

Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business
Asheville Friends Meeting
9th Month 20, 2020

Present: Robin Wells, Clerk; Beth Eddy, Recording Clerk;

Present va ZOOM: Morgan Murray, Bob Lackey, Gita Larson, Jim Cavener, Margaret Farmer, Steve Livingston, Jane Fernamdes, Jim Barham, Sarah Jane Thomas, Pat Johnson, Barbara (Kitti) Reynolds, Ellie Cox, Patti Burgess, Laura Wall, Patti Hughes, Margaret Normile, Scotty Utz, Rylin Hansen, Pat Campbell, Barbara Esther, Mike Eddy, NancyLynn Sharpless.

Meeting opened with silent worship.

The Clerk shared a reading out of the silence. It is from Caroline Stephen (1834-1909), author of “Quaker Strongholds.”

Everything, all beauty and rightness, seems to turn upon a right subordination of the outward to the inward, the transient to the permanent, in our lives and thoughts. Yet this right subordination cannot be achieved in a hurry. If we are to learn to assign to the weightiest matters their true place and predominance, we must allow ourselves, or rather we must steadily resolve to secure for ourselves, quietness enough not only to know our own minds, but to listen to the still small voice of conscience, or of God, speaking in our own hearts.

Minute #1: Friends approved our 8th month business meeting minutes with the following corrections: Adding Pat Johnson as in attendance; correct spelling of Rylin Hansen’s name in the second paragraph of announcements.

Announcements

We received an epistle from Piedmont Friends Yearly Meeting, which managed to hold their annual session virtually on 7/24-26/20. Their theme centered around a query, “What opportunities do Quakers find in the pandemic and the current

awakening to injustice for creating the world we seek?” They had a registration of 114 people and were able to have meeting for worship, small-group sessions, a workshop, business meeting(s), and time for building community. This was all accomplished using a Zoom format. You will be able to read their entire epistle in the upcoming Digest.

The SAYMA Nominating Committee has reached out to us, because the Yearly Meeting Planning Committee needs a clerk. Please contact Robin Wells to get more information.

UNC Asheville Professor of Biology Jennifer Rhode Ward has been named the winner of the 2020 Association of Southern Biologists’ Meritorious Teaching Award, one of the highest honors for excellence in teaching at the undergraduate and/or graduate level in biology in the U.S. Southeast.

We are nearing the final months of the fiscal year when our Meeting sends out our outreach checks. This is a significant portion of our budget. Contributions to the Meeting will need to cover this before all of the outreach can be sent. A Friend noted that the 2020 outreach budget was \$9,000.00; \$3000 had gone out to Quaker outreach, with the remainder scheduled to be distributed (if funds are available) between racial justice and outreach. Robin asked Friends on the committees to be prepared with suggestions as to how to reduce their budgets if necessary. It will be discussed at the tenth month bussiness meeting.

The next SAYMA Representative Meeting will begin next weekend at 9:00am on the 26th day of the 9th month. Any Friend is welcome to attend. Friends can register to participate in this rep meeting by going to the SAYMA website, <https://www.sayma.org/>. Registration closes at 3:00 pm on Friday 9-25-20.

Nominating Committee-Kitti Reynolds

Nominating would like to nominate Ellen Carr for the Finance Committee. Ellen has a lot of experience with finance. She teaches an online course in finance and is a financial manager. She would be a wonderful addition to the committee.

Minute #2: Friends approved Ellen Carr for the Finance Commettee.

Some Work Towards Restorative Justice-Patti Hughes

Several Friends from Meeting were inspired by Bob Smith to engage in a conversation to address concerns around the outcome of the Johnny Rush case. The Clerk asked one of us to share about this important work.

In August 2017, Johnny Rush was apprehended for jaywalking and beaten by APD officer Mr. Hickman. In 2018 the Citizen Times shared body cam footage making the broader community aware of the brutality of this incident. Todd Williams, the Buncombe County DA chose to make a plea using the Restorative Justice process. The plea offered Mr. Hickman one year of supervised probation with the commitment by Jon Powell, the Restorative Justice facilitator, that he would bring in the voices of the community impacted by this incident in order to address and mitigate the harm experienced by the community. The black community has not been engaged in this process leaving them feeling let down by the justice system.

‘Just Us’ is a black-led collaborative of concerned Asheville citizens and faith leaders advocating to extend former officer Hickman's probation so the harm to the community can properly be addressed and healed. We were founded by Bob Smith and Elizabeth White and have met every week for a year. Seven members of this group are part of Asheville Friends Meeting. Over the course of this year our group has engaged with Jon Powell, Todd Williams, Chief White, the interim APD police chief; Chief Zack, the APD police chief; Sheneika Smith, Asheville City Council Member; Al Whitesides, Buncombe County Commissioner, Ben Scales, Asheville Attorney; Esther Manheimer, Asheville Mayor; Debra Campbell, Asheville City Manager and John Maddux, Assistant City Attorney. At this time Mr. Hickman’s hearing has been delayed by the court. ‘Just Us’ continues to meet weekly and do our work. We are currently working on filing an amicus brief with the court.

Racial Justice Committee--Steve Livingston

The Racial Justice Committee has signed on to the amicus brief being filed in the case of State NC vs. Hickman.

Sense of the meeting was that AFM will also sign onto the amicus brief;

Minute #3: Meeting Approved signing onto the amicus brief being filled In the case of State NC vs Hickman

Outdoor Meeting for Worship-- Robin Wells

In March, Asheville Friends Meeting stopped holding meeting for worship face-to-face in the Meetinghouse due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Meeting for worship continued online using a Zoom format. A plan was developed by Ministry & Counsel to address how and when we would reopen worship at the Meetinghouse (see attached plan).

In this plan, Stage 1 would permit meeting for worship outdoors with a minimum six-foot separation between our chairs. Friends will be encouraged to bring their own chairs and a few easily-sanitized chairs will be available for those who do not bring a chair. These provided chairs would be sanitized both before and after meeting. We will not pass any clipboards. We will minimize the potential spread of the virus by eliminating singing before meeting and limiting the social time following meeting. There would be no First Day School. The downstairs bathrooms in Meetinghouse will be made available, but the meeting room, kitchen, and upstairs will be closed off. We will attempt to provide online access to our meeting for worship, for those who need to stay at home. We may need to establish wifi at the meetinghouse to make this possible.

On the 4th day of ninth month, Governor Cooper opened the state to Phase 2.5. This move increases the number of people allowed in an outdoor gathering to 50. While we don't think that our meeting would have 50 people, it indicates an improvement in the pandemic indicators for our state.

Buncombe County data has also shown a decrease in confirmed cases. Friends can go to the Coronavirus Cases Dashboard for the County. A link is provided below. (You may need to give it some time to fully open.)

[COVID Data for Buncombe County](#)

In light of this positive move in the data, we are proposing to hold meeting for worship in front of the Meetinghouse next week, 9-27-20, weather permitting. Our Zoom meeting for worship would still take place. As we see it, there are only four or five more weeks that we could hold meeting for worship outside this year. After that, we would go back to only Zoom meetings until it is warm enough to meet outside or it is deemed safe for us to hold worship inside.

We understand that there are individuals in our Meeting that will need to continue their isolation due to their vulnerability. **It is ultimately up to each individual to decide whether it is safe to return to the meetinghouse.**

The ad hoc committee that was asked to examine the data to determine when it would be safe to return to worship at the meetinghouse, submitted the following report:

For the outdoor venue, we are in unity that the issues of weather, inadequate sound transmission, and inconvenience (to ourselves and our neighbors) of a central microphone and amplifier make outdoor meetings unwise. My I.T. consultant (my stepson) tells us that we cannot combine a physical outdoor meeting and a simultaneous virtual Zoom meeting.

For the indoor venue at the Meeting House, we are in unity that the lethal danger of COVID in that setting makes it unwise. Close proximity to each other, closed environment, extended time, etc.

We cannot predict when the risk of COVID will be low enough to make a different suggestion, and so this recommendation is permanent for the time being.

Whether we begin next week or not, we need to consider being able to connect our Zoom worship with worship at the Meetinghouse. In order to do this, we will need to restore internet to the Meetinghouse. Are we in agreement with restoring internet? Mike E. has reached out to a few local providers to see what the cost would be. The installation cost is uncertain due to the possibility that our cable line has been cut.

In the following discussion one Friend raised concerns about spread of covid-19 beyond the 6' limit of spacing especially when one talks; she asked about the additional expenses of opening the meeting house if we meet outside. It was pointed out that only the downstairs bathrooms would be open. The kitchen, meeting room and second floor would be closed. A Friend asked about costs to do a Zoom meeting on site. Someone stated the it could be hard to see all if outside and we need to work on how to set up. It was suggested using a cell phone as a hot spot to test Zoom on-site. Some friends are concerned about dividing meeting into onsite vs Zoom attendees. It was noted that some Friends could only come to a face to face worship as they do not have access to Zoom. Concerns about bottlenecks going to and from cars to chairs. OUR CLERK noted that we only have about 3-4 more weeks of warmer temperatures to take advantage of sitting outside. A friend advised us to use these first on-site meetings as a proving ground for options that can be used next year in the spring when weather gets warmer again. We will need to continue to remind individuals to not violate distance regulations and to keep masks on while on the property.

Minute #4: Meeting Approved meeting for worship outside in the front yard of the AFM Meetinghouse (weather permitting) starting at 10:00am on 9th Month 27, 2020. Friends agreed to follow the established safety protocol, (attachment 1).

House and Grounds-NancyLynn

House and Grounds is gathering bids (3) from painters for the repair and painting of the exterior meeting house north and west walls. Jim B reported that 2 of the exterior walls had been painted in the recent past. Bids will be available for review at the next meeting for business in the 10th month 2020.

SAYMA Minute in Response to the Finance Committee Queries

Eighteen Friends met to discuss Finance Committee queries and the proposed budget for FY21. We heard diverse opinions regarding the percentage of our annual expenses, particularly the 21% we would send to Wider Quaker Organizations (WQOs) and the 9% we would spend on racial justice efforts if the proposed budget is approved. We acknowledge that the WQOs that we belong to and support also attend to racial justice concerns. Asheville Friends want SAYMA to continue to support racial justice work within ourselves, our meetings and in SAYMA.

Concerns arose around how white Friends are helping to achieve the goals set out by FoC in 2017. The URJ Committee has developed an excellent resource library through the SAYMA website. Have white Friends used this free resource? We know that white Friends are on a path to understanding our part in creating inequity, just as it is our task, an unending one, to work toward justice and the reality of an antiracist Religious Society of Friends.

Some expressed strong support for more funds going to SAYMA URJ currently. There was also strong opposition from others for any more funds going to SAYMA URJ as it is currently constituted. We were not in unity.

There was support for supporting racial justice work in SAYMA. Friends of Asheville Friends Meeting support continued racial justice work, with emphasis on completing the work set out in the mission, vision and goals written by FoC in SAYMA. We also look for adherence to the established goals, vision and mission, with transparency in reporting how our yearly meeting resources are being used.

Minute #5: AFM approved the minute to be sent to SAYMA Finance Committee and the wider SAYMA community.

Seasoning Morgan's ideas for SAYMA-Morgan Murray

The following text was written by Morgan after having a conversation with some SAYMA FOC. It has been shared with some Atlanta FOC. It is just a starting point and he asked us to help him season his leading.

(YM 2017) 47--26 Uplifting Racial Justice Committee Proposal (SAYMA URJ)
(Attachment J)

“First Statement: SAYMA understands its deep responsibility to create an

environment that is safe and welcoming to Friends of color and continues to unite behind the creation of a standing committee to provide focused support in their monthly meetings and at Yearly Meeting. Friends has a couple concerns and words to change, but were ready to move forward. A need was brought to us and we need to uphold this idea and keep moving toward finding out how to get there.”

SAYMA has struggled over the past few years over the issue of the URJ Committee. However one feels about SAYMA-URJ, it is clear that SAYMA-URJ was created from a sense of wanting to move forward and to do something about racism. As the struggles over the past years have taught us, ‘we are still moving toward finding out how to get there’.

The Vision and Mission approved by SAYMA for SAYMA-URJ at the 2017 Yearly Meeting:

Vision: SAYMA/URJ envisions a Yearly Meeting community where every Friend of color is safe and feels welcome. We see a SAYMA community where the divine light within every Friend of color is affirmed, his or her unique history, spiritual journey and lived truth is honored, where our messages and concerns are heard and respected with due consideration. We see a SAYMA community where Friends of color are empowered to build close spiritual Friendships, appreciation, love and support for the weighty responsibilities we carry as people of color, embodying Quaker Testimonies, within and outside of the Religious Society of Friends.

Mission: To help SAYMA become a safe and welcoming place for Friends of Color. The committee will do this by providing a safe place for Friends of Color to bring issues and concerns regarding racism within their monthly meetings and SAYMA, and to find support and advocacy. The committee will also work to raise awareness about white supremacy (aka racism) within SAYMA by compiling and disseminating educational resources.

Goals:

1. Help navigate Quaker culture and process;
2. Provide opportunities to connect with other FOC in order to build a community of support; share experiences and resources; and receive emotional, strategic, and tactical support;
3. Work to resolve the expressed concerns of FOC in a timely manner;
4. Engage in culturally-relevant conflict resolution processes that honor SAYMA's commitment to uplifting racial justice;
5. Hire skilled facilitators to help FOC understand and heal from generational racial trauma and develop personal and group empowerment;

6. Arrange ongoing workshops and other opportunities for learning that focus on dismantling racism for all SAYMA Friends beginning with the Yearly Meeting leadership (including all SAYMA and Monthly Meeting clerks; the Finance Committee; the Planning Committee; Ministry and Nurture Committee; Junior Yearly Meeting; SAYF; and YAFs).

Perhaps because SAMYA-URJ was created from a white-centric viewpoint, rather than a FoC viewpoint, SAYMA-URJ was created with a mission which violated a maxim of anti-racism:

It is not the job or responsibility of people of color to educate white people on racism.

While well-intentioned, it has become clear that violating this fundamental maxim of anti-racism is a structural defect in the design of URJ.

Dismantling any racism in SAYMA (goal 6) is a separate mission from that of providing FoC opportunities to build a community of support (goal 2). It is irresponsible, and fundamentally unfair of SAYMA to demand that FoC participate in educating white people as a condition for participating in a community of Friends of Color.

While ‘Anti-Racism’ education and how to dismantle any racism within SAYMA is requiring more seasoning within SAYMA, the need for a safe forum for Friends of Color to share and support each other within the SAYMA community, and to welcome new FoC into the SAYMA community, is a need which we have already discerned, and something that we can, and should, do right now to move forward.

Therefore it is recommended that SAYMA create a new committee, SAYMA FoC, independent of SAYMA-URJ, with a mission separate from that of SAYMA-URJ.

It is recommended that SAYMA:

1. Establish a new committee: SAYMA FoC
2. The vision of SAYMA FoC shall be:
 - a. Vision: SAYMA/URJ envisions a Yearly Meeting community where every Friend of color is safe and feels welcome. We see a SAYMA community where the divine light within every Friend of color is affirmed, his or her unique history, spiritual journey and lived truth is honored, where our messages and concerns are heard

and respected with due consideration. We see a SAYMA community where Friends of color are empowered to build close spiritual Friendships, appreciation, love and support for the weighty responsibilities we carry as people of color, embodying Quaker Testimonies, within and outside of the Religious Society of Friends.

3. The Mission of SAYMA FoC shall be:
 - a. Mission: To help SAYMA become a safe and welcoming place for Friends of Color. The committee will do this by providing a safe forum for Friends of Color to bring issues and concerns to find support and advocacy.
4. The Goals of SAYMA FoC shall be:
 - a. Help current and potential Friends of Color navigate Quaker culture and process;
 - b. Provide opportunities to connect with other FOC in order to build a community of support; share experiences and resources; and receive emotional, strategic, and tactical support;
 - c. Advocate for the expressed concerns of FoC within their monthly meetings, and within SAYMA;
5. All Friends of Color that are members of any of the constituent SAYMA Monthly Meetings are automatically members of SAYMA FoC.
6. A Clerk shall be selected by SAYMA FoC Committee members from the FoC Committee Members.
7. All people of color are invited to attend any of their meetings except those meetings that SAYMA FoC decide should be closed for business only, at their discretion.
8. SAYMA FoC may limit their meetings to only people of color, at their discretion.
9. The initial budget for SAYMA FoC will be \$500, with the invitation to return during the fiscal year to request additional funds if needed.
10. The SAYMA FoC committee will follow accounting and auditing practices the same as all other committees in SAYMA. They will not be asked to follow any accounting procedure that is not also followed by other SAYMA committees.

In the following discussion, a Friend reminded us about the history of racism starting after the Bacon Rebellion when the government of VA and MD made laws identifying whites vs slaves as a tactic to separate groups

It was noted that August Friends Journal has an excellent article written by Vanessa Julye 'online lifeline for FOC'.

Another Friend suggested that Morgan's ideas not go out until they have been communicated with the URJ and FOC.

Any change to URJ needs to come from FOC not white people.

AFM supports URJ and FOC in a loving relationship. It was suggested that queries be provided to AFM to guide our discussions to uplift Racial Justice.

Supporting local Black owned business Scotty Utz

Scotty reminded us of the need for economic justice especially in the minority communities. We should look to support Black-owned businesses and share links to them on our Digest. A great resource about supporting the resiliency of the African American community in Asheville is the greenbook: rebuilding Appalachia on the hoodhuggers.com ; another resource mentioned is the Yoruba Life directory of black-owned business. It was suggested that we get a bid for work on the Meetinghouse by a black-owned business. This will be presented at the 10th month meeting for business.

Minute #6: The Meeting approved sharing the links to minority owned business in the weekly Digest starting 23th of 9th month 2020 continuously until our website is available.

Minute #7: The Meeting approved a minute of thanks to Robin Wells for her time as clerk to AFM. Thanking her for her grace, mentorship and wisdom she displayed in her work as AFM clerk.

The Meeting closed with silent worship until way opens for our next business meeting in 10th month. This is the last business meeting clerked by Robin Wells. Bob Lackey will begin his term next month. Our clerk thanked the Meeting for a memorable year of deep listening, sharing, loving, and laughing. We have come far

as a meeting, but have much further to go. It is by listening and honoring the truth in each other, that we will mend the tears.

Attachment #1:

Reopening Asheville Friends Meeting

The last few months during the COVID-19 Pandemic have been challenging on many levels. Some of us have had loved ones stricken by the virus. Some of us have lost jobs or have loved ones who have lost jobs. Others are working in jobs considered essential and have been out in the world. Still others are working from home with the challenges that come along with combining family life and work. Several among us have been bravely volunteering in the community to make sure that everyone has the food and supplies that they need. None of us remain untouched.

As a faith community, we have been asked to stay home to do our part to isolate ourselves and “flatten the curve.” Even though we have been apart physically, we have done our best to stay connected by phone, by internet, and by having our meeting for worship facilitated using Zoom. We are grateful for the efforts of many in our Meeting who have worked hard to keep us together during this time.

The time has come to begin planning for our return to face-to-face worship. We need to proceed cautiously, using what we have learned about how this virus spreads. There are many among us who are vulnerable and may not survive, if exposed to the virus. We can not let our enthusiasm about returning to Meeting, drive us to do something we later regret.

Even as we begin to meet again in the meetinghouse, we understand that there are individuals in our Meeting that will need to continue their isolation due to

their vulnerability. **It is ultimately up to each individual to decide whether it is safe to return to the meetinghouse.**

General Precautions

We want to begin with small steps and take certain precautions that will minimize the potential for virus transmission.

- Friends will be asked to wear a mask while at Meeting.
- Friends with a cough, fever of 100 degrees or greater, or other respiratory illness will be asked not to attend. (If a contact-free thermometer can be obtained, we can take temperatures as people arrive.)
- Hand sanitizer and tissues will be made available.
- Anyone who develops a cough during meeting for worship (even if not due to the COVID virus), is asked to leave the meeting space.
- We will greet each other without contact, using creative ways to show we care.
- The surfaces in the Meetinghouse will be cleaned before and after meeting for worship.

We propose opening the Meeting in steps:

Step 1

We will only hold meeting for worship outdoors with a minimum six-foot separation between our chairs. Friends will be encouraged to bring their own chairs and a few easily-sanitized chairs will be available for those who do not bring a chair. These provided chairs would be sanitized both before and after meeting. We will not pass any clipboards. We will minimize the potential spread of the virus by eliminating singing before meeting and limiting the social time following meeting. There would be no First Day School. The downstairs bathrooms in Meeting will be made available, but the meeting room, kitchen, and upstairs will be closed off. We will attempt to provide online access to our meeting for worship, for those who need to stay at home. We may need to establish wifi at the meetinghouse to make this possible.

As way opens we will initiate further steps of reopening.