

**Meeting for Worship With Attention to Business**  
**Asheville Friends Meeting**  
**Fifth Month 14, 2023**

**Present:** Patricia Johnson , Clerk, Barbara Burke, Recording Clerk, Jim Barham, Steve Livingston, Katherine Kowal, Rusty Maynard, Margaret Normile, Ellie Cox, Robin Wells. Suzanne Junkin Friedrichs, Kitti Reynolds, Margaret Farmer.

**Present via Zoom:** Gita Larson, Mike Eddy, Beth Eddy.

The Meeting opened with Silent Worship

The Clerk shared a reading out of silence:

*A Living Faith: An Historical and Comparative Study of Quaker Beliefs*, 2nd Edition, Chapter 8, by Wilmer A Cooper, Friends United Press, Richmond, IN, 2000.

“Quakerism is a way of life.” This saying, common among Friends, is intended to make it clear that Quakerism is not just a set of beliefs or a statement of faith; it is a practical, ethical, and functional religious approach to life. That is to say, it is a religious faith to be lived out and not just professed and talked about. This is not to suggest that Friends do not regard faith commitment as primary and prerequisite to action. Indeed, our first responsibility is to seek the truth in terms of God’s will. But after we have discerned it, we are obliged to carry out the will of God by “doing the truth.” The inward journey of faith can never be separated from the outward journey of practice, and Friends believe the two are integral and indispensable to each other.

**Minute # 1:** The Meeting approved the agenda.

The Fourth Month Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business minutes were reviewed, and the wording of concern for the liability for the playground will be reconsidered. Therefore, the Fourth Month Minutes are not approved at this time and will be brought forth for approval at the Sixth Month MFB.

**Announcements:**

Registration for Southern Appalachian Yearly Meeting and Association Sessions and Retreat is open. It is being held at Berea College, Berea, Kentucky, from Friday, June 23-Tuesday, June 27, 2023. Several Friends from the Meeting are hoping to attend, and the possibility of carpooling was brought up.

The 2023 Friends General Conference Gathering is Sunday, July 2 - Saturday, July 8, 2023, at Western Oregon University, Monmouth, Oregon, and registration is now open.

66 pounds of food was collected by the Meeting for the Mountain Area Nutritional Alliance (Manna). A Friend brought a barrel from Manna to the Meetinghouse for future donations. A Member suggested that we can continue to collect food all year and donate it to the BeLoved street pantry boxes located around Asheville, in addition to donating it to Manna. There is a sign on the barrel indicating what donations are not acceptable to Manna.

**Minute #2:** The Meeting approved food could also be distributed to BeLoved food pantries

**Committees:**

**Nominating:** Kitti Reynolds

The Nominating Committee is pleased to nominate Zoe Wallace to be the Meetinghouse Rental Coordinator. We thank Kim Wagner, who was the past rental coordinator, for all her work.

**Minute #3:** The Meeting approved Zoe Wallace as Meetinghouse Rental Coordinator.

**Finance:** Satchel Loftis.

There is no new news in the last month to report and therefore no official Finance report .

**Peace and Earth:** Steve Livingston

### **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.

In the discussion that followed a Friend asked in what manner reparations would be paid. Steve explained that currently the Meeting’s reparation fund is used to compensate Black, Indigenous and other People of Color who share with us their wisdom and experience as we attempt to eliminate white supremacy. P&E is working on discerning the creation of another fund, to be called the Indigenous Support Fund that will allow the Meeting to invest in support of Indigenous people, in accordance with how they wish to spend the money. The Friend asked if P&E could bring to the Meeting their suggestions as to the amount of money or percentage of incoming funds being considered. Steve

indicated that there is also a separate committee that takes care of the reparations fund. This committee could conceivably bring to the Business Meeting a recommendation as to how much money would go into the reparations fund. They may suggest a portion of the reparations fund's money go towards something that the Asheville/Buncombe County Reparations Committee suggests. Another Friend agreed that this is an important point. Our Land Acknowledgement Statement read at each Meeting indicates our commitment to give priority and resources to Indigenous People. It is hard, but important, to give up our power and control, and enable the people receiving the funds to make their own decisions as to what to do with the funds. It is difficult to be willing to be vulnerable and see what we are willing to give up.

A Friend agrees there is a need for an Indigenous Support Fund, and some funds from the Reparations Fund have been used to help us learn about the process of what is needed and how to actually proceed with reparations. Our current Racial Justice Committee is charged with discerning the distribution of our Racial Justice Fund, and this Friend thinks the expenditure of those funds has been outstanding, and would like to see the Indigenous Support Fund do a similar type work primarily in Asheville. A Member supports the effort proposed, and reminded the Meeting that we have to remember our not-for-profit status, in that we cannot give money to an individual but can give it to an organization. The Clerk said the discussion today is not about this particular fund and how it will be allocated, but rather about Meeting support for the proposed minute.

A Friend asked if this proposed minute is approved, would it be sent to other member meetings of SAYMA? The Clerk indicated that yes, if the proposed minute is approved, it would then go to SAYMA's Peace and Social Concerns Committee which would then disseminate it to the other meetings to ask them to consider it. Ultimately, we hope it would come to the business meeting at the yearly Retreat and Sessions (though not this year). This is a journey, and other meetings may not be so led, but this proposed minute may begin the process of the Yearly Meeting considering this proposal and uniting with it. A Friend spoke about the process of taking this proposed minute on to SAYMA. She expressed uncertainty as to whether our Meeting has a representative on SAYMA's P&SC Committee and suggested if we had a representative from the Asheville Friends Meeting on that committee, it would be a big help in implementing this minute. There are some in the Meeting who feel that SAYMA wasn't ready to address a minute such as the one proposed here, but feel led to move forward with the proposal. Another Member said some members have been leery about working through SAYMA because of the struggles the Yearly Meeting has been experiencing. SAYMA has been talking about reparations, and she thinks that it will be considered during Annual Sessions. Because we lost a sense

of community, and being together to accomplish things during COVID, she is hopeful that now all of us are able to meet together, SAYMA will be able to pull together once again. She also said that SAYMA is looking for nominations for committees, especially Peace and Social Concerns, EarthJustice, and Outreach.

A Member asked who are we talking about when we speak of “racial” anything? People may feel “racial” covers the Black community, and the Indigenous community, but are we leaving other minority communities, such as the Korean and Hispanic communities out of the process? A Friend suggested we remember that when we speak of the BICOP community, we are not just addressing Black or Indigenous people, but rather people of the global majority, that is, the non-white non-European-descendent majority.

A Friend suggested that sections of the proposed minute might be better phrased as a query. He feels that a query based approach would allow for the diversity of what transpired in the past and might lead us to better investigate what happened during those periods. For instance, regarding the boarding schools, were there any benefits or was violence the predominant factor?

A Friend responded that what feels neutral to us is actually defaulting to white supremacy culture. That which feels neutral to those of us who are white may be seen as completely different to people of the Black, Indigenous and other People of Color community. Also the intention doesn't matter as much as impact, that is, the intention can be good, but the impact can be devastating. Self education is of primary importance, and some of the commitments address that.

Another Friend commented that Indigenous people have been asking for some time for faith groups to address what happened and apologize. Some religious organizations have done this, but they have a structure that allows a proposal such as this to move up to the highest level and then the religious community can issue a statement. Friends don't have the hierarchy that other religions have to address this, so we are beginning with an AFM minute, that will then go to SAYMA, our Yearly Meeting. There have been other yearly meetings that have issued a similar minute to the one being proposed in our Meeting.

A Member supported the idea of queries. When asked to commit it doesn't open us up, but sort of closes the door, asking people “Do you agree to this or not agree to this?” We need to try to open ourselves up, which a query implies, and invite ourselves to go deeper

beyond what we already know, versus a commitment, which implies “I know this and it is right and here is where I stand.” In general a query approach would allow us to self educate and invite people to tell their stories, and tell us why they feel the way they do. A Friend brought up that the boarding schools are not ancient history and people are still alive who attended these schools, and know what went on.

The Clerk brought up that we had planned to have a workshop with Paula Palmer, a Quaker involved with Indigenous work, in 2020, but the COVID pandemic caused the workshop to be canceled. There will be a similar workshop this year in September at UNCA with local Indigenous speakers.

A Member had a question about how specific our commitments will be. Can we as a Meeting approve the minute, without having a line item in the budget for the amount the Indigenous Support Fund will have? Another Friend said he felt unease in the proposed minute with the characterization of some of the people and the roles they played, though he is in accord with expenditures for a Indigenous Support Fund. He feels a query approach may help us better characterize the diverse versions of history. Steve explained that the minute proposed poses questions and our commitment to finding answers to those questions. The Meeting may need more time to discern if it can approve this minute. It is wise to take our time in our discernment, and not enter into it lightly. The Meeting agreed that Members will study the document in the coming month, and discern if they are able to make these commitments. We will bring it back to our next Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business.

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