

Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business
Asheville Friends Meeting
Fourth Month 16, 2023

Present: Pat Johnson, Clerk, Barbara Burke, Recording Clerk, Zoe Wallace, Jim Cavener, Rusty Maynard, Barbara Esther, Jim Barham, Joel O'Brien, Bob Lackey, Suzanne Junkin Friedrichs, Margaret Normile, Sarah Shipe, Sarah Jane Thomas, Scotty Utz, Steve Livingston, Adrienne Weir.

Present via Zoom: Ms Bettie Council, Satchel Loftis, Christopher Foreman.

The Meeting opened with Silent Worship.

The Clerk shared a reading out of silence.

Listening Spirituality

by Patricia Loring

Chapter 1. Foundational Personal Practice in Support of Listening for God, p 9.

Earlier Friends were clear that nothing was more important than this daily "set aside" time--time unambiguously for God. If God is truly God, there can be nothing more important than making space to give ourselves over fully to developing our relationship with him/her. Thomas Kelly speaks of the irony of our conviction that we are doing things "for" God when we don't take time to listen for what God might truly want us to do.

The time will look wasted by ordinary standards. One unconventional decision required of those who are ready to give themselves over to the deepening of their spiritual lives is to be willing --as some touch-minded person puts it--to waste time with God: to give over one's own agenda and be open to the promptings of that mysterious being whose ways are not our ways and whose

time is utterly different. It's only the beginning of the ways in which we are called to step over against the prevailing culture--to be countercultural.

Minute #1: The agenda was approved.

Minute #2: The Third Month Business Meeting Minutes were approved.

Announcements: Pat Johnson

The Southern Appalachian Yearly Meeting and Association Sessions and Retreat is Friday, June 23, 2023 - Tuesday, June 27, 2023 in Berea, KY. The workshop proposal deadline for SAYMA is April 24, 2023. Online registration for the Sessions and Retreat is not yet available.

The 2023 FGC gathering is Sunday July 2 , 2023 - Saturday July 8, 2023 at Western Oregon University, in Monmouth, Oregon.

We are continuing to collect food for MANNA Food Bank. The box is in the entryway.

The Hip-Hop Nativo Festival was awesome. The Meeting made a donation to the festival and Friends can still make donations.

Committees:

Ministry and Counsel: Pat Johnson

The Meeting has had a membership transfer request from Christopher Foreman. Christopher has requested that his membership be transferred from the Swannanoa Friends Meeting to Asheville Friends Meeting. M&C recommends the transfer.

Minute #3: The Meeting enthusiastically approved welcoming Christopher Foreman to the Asheville Friends Meeting and the transfer of his membership.

Finance: Satchel Loftis

Satchel shared a screen of the most up to date finances as of March, 2023, and he indicated that numbers are about typical for this time of year. He did indicate that payments for gas in the first quarter are higher than in past years, but this may be due to Zen center using the Meetinghouse several days a week which they had not been doing during COVID, and this may contribute to the higher gas usage. The report is included as an attachment at the end of the Minutes.

Minute #3: The Meeting accepted the Finance Committee report.

Gun Safe Surrender Event: Scotty Utz

Scotty invited the Meeting to co-sponsor a Gun Safe Surrender Event, to be held on Saturday, May 13, 2023. The first Mothers Day envisioned was a Mothers Day for Peace, promoted after the Civil War. The pastors of Circle of Mercy and Land of Sky UCC and Scotty Utz have initiated this event in Asheville. Scotty has also reached out to Swannanoa Valley Friends Meeting. The Safe Surrender Event is a time when people are invited to bring their unwanted guns to be turned into scrap metal to make garden tools and/or art. The Meeting is asked to be a co-sponsor in support of the event. We are asked to have 3-4 volunteers at the event and promote it on our media website. The Surrender Event also asks for donations in order to provide gift cards to the people who donate their guns. The event is promoted as an opportunity to give \$50 gift cards to mothers and get a gun off the streets. The location of the event is Land of Sky UCC, in East Asheville.

Minute #4: The Meeting approves co-sponsoring the Gun Safety Surrender Event.

Peace and Earth: Steve Livingston.

Peace and Earth has been working on a minute of support for indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples have asked that faith groups accept responsibility for the actions they took against the original inhabitants of this country. Steve stressed that when we talk of right relations with native people it is a journey, and decolonization necessarily includes repatriation of land taken.

Proposed Minute of Support for Indigenous People

The Asheville Friends Meeting with leading from Spirit adopts this Minute. Spirit calls us toward truth, racial healing, and transformation, following the Indigenous wisdom of respect for the earth and all its beings.

We affirm the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We repudiate the Doctrines of Discovery: the religious basis for European colonization around the world. We acknowledge and regret Friends' role in the ensuing genocide, land theft, and forced assimilation of the peoples indigenous to this continent, including Friends' role in operating and legitimizing compulsory schools for Indigenous children. We endorse the formation of a federal Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies and will continue to support Indigenous rights, self-determination, and sovereignty.

We commit to compassionately listen to and courageously face the learning required to comprehend settler colonialism and establish rapport with Indigenous people. We seek to establish relationships that guide us to thoughtful, grounded actions opposing the ongoing

systemic dehumanization and material dispossession of the original peoples of the land on which we live and worship.

We commit to the following actions and call upon the Meetings and Worship Groups of SAYMA to similarly commit as led :

- To self-educate about the history of Indigenous life before European contact, the arrival of settler colonial peoples, and the current effects of colonization specific to our region. We will compensate Native people who provide us with their expertise from our Reparations Fund. We will learn how to interrupt anti-Indigenous behavior and language.
- To self-educate about Quaker involvement in compulsory day and boarding schools for Native children, where language, religious, and cultural assimilation were violently enforced, and where kidnapping, torture, and preventable child death were common.
- To provide opportunities for collective lamentation: times and/or spaces to acknowledge, grieve, and integrate these truths, with the guidance of Spirit and our Indigenous advisors.
- To uphold the self-determination and sovereignty of Native nations. We acknowledge that it is not the place of non-Indigenous people to define or decide the priorities or realities of Indigenous people, and that ‘right relationship’ requires respect for Indigenous people’s autonomy and leadership.
- To act in solidarity with the reinvigoration of local Indigenous cultural knowledge and wisdom. For example: language restoration; environmental stewardship; Native Craft and Art; food and medicine; wildfire management techniques; spirituality; mental and physical healthcare; programs for youth; and Native-led healing work.
- To explore the sources of our properties and wealth and to invest in Native nations or Native-led projects that support Indigenous rights, health, or autonomy. These

investments could include sharing property, paying rent as suggested by tribes, or returning the land. Example projects include efforts to create awareness and advocate for missing and murdered Indigenous women; support treaty rights; support legislation repudiating the Doctrine of Discovery and support ecological protection movements.

- To identify ways in which these commitments are honored within each annual State of the Meeting report.

A Friend suggested everyone carefully read the proposal, as there is a great deal the Meeting would be committing itself to do. Steve explained that these are commitments, not goals, and a direction in which we hope to be able to move. The call for other Meetings to engage in these same commitments is in accordance with the practice of SAYMA in advancing a concern that falls within the oversight of their Peace and Social Concerns Committee. By inviting other SAYMA Meetings to address these commitments we hope they will join us in these commitments, or we will join them in similar commitments, and open the way to the Yearly Meeting having a similar minute.

The Clerk asks that Friends review and reflect on the proposed minute so that we may further discuss it in our Fifth Month Meeting for Business.

Ministry and Counsel: Pat Johnson

The Long-Range Planning Committee would like to give the Religious Education Committee the go ahead on installing some playground pieces in the ground and putting up a new shed for their outdoor toys. The current shed has fallen apart and the door does not work. The area of the playground is defined by the garden beds to the east and the large oak stump to the north. All playground structures can be removed relatively easily, should new plans arise in the future. Should this be approved, the RE Committee will plan a workday in the next few months to work on the playground.

A Friend sent the following email in response:

In legal terms, the proposed playground is called “an attractive nuisance.” Which means that AFM will be totally liable for any neighborhood child who is injured while playing there. That, in turn, suggests that an unscalable, lockable fence would be a minimal requirement. This would be both expensive and unsightly. Additionally, we ought to run it by our insurance provider first. I would be surprised if they were willing to provide any coverage at all, less surprised if they doubled our premium.

There are any number of NEW GAMES and other activities which do not require installed equipment, most of which encourage group participation more so than does a structured playground.

I will not stand in the way, indeed I can barely stand at all, but I do think this notion needs more seasoning.

The Friend indicated that members thought this was being overly concerned about things that could conceivably happen and they asked if this is how we want to live our lives.

A different Friend suggests that we follow through on the suggestion in the email to check with our insurer concerning liability for having an attractive nuisance on the property. The liability may outweigh the desires of the Meeting’s children. We have a responsibility for what we have available for play and maybe more emphasis should be on interactive play.

A Member stated that the Clerk of Junior Meeting for Business has been participating in Long Range Planning Meetings, and feels that the JM Clerk will support the suggestions to ensure the safety of the equipment, and to check with our insurer. The children want

the current equipment to be safe, and they will be asked what will be acceptable for them moving forward. They would also like to have a donated swing installed.

Minute #5: The Meeting approved The Junior Business Meeting and RE Committee request to install a new shed, and explore the installation of new playground equipment in the ground.

FCNL Request on Reproductive Health and Abortion: Bob Lackey, liaison to FCNL.

Two Friends prepared the following statement:

- What does reproductive health care look like in the world that you and your community seek?

Women deserve access to equitable, affordable, comprehensive, and safe health care, which includes maternal health care and abortion care.

- How are the Quaker values and testimonies relevant to the issue of abortion?

Quaker values addressed: equity, integrity, community are evident in the above statement, both because women in general are not treated with the care they need and because women in communities of color or in rural areas do not have equal access to quality care. Therefore we, Asheville Friends Meeting, would like to see a statement that includes all care, including safe and accessible maternity care which includes abortion in the FCNL policy statement.

- Should the FCNL Policy Statement be revised on the issues of abortion and reproductive health and abortion?

Yes

- If so, what should the Policy Statement say?

We seek a world where women's health, bodily autonomy, privacy, and dignity are protected and honored by our governments and communities. All people deserve access to equitable, affordable, comprehensive, and safe health care. For women, this health care includes but is not limited to access to safe abortion care and maternity care.

Maternal mortality rates in the United States continue to climb. In 2020, the United States ranked 2nd highest of all countries in the global north for maternal mortality rates. These mortality rates are even higher for women of color. In 2021, the rate was more than twice as high for black women as compared to white women. Additionally women in rural areas also have much higher maternal mortality rates compared to women in urban areas. Maternity wards in rural areas continue to close their doors especially in states lacking Medicaid expansion. When women lose access to adequate health care, those who are disadvantaged feel it the most.

We seek a world where there is equitable access to comprehensive health care for women of all cultures and needs, such as Medicare for all. We seek to safeguard the well-being of all women and families. We seek a world where women have the sole right to make decisions regarding their own body with dignity and for their decisions to be honored and fulfilled. We seek a world where women's health and safety are always a priority.

<https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/hestat/maternal-mortality/2021/maternal-mortality-rates->

[2021.htm#anchor_1559670130302](#)

<https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/field/maternal-mortality-ratio/country-comparison>

A Friend asked about Medicare for All and could this be included in the statement above. One of the Friends who helped prepare our responses said she is not sure this request is what FCNL is looking for in the responses from Meetings concerning Reproductive Health and Abortion. She feels we could support Medicare for All when it comes to legislation but Medicare for All is not the goal of this statement. This statement expresses the way the Meeting feels about the care of women and families in particular. Bob expressed that the request from FCNL was speaking specifically to the issue of FCNL Statement on abortion. There is an FCNL policy document called *The World We Seek* containing a request for Medicare for All.

Minute #6: The Meeting approved the statement from our Meeting to FCNL and expressed gratitude to the Friends who worked on this.

The Meeting closed with silent worship until the way opens for our next Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business in the Fifth Month, 2023.

Attachments

📄 AFM - Operating Activity FY2023 - 2023-04-15.pdf

