qew.org and in their newsletter.

Outreach is a major activity. eric has done post-worship sessions at several monthly meetings in our region and was a leader for the theme of care for the earth at the most recent gathering of the Pacific Northwest Quarterly Meeting. Mary Ann Percy, the other representative to QEW, will be active in outreach programs also.

eric sees the issue of the care of the earth as the most important issue we face—above all others. For survival of us all, as well as other living things, we must change our viewpoint and our lives. Education needs to be grounded in the real world. Some Native American groups, e. g., the Hopi tribe, are especially in tune with the needs of the earth.

Quakers can take a stand to remind us of the Light within all creation, not just in the human form. This means we would no longer lift the human form above all others. Secondly, it is important that from our earliest history as Quakers we honored both the masculine and feminine principles in creation.