

AUGUST 2015

Cherry Grove Monthly Meeting

Minutes

Attendees:

Rob & Toni W., Ollie & Karen B., Diane B., Dan & Jan H., Camille R., Johan & Dave S., Cathy K., Phyllis B. Linda A., Matt & Sandi W., Brian M., Bob & Ida H., Cleone J., Dave & Jan D., Crystal E., Bonnie K., Bonnie C., Andrea D.

Meeting opened with prayer.

Review/Q&A of July minutes and August materials. No questions.

Elders – Trey Doty, Scott Morin, and Betty Jo Steele will be speaking on Sept. 6, 13, and 20, respectively. Two of those Sundays Arden will be serving elsewhere – at Family Camp and performing a wedding.

A short summary from the recent NCD survey was given – results were very fresh as they had just arrived during the week. Total average score was down slightly to 49 (an “average” church will score 50). Three of our top-ten largest gain questions were in the category of Inspiring Worship Services, our previous low-scoring category, showing success in the work we did at the last survey period. Loving Relationships continue to be our strong category. This survey, our low-scoring category is Need-Based Evangelism, and this will be the area we focus on going forward. Elders will be discussing the results more thoroughly at their next meeting. A team will be asked to come together from the congregation to create a Cherry-Grove tailor-made response to address this category in the near future.

Christian Ed – *Brian M.*: VBS was a huge success, 120 kids were served. Kids will create their own bible book throughout the year. It was suggested that there be follow up with the kids from outside Cherry Grove who attended .

Clerk – Open discussion regarding NWYM Elders release of West Hills from Yearly Meeting membership.

A short description of where we stand as a Yearly Meeting was given, with description of two places of tension within Yearly Meeting – that of phrasing of Faith and Practice regarding Human Sexuality, and the inability of YM Elders and West Hills Friends to find ground for West Hills to remain among the church members of NWYM.

Time was allowed for reading the letter NWYM Elders published releasing West Hills (included in the minutes packet for the meeting). Prayer and silence were offered.

Most of the discussion centered on the political nature of these topics, both within and outside Northwest Yearly Meeting. Another area of conversation revolved around the process by which YM Elders released West Hills Friends from membership within NWYM and the appeal process available to West Hills. A third area of conversation involved possible legal implications of the recent Supreme Court

decision about same-sex marriages, especially on Cherry Grove's non-profit status. No part of our conversation reflected any new or changing understanding for Cherry Grove regarding Human Sexuality – that the basic understanding of human sexuality within NWYM's Faith and Practice is correct, but the current statement should be rewritten so the language is "seasoned with grace." There were repeated reminders that Scripture is to be the basis and anchor of the understanding of our faith. While there was a sense of pain present in the room no one verbalized their feelings of sorrow about this decision. Nor were there expressions of joyful approval rather, simply, a general acknowledgement of a difficult decision. Our group acknowledged the careful, loving yet heart-wrenching decision on the part of the Elders and determined to pray for them.

Arden spoke to a couple of issues around the word "shattering" used in the YM Elder's note and in the NWYM Faith and Practice. He illustrated that shattering occurs on multiple levels in situations like the current one.

One level can be seen in West Hills (and others within NWYM) being beyond the boundaries outlined in our Faith and Practice both for the behavior of persons and the Biblical understanding we share about human sexuality. The continued focus on this issue has limited NWYM's effectiveness as part of the body of Christ in the time and resources it demands.

A second level, publicly presenting a "divided witness", can be seen when there is public activism on the part of the LGBTQ community in contrast to Faith and Practice. An example is when two pastors of YM churches publicly disagreed with GFU's housing policies and decisions regarding a trans-gender student, citing their pastor positions to give their words more authority. They published their disagreement on several online media sources and gave interviews with OPB, putting the school at additional legal risk while the school was maintaining its position in accordance with F&P.

A third level is unlovingly placing members of NWYM in adversarial situations, creating unwanted and undue strain on relationships. Though he could cite many examples, Arden spoke about his name being given to OPB to provide a counter point in an on-air debate segment (to be titled as the negatively-framed "GFU's Discriminatory Policies) between one of these pastors and himself on OPB. Arden said he declined as he did not believe it was his right or responsibility to represent GFU, nor should issues like these be worked out not in the public eye.

We closed on a query calling us to prayer and consideration:

While we maintain our position to be loving to all who walk in our door and join us in worship, how well have we prepared ourselves (individually and as a congregation) for those times when someone walks in our door with differences to how we understand God's revelation?