

Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business

Asheville Friends Meeting

4th Month 10, 2022

Present in the Meetinghouse: Bob Lackey, Clerk, Ellie Cox, Katherine Kowal, Steve Livingston, Robin Wells, Jim Barham, Jim Cavener, Rusty Maynard, Nick Mimkin, Susanne Junkin-Friederichs

Present via zoom: Barbara Burke, Recording Clerk, Gita Larson, Adrienne Weir, Rylin Hansen, Margaret Farmer, Beth Eddy, Mike Eddy, Morgan Murray, Pat Johnson

Meeting opened with Silent Worship

The Clerk shared a reading out of silence .

Hearing with the Heart: A Gentle Guide to Discerning God's Will For Your Life , by Debra K. Farrington. Jossey-Bass, 2003. pp. 96-98.

“Each of us has a lens through which we look at and evaluate the world around us. It’s both unavoidable and healthy to have a lens that helps us make sense of everything we see and experience. We create ways of categorizing information, as well as the things that happen to us that are based in the values of the places we have lived, the institutions we have been affiliated with, our schooling, the values and understanding of friends and family, and our own experiences. All of that is well and good. But when we are unconscious of that lens – when we think that the way we see and understand is Reality – we limit our ability to discern

well. We will end up forcing God into our systems of thinking rather than expanding the mind of our heart to accommodate God.”

Minute # 1: The Third Month business meeting minutes were approved.

Announcements:

I want to let you know that we are holding a memorial service for George Oldham (long time member, former co-clerk of AFM) on Sunday, June 26th. The service will be held in the Village Hall at Carolina Village Retirement Community in Hendersonville and will be followed by a reception at the Edneyville Community Center. The Community Center has an outdoor covered patio so folks who are uncomfortable with indoor gatherings can be part of the celebration of George's life.

I am also emailing several Asheville Friends who remember Dad and I will be appreciative of help with the service and reception.

Thank you,

Martha O, Huggins

Committees:

SAYMA - Morgan Murray, Margaret Farmer, Barbara Esther

Report on SAYMA Representative Meeting of 3/26/2022

Our general feeling after the Representative Meeting was exhaustion over the enduring tension, with some hope since many Friends gave input into

the ways we have experienced Quaker process being used during our meetings. There was a prolonged discussion about the agenda presented by the clerk, with two Friends standing in the way on grounds the planned agenda would further divide us. Many Friends participated in the 2-3 hour discussion that followed, before we eventually proceeded with an alternative agenda. Instead of reading and discussing multiple minutes and letters from several meetings that had been posted on SAYMA's home page, we agreed on discussing one minute (from Nashville Friends Meeting) and a proposal for a way forward for SAYMA. Reports from Ministry & Nurture and the Finance Committee were deferred and attached to the minutes. The Finance committee requested that each monthly meeting respond to the request therein.

We heard the Yearly Meeting Planning Committee report that SAYMA sessions will be held June 16-19 at Warren Wilson College, with a hybrid (via Zoom) option for adults who will not attend in person. There will be an in-person-only program for Junior Gathering age 3 to the 6th grade, since hybrid programs have not had very positive results. The SAYF program will also meet in-person-only on campus, without a hybrid option. FCRJ (Friends' Center for Racial Justice) has plans to participate during these sessions as well.

Other announcements included Tim Lamm's upcoming move to New England this spring; Swannanoa Valley Meeting's withdrawal from SAYMA but not SAYF, and the laying down of Brevard Friends Meeting.

There were 2 scheduled worship sharing opportunities for small groups, before and after lunch. Friends generally expressed appreciation for spirit-led sharing together.

Angela Hopkins shared FCRJ's intention for moving forward on work with SAYMA.

FCRJ arranged for 3 SAYMA Friends to complete anti-racist analysis training facilitated by Roots of Justice which included religious institutional anti-racism assessment, with plans to send more. There will be a future announcement about small group opportunities. Angela herself will be undergoing surgery soon.

A proposal for an Ad Hoc Committee to guide SAYMA through a suspension of business was presented. There was no unity on accepting this proposal, with another lengthy discussion, in which some Friends requested more transparency on the selection of members for this committee, and time for us to take this proposal to our monthly meetings for discernment. The proposal sent out after the Representative Meeting will consider steps from Nashville Friends Meeting's minute. There will be a called Representative Meeting soon (April 30) to bring back feedback from our home meetings. No decision was made about suggestions in the Nashville minute.

Although not on the agenda, we were presented a detailed oral report from one Friend on the steps SAYMA would have to take if we make a decision to lay the yearly meeting down. Many Friends found this report unsettling.

The need for more members of the nominating committee was brought up. The clerk instructed us that each monthly meeting can appoint a person to assist the nominating committee to find Friends willing to serve on SAYMA committees. Each meeting is asked to consider doing this.

Angela Hopkins had earlier recommended we base nominations for positions according to a person's spiritual gifts. More representation on this committee would provide it with a wider and clearer understanding of individual Friends' gifts and experiences in service to their meetings.

After the report was read there was a long discussion about its contents. A Friend asked if SAYMA really could be laid down. Morgan said it could be voluntarily laid down if a way forward cannot be found. If involuntarily laid down, it could cause legal and financial problems (State of Alabama could receive SAYMA funds). Friends agreed that this is a surprise to many and concerning to all. A general consensus was that SAYMA needs to take a pause, and focus on recognizing that of God in all of us and Spirit led attempts to move forward. Morgan feels it was shocking and unsettling to think of laying down the yearly meeting but could be an opportunity for SAYMA to recognize the tension present and know we are on the wrong path, and allow us to be spirit-led in finding the right path.

A Friend is surprised that SAYMA could be laid down, and how quickly this could happen, as it was not on the agenda of the representatives meeting for discussion and was a surprise to many.

Another Friend felt that SAYMA being laid down is similar to a family breaking apart.

Another Friend stated that the theme for this year's Yearly Meeting is "Seeking Spirit in Each Other." He feels that if it is decided in Yearly Meeting to have a pause, it is serving the purpose of allowing each of us to seek the Spirit in each other. The situation may feel discouraging, but it provides us with an opportunity to return to the basics of Quaker beliefs, that of seeking the spirit in one another. It may be painful, but necessary, and we will be led by the Spirit.

Morgan then read the Nashville Friends Meeting statement and a discussion followed.

Nashville Friends Meeting Statement Regarding SAYMA

Approved on 3/6/22

Rufus M. Jones once wrote of Quakers' ability to “‘speak right on,’ in plain, blunt fashion and tell us in yeoman language of the inward battles which they have fought.” Our commitment to speaking plainly calls on us to name things for what they are, without euphemism, elision, or unnecessary complication. When it comes to the issues currently facing SAYMA, that means stating clearly what is going on and what is under consideration.

The conflict in SAYMA began with disagreements surrounding a sizable budgetary allocation made to the Uplifting Racial Justice Committee (“URJ”). Those funds have been spent and that annual budget has been superseded. If any budget item is allocated to URJ (or any other committee) in the future, it will inherently involve new funds, committed through a new process. While some have voiced concerns about various aspects of how the earlier money was allocated and/or spent, there is nothing that can be done about that budget or those dollars now. There is no live conflict involving that budget to resolve.

What continues now is, instead, a conflict with no solvable core, perpetuating itself— and indeed growing—through its own momentum, rather than being driven by any piece of business that must be resolved or goal that must be attained. It is the strong sense of Nashville Friends Meeting that SAYMA must either move beyond that self-perpetuating conflict or, if that is impossible, reconsider whether SAYMA, as a body, should continue to exist.

Moving on does not mean ignoring what we have learned and still can learn from where we have been. The URJ process has illuminated issues that we should, and indeed must, continue to address, including with regard to the ways that we have departed from Quaker process. SAYMA's failures surrounding URJ have also brought to light many of the ways that we have privileged some voices (particularly white and male voices) over others, including by vesting those favored voices with the mantle of authority and

dismissing those who disagree as outsiders. These problems are bigger, harder to solve, and far more important than any budgetary or interpersonal disagreement.

While the struggles for justice and against racism must continue, there is no need for the unproductive acrimony that has dominated SAYMA meetings for the last few years to persist in monopolizing our efforts and attention. To that end, Nashville Friends Meeting would support:

- • Prioritizing the conflict transformation process led by Friends Committee for Racial Justice, with an understanding that SAYMA will prioritize building a healthier foundation for the future, not relitigating the past;
- • A suspension of ordinary SAYMA business (with exceptions for core functions that must be performed);
- • For SAYMA to devote its shared time primarily to worship-sharing related to issues of spiritual grounding and Quaker process, followed by attention to antiracism and social justice;
- • Monthly meetings doing their own anti-racism work/confronting white privilege on a local level using outside resources;
- • Monthly meetings reporting to SAYMA the anti-racism work that they are doing/have done; and
- • More small regional meetings of monthly meetings that would build regional Friends knowledge and understanding.

After our spiritual bonds have been tended to, we may be able to move forward as a Yearly Meeting. One Friend reluctantly stood aside from the consideration of this Minute.

Please find attached a proposal for an Ad Hoc Committee for SAYMA's Transition Guidance, whose charge would be to work out details for implementing the Nashville minute. We will have an abbreviated second spring representatives meeting on Saturday, April 30, to hear from monthly meeting representatives about the discernment of constituent SAYMA meetings on this means of crafting a detailed proposal to be presented to the body at YM 51 June 16-19 at Warren Wilson College.

A Friend felt as if this statement is a move in the right direction, and another Friend found it refreshing and new and felt it gave us a way to move forward by setting aside the conflict, and appreciated the work put into it. Many have concerns about following the stated path and maintaining Quaker process going forward. A concern was brought forward about the suggestion that each monthly meeting name a representative to SAYMA's nominating committee to recommend people within their meetings who have a gift of spiritual discernment. Friends shared a sense that our business meetings often feel more like meetings of corporate boards rather than a worshipful Spirit led meeting, and we should remember it is a Meeting for Worship with attention to Business. It was also suggested that there be a position of co-clerks for SAYMA instead of one clerk.

Ad Hoc Committee for SAYMA's Transition Guidance

The SAYMA clerks committee will serve in this ad hoc role, charged with working out details of SAYMA's staffing and reduced activities during suspension of regular business meetings for one to two years, as proposed in the Nashville minute. SAYMA will continue to sponsor an annual retreat at the time of its yearly sessions in June 2023 and 2024. The committee will act as a liaison, aided by the administrative assistant, with FCRJ as they pursue the racial justice work that SAYMA has requested and was agreed to in a letter addressed to SAYMA and FCRJ August 20, 2021, signed by the Presiding Clerk.

As stated in several minutes reviewed at RM 148, SAYF will continue to function under its present structure, and be financially supported by SAYMA. Specific details for other necessary yearly meeting functions during this period of renewal during suspension of regular business will be worked out by the committee and presented to the body at YM 51 for approval. Among these procedural details, it is important to decide who gives authority for dispensing funds, and who has check-signing privileges. The committee may designate sub-committees to work out some of the details (for instance, financial ones) and may also recruit others from SAYMA with necessary skills or information, as needed.

The ad hoc committee will terminate its functions at the close of YM51, and be laid down.

Discussion of the transition process followed and some Friends were concerned about the length of the pause, and the composition of the Ad Hoc Committee. A number of Friends would like to see the Ad Hoc committee composed not of SAYMA committee clerks, but of (new) people whose role is to facilitate our spiritual journey towards healing SAYMA and work towards a sense of the meeting to be on the right path. A Friend feels that the Ad Hoc committee needs to define what the Yearly Meeting would do if there was a national emergency during the pause. Another Friend suggested that each monthly meeting offer facilitators to compose the Ad Hoc committee, rather than the clerks of the committees, who will maintain a Spirit-led process. We acknowledge that there are people who are unable to attend MfW or MfB, or serve on committees, but have contributions to make.

1. We are in agreement in supporting the Nashville minute concerning SAYMA taking a pause.
2. We are asking ourselves to work harder on a spiritual sense of our own meeting and how we can participate in SAYMA.
3. We do have some problems with the constitution of the Ad Hoc committee being made up of current committee clerks. We would like to see the Ad Hoc committee constituted differently. We have a preference of seeing more people who are spirit led and discern the way forward who have a sense of meeting. We encourage equal participation of men and women and BIPOC as well as people experienced with the process.

Minute #2: We support the Nashville Monthly Meeting statement, and we have a concern about the composition of the Ad Hoc Committee. We hope the Ad Hoc committee has members who have the spiritual gift of discerning the path forward in a spiritual way.

Ministry and Counsel: Bob Lackey

Letter of Transfer for DeAnna Hatch.

April 5, 2022

DeAnna Hatch, Clerk

Oread Friends Meeting

1146 Oregon St

Lawrence, KS

66044

Dear DeAnna,

This letter is in response to your request to transfer your membership from Asheville Friends Meeting to Oread Friends Meeting in Lawrence, Kansas.

I enjoyed talking with you today and learning a bit about your history. Your introduction to Friends was in a worship group in Oxford, MS where you attended graduate school. You then became a member of the Memphis, TN Meeting. You joined Asheville Friends Meeting in 2011, possibly in late 2010, and left when you moved from Asheville at the end of 2011. Currently you are a member of the Oread Friends Meeting in Lawrence, KS where you have attended for almost four years and have been Clerk of the meeting since January 2022.

On behalf of Asheville Friends Meeting your transfer is approved. Please extend our greetings to the Oread Meeting.

In Friendship,

Bob Lackey, Clerk

Asheville Friends Meeting

Minute # 3: Letter for transfer of membership of DeAnna Hatch was approved.

Peace and Earth: Mike

P&E would like to continue announcing Earth Day observance on 4/24

"For our Earth Day observation on 4/24, the Peace and Earth Committee is asking Friends to focus on local foods. And what could be more "local" than our Meetinghouse garden! Steve Livingston, our garden steward, will provide seed potatoes for all interested Friends to participate in planting. Adults will cut up the seed potatoes into individual eyes and then young Friends can plant them in the ground. Please bring your own hand trowel for the digging part. This will also be our first Sandwich Sunday in over two years, and Friends are encouraged to bring food items to share that are made at least in part from locally sourced ingredients. Label your dish to indicate what ingredients are locally sourced, and what local farm or garden it came from. During the meal we can share not only the bounty of food, but also the bounty of local sources."

Racial Justice Committee: Steve

Racial Justice Committee's response to Atlanta Meeting's inquiry about work we are doing in our Meeting to advance understanding of structural racism and white supremacy culture and to promote racial equity. Our Meeting's work in identifying and addressing structural racism and white supremacy is charged to our Racial Justice Committee, while our work in identifying and promoting right relations with Native Americans is done by our Peace and Earth Committee. Both committees feel led to bring concerns to the whole meeting, which has become increasingly receptive.

In-Meeting training and advocacy

About two years ago, our Meeting began a weekly Zoom discussion group to support our anti-racism growth, by sharing our experience reading books such as Resmaa Menakem's "My Grandmother's Hands" or listening to podcasts such as "Seeing White." About a dozen Friends attend these weekly meetings. We are currently working our way through Layla F. Saad's "Me and White Supremacy." Each time we come to the end of one experience, the group collaborates in choosing another to continue supporting our practice together. The candor and heart-felt sharing has created a space for courage and community in our mostly white meeting.

We have had several second hour learning opportunities on Native American issues, including Cherokee language and spirituality, boarding schools and boarding school healing, and decolonization and uncolonization. We had another second hour opportunity to learn about the work of a new attender who is very active in promoting racial equity in Asheville's Black community. Many Asheville Friends have begun to support her work, and learn valuable skills to use in our individual anti-racism work.

Our Meeting struggled for years to overcome our reluctance to accept the Racial Justice Committee's discerned charge of "identifying and addressing racism and white supremacy in our Meeting and our wider community." With persistence, advocacy, listening, and education, Friends finally overcame their discomfort with

the idea of “white supremacy” being applicable to our own Meeting, and approved the committee's charge.

Community Training

Many Asheville Friends have participated in workshops presented by the Racial Equity Institute and Building Bridges of Asheville. Several Friends continue meeting monthly with the Keep It Moving Coalition, an organization made up of graduates of those two programs that provides ongoing opportunities for further training and experience. Several Friends have participated in “Act Out Equity”, a group organized by a Black community leader, to examine incidences of racism in schools, workplaces, and other public places and learn how to respond effectively. Friends also participate in community activities such as screenings of racially themed films and stage plays, lectures, and art exhibits, including them in our weekly on-line Digest.

Community Activism & Financial Support

Our Meeting has recently established a restricted fund that we call the Reparations Fund, which is initially being used to compensate Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC) for helping us in our efforts to become a more anti-racial, multicultural faith community by sharing their expertise and experience. Donations and disbursements are managed by a group of Friends whom we call the Reparations Fund Caretakers.

Our House and Grounds Committee has created a policy of searching for BIPOC contractors for maintenance projects on our meeting house.

Several members of our Meeting were involved for years in a Black-led group called “Just Us” that was seeking justice for a victim of racist police violence. One of the leaders was a member of our Meeting. Members of our Meeting participate

in the work of Asheville's Black-led Racial Justice Coalition, through local government committee watching and advocacy for racial justice issues that come before the City and County. Asheville Friends have participated in the Poor People's Campaign, Black Lives Matter, the Asheville Sanctuary effort, and the Occupy! movement. Asheville Meeting provides financial support to the UNCA Native American Speakers Series and to the Cherokee Center for Native Health, and donates about 15% of our annual income to local Black-led organizations working for racial and economic justice, youth education and empowerment, and trauma healing. Some Asheville Friends are actively engaged in developing personal relationships with members of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. We sought advice from Cherokee elders and historians in developing our Land Acknowledgement and brought it to the Tribal Council before publication.

Conclusion

These activities over the years have supported anti-racism awareness and growth in those who have participated, and have influenced the meeting as a whole as we share our learning. We are constantly seeking ways to weave these experiences even more into the life of the meeting. And though we may stumble and falter and make errors, we are learning more about our blind spots and our cultural conditioning, and we can acknowledge that our Meeting has advanced in our journey toward becoming a truly anti-racist, multicultural faith community.

Friends thanked the writers of the report for all their work.

Minute # 4: We accepted the report of the Racial Justice Committee.

Monthly Meeting Discernment Process of 118th Congress FCNL Legislative Priorities:

Members / attendees of Asheville Friends Meeting must now choose 7 from our 9 priorities that we submitted on 3.20.22. This will be uploaded into an FCNL form and submitted before 4.12.2022

- IV.3.1 Increased empowerment of women and girls, non-coercive family planning resources.
- Medicare For All. Eliminate 26,000 excess deaths attributed to lack of medical insurance annually in the USA. Eliminate 66% of personal bankruptcies annually. As proposed in Current Bills H.R. 1976 and S.1129. " The World We Seek" Legislative Policy Citation III.2.6
- Initiate measures to eliminate atmospheric carbon release (our environment is in dire peril: nothing less than zero carbon emissions can save our ecosystem now) as well as soil and water pollution (which also damage the environment and are a socioeconomic justice issue.)
- Remove the exception clause of 13th amendment that allows for enslavement of persons convicted of crimes, Critically assess roots of criminalization and change de-humanizing attitudes associated with the exception clause.
- Housing for all who desire it, that is affordable, sustainable, safely built, and suitable for the climate in which it is located, and with accessibility to necessary stores.

- Since Carlisle, in 1879, churches and government created boarding schools for Native children. More than 30 were run by Quakers. Pass S. 2907 and H.R. 5444 creating a Truth and Healing Commission.
- An apology and if possible reparations to begin to address racial injustice.
- Reduction of dependence on violence to solve problems, nationally and internationally, so we can put our resources into dealing with the causes of areas of conflict and human needs.

Minute# 5: We approved sending the above 8 priorities to FCNL

Meeting closed with silent worship until the way opens for our next Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business in the fifth month of 2022