

Five Minute History of Southern Appalachian Yearly Meeting and Association-SAYMA

Before I tell you a little about the history of our yearly meeting, I want you to hazard a guess as to how many yearly meetings among the branches of Quakers there are worldwide and where they might be. Later, during our discussion time, I'll reveal what I know about that.

While my part of the presentation is to provide a little history, I think you'll pick up some of the enthusiasm that I feel about gathering with other Friends in our region. Most of you know that *Friends of Truth* or *Children of the Light* began gathering together under the leadership of George Fox and about sixty others in 1652. During those early years Friends would gather once a year across England, thus the name "yearly meeting." Persecution and imprisonment led to Friends supporting each other and later to emigration to North American and other colonies. Smaller groups of Friends met on a quarterly basis with others in geographic proximity and local worship groups would gather on a monthly basis. The worship group was the smallest unit, and most likely village based. So, the frequency of meetings lent the groups their names. Our yearly meeting now refers to the June gathering as Retreat and Annual Sessions. This captures the fact that we are on a spiritual retreat together and that we take care of much of the business of the yearly meeting on that weekend.

The earliest worship group of unprogrammed Friends in the SAYMA area was in Nashville TN in **1926**. Friends involved in Fisk University were instrumental in that beginning. By **1941** the meetings in Nashville had become regular. During the **1940s and 50s** Knoxville, Pine Mountain and West Knoxville TN, Berea KY, and Celo NC began worship groups.

Between **1956 and 1959** five Tennessee communities assembled and formed SAAF, Southern Appalachian Association of Friends. In **1959** SAAF expanded to a four-state area when Atlanta Meeting developed in GA, along with Chattanooga TN, Berea KY and Celo NC.

Weekend gatherings on an annual basis were held until **1970** when discussions culminated around the creation of a yearly meeting, and Southern Appalachian Yearly Meeting and Association was formed, now joined by Asheville NC, Sewanee TN and Columbia SC. Why Association? At that time some Friends were living in isolated places without other Friends near enough to form a worship group. As the yearly meeting grew, Friends wanted to keep that name so that Friends in places without a meeting or worship group would feel welcome joining in yearly meeting activities even though their membership might be with a meeting outside our area or through Wider Quaker Fellowship.

In **1977** SAYMA approved affiliation with Friends General Conference. By then Birmingham and Huntsville AL, Charleston WV,

Cookeville, Crossville and Memphis TN, had joined the yearly meeting. Later Athens GA, Boone, Swannanoa Valley and Brevard NC, Foxfire (Tri-Cities) TN, Greenville SC, and Oxford MS joined SAYMA, as well as did worship groups that sometimes became established, sometimes came and went.. During the early years as a yearly meeting we developed a Guide to Our Faith and Practice, which was revised and the revision approved in 2012. We wanted to write our guide independent of the influence of other yearly meeting guides. As a result, it took years to develop. We may consider another revision, or additions to the 2012 revision, in 2022.

Other Quakers in North Carolina have a longer history than SAYMA: Conservative Friends and Friends who worship in pastoral meetings such as those in North Carolina Yearly Meeting. But SAYMA is the group of non-pastoral meetings in our state and neighboring states in the southeast. Some of the meetings are indeed small. Boone Meeting was laid down a couple of years ago because there was only one person left in the area who was a recorded member. Other meetings such as Atlanta Friends Meeting, are larger than ours,. We are, however, considered a large meeting within SAYMA,.

Sources: *SAYMA Guide to Our Faith and Practice*, FWCC website

Time Line

1926 Nashville TN worship group met

1941 the meetings in Nashville had become regular. (1 WG)

1940s and 50s Knoxville* TN, Pine Mountain* TN, Berea KY, West
Knoxville TN and Celo NC began worship groups. (6 WGs)

1956 - 1959 SAAF, Southern Appalachian Association of Friends
formed (5 TN WGs)

1959 Atlanta GA, Chattanooga TN, Berea KY and Celo NC joined
SAAF (10 WGs in four states)

1960 - 1970 Annual weekend retreats were held

1970 Southern Appalachian Yearly Meeting and Association was
formed, joined by Asheville NC, Sewanee* TN and Columbia
SC

1977 SAYMA approved affiliation with Friends General Conference.

Birmingham and Huntsville AL, Charleston WV, Cookeville,
Memphis and Crossville TN joined SAYMA

1977 - 2021 Athens GA and Boone (now laid down), Swannanoa Valley
and, Brevard NC, Foxfire TN, Greenville SC, Oxford MS
joined SAYMA (20 monthly meetings)

*These meetings no longer exist, to my knowledge.

YEARLY MEETINGS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD - 70 YMs

AFRICA-22 yms

Luguku YM Kenya-over 30,000	Vihiga YM
Bware YM Kenya-7,200	Lugari YM
Chavakali YM East Africa	Chwele YM
Vokoli YM Kenya	Chewbuyusi YM
Central YM Kenya	Highland YM
Nairobi YM	Tulvi YM
Kakamega YM	Tanzania YM
East Africa North Yearly Meeting	Uganda YM
East Africa Elgon Yearly Meeting	Rwanda YM
Kuribuka YM	Kibimba YM
Central and South Africa YM	Congo YM

NORTH AMERICA-24 YMs

Ohio Valley YM	Pacific YM	Piedmont YM
New England YM	Canada YM	Southeastern YM

Rocky Mountain YM	Sierra/Cascades YM	NC Conservative YM
Alaska YM	Illinois YM	South Central YM
New York YM	Baltimore YM	Indiana YM
Western YM	North Pacific YM	Philadelphia YM
Iowa Conservative YM	Wilmington YM	Northwest YM
SAYMA YM	Iowa FUM YM	Lake Erie YM

CENTRAL and SOUTH AMERICA-6 YMs

Cuba YM	Mexico YM
Honduras YM	Jamaica YM
Valley YM	Reunion General de los Amigos

Numerous churches, monthly meetings in Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Bolivia and Peru.

EUROPE AND THE MIDDLE EAST-12 YMs

German YM	Britain YM
Belgium and Luxemburg YM	Denmark YM
Finland YM	France YM
Ireland YM	Middle East YM
Netherlands YM	Norway YM
Sweden YM	Switzerland YM

ASIA AND THE PACIFIC - 6 YMs

Aotearoa YM New Zealand
 Bhopal YM India

Bundelkhand YM

Mid-India YM

Australia YM

Japan YM