

Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business
Asheville Friends Meeting
First Month 14, 2024

Present in the Meetinghouse: Pat Johnson, Clerk, Kitti Reynolds, Interim Recording Clerk, Vinnie Grossi, Jim Cavener, Barbara Burke, Katherine Kowal, Jim Barham, Ellie Cox, Steve Livingston, Sandra Parker, Barbara Esther, Margaret Normile, Robin Wells, Suzanne Friedrichs, Adrienne Weir

Present via Zoom: Bob Lackey , Satchel Loftis, Rylin Hansen, Zoe Wallace, Joel O'Brien, Gita Larson

The Meeting opened with Silent Worship.

The Clerk shared a reading out of the silence.

See No Stranger A Memoir and Manifesto of Revolutionary Love

By Valarie Kaur

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Seeing no stranger begins in wonder. It is to look upon the face of anyone and choose to say: *You are a part of me I do not yet know.* Wonder is the wellspring for love. Who we wonder about determines whose stories we hear and whose joy and pain we share. Those we grieve with, those we sit with and weep with are ultimately those we organize with and advocate for. When a critical mass of people come together to *wonder* about one another, grieve with one another and fight with and for one another, we begin to build the solidarity needed for collective liberation and transformation— a solidarity rooted in love.

Approve Agenda

Minute #1: Friends accepted the agenda.

Approve Twelfth Month Business Meeting minutes.

Minute #2: The Meeting approved the Twelfth Month Business Meeting Minutes as amended.

Announcements: Pat Johnson

● **Asheville Citizens Times: Letters to the Editor**

12/24/2023

Edwards response was inadequate

Recently I wrote to Representative Chuck Edwards on behalf of the Asheville Friends Meeting (Quakers) urging him to support a cease-fire in Gaza more specifically defined below. He wrote back with two paragraphs on what Hamas has done but said nothing about what Israel has done. Here is a quote from his letter: “While I do not support the killing of innocent civilians on either side of the war, I support Israel’s military operation against Hamas in order to prevent the ongoing threat against civilians in the region.”

The Asheville Friends Meeting wishes to inform our community of the following Minute (a public policy statement) that we approved at our business meeting on Nov. 19: Minute on the War in Gaza The Asheville Friends Meeting (Quakers) calls on our elected representatives to demand consistent and adequate humanitarian aid for Gaza. We urge them to insist that Israel adhere to international humanitarian and human rights law. We call for an immediate cease-fire to end the wholesale slaughter and destruction in Gaza.

Representative Edwards' response is inadequate and doesn't address our concerns. As a faith group in this community, we strongly encourage everyone to stand up against this horror and pressure our elected officials to do the same. Thank you.

Patricia M. Johnson, Candler

- M&C asks if anyone has a laptop they're not using to consider donating it to the Meeting with the hope that more folks could then provide “tech support” on Sundays. Kitti expects to have an older laptop that she will donate to the Meeting. Pat is writing up instructions on how to do tech support.
- We invite all committees to send their clerk or a representative to a gathering to help write our annual State of the Meeting Report. Date: Jan 27th from 3-5. Backup date if needed, is Feb 3rd at the same time. Snacks & pizza will be served.

Queries for our state of the meeting reports:

What has our Monthly Meeting been holding/carrying this past year?

How has our Meeting embraced the Light, and in so doing, how have we been changed?

What holds us together and helps us avoid becoming overwhelmed by the brokenness of the world?

SAYMA Update: Margaret Farmer (read by the Clerk)

Our meeting needs a representative to our yearly meeting, since Morgan no longer attends. Barbara Esther and I both attend, wearing other “hats,” each with a very specific focus.

The representative position involves attending 3 meetings:

Spring (this year on Saturday, April 6 in Atlanta arriving Friday evening, leaving late Saturday or Sunday midday.) In person meetings are hybrid, so virtual attendance is possible.

Fall held in late October or early November, also on a Saturday.

SAYMA retreat and annual sessions (business meetings), at Berea College in Berea, Kentucky in the time frame of June 19-23 (not firm dates yet). Meeting will be hybrid, so virtual attendance is possible.

The representative is **not** charged with “voting” based solely on monthly meeting input, but rather discerns for themselves along with the others in attendance, in corporate discernment as spirit moves through the representative meeting.

The representative reports to the monthly meeting after each of these meetings, sharing the report with the recording clerk who adds it to the meeting minutes.

Rental Coordinator: Zoe Wallace

Zoe presented the proposal to "rent" the Meetinghouse for free with a no minimum suggested donation to groups that are run by and serve the global majority. Rates will not change for other groups or current groups.

A Friend asked for examples and also suggested flexibility for groups that might have payment problems, letting groups try out if they could pay. Give the coordinator flexibility. A Friend suggested allowing global majority groups to use the building whether or not they could pay. A Friend was concerned about insurance. Clerk pointed out that every group that uses the Meetinghouse signs a waiver. A Friend pointed out that new doors could open. Another Friend said that the Zen group would have to have someone come in to pick up all the cushions and store them before another group comes, then put them back before the Zen group meets. Zoe might be able to take charge of cushion placements. A Friend thought the Zen group should manage the cushions and they are not renting the space at other times. A Friend pointed out this could be an opportunity to work with multicultural groups and stick to the policy of who

we charge rent to. A Friend suggested this be part of the rental coordinator 's guidelines . Another Friend was opposed to broadening the discussion beyond what Zoe proposed.

Minute # 3: The proposal was approved to offer rent-free space to people of the global majority.

Committees:

Nominating: Kitti Reynolds.

The Board of Directors chooses members by consensus but they are subject to the approval of the Meeting. The Board chose Kitti Reynolds so we ask for her approval. Board members have traditionally been members of the Finance Committee as well. Kitti has agreed to serve on the Finance Committee so we ask for approval.

Minute #4: Kitti is approved to be on the Board and on Finance.

Ministry & Counsel: Robin Wells presented the following:

Forum on Community Engagement

Earlier this month, M&C co-facilitated a second-hour forum with the Nominating Committee entitled "Invitation to Community through Committees and Meeting Positions." It was well attended and several people shared about how they got to know people in the community better while working on a committee or serving as Clerk or recording clerk. Most committees are welcoming new members, so people are encouraged to let us know where they might have an interest. Committees are also encouraged to reach out and invite individuals to join them. Remember that you can "test drive" a committee without officially joining it, if you would like to see if it would be a good fit for you.

One committee that was asked about in the forum is the Care and Nurture Committee, which is a subcommittee of Ministry & Counsel. This committee had become inactive over the last few years and there is interest in reviving it. Through the years, Care and Nurture has had many roles. They generally hold the Meeting in the Light and keep an eye on who might need help in the Meeting community. Sometimes this happens through a card sent at the time of a family member's death or other difficult challenge. Sometimes they help initiate a meal train for someone who is sick and is needing meals. They occasionally offer rides to those who need

help getting to Meeting or a doctor's appointment. Committee members don't do all of the work. They coordinate it among the broader community. Is there anyone interested in joining this committee? Please let Kitti Reynolds know or reach out to anyone on Ministry & Counsel. Barbara Burke would like to serve on Care and Nurture.

Robin added the suggestion that Doug Lane be on retainer to provide routine maintenance for the Meeting House. Two hours/month. Larger projects would still be done by people of color and arranged by House and Grounds. Adrienne is still associated with Women in the Trade group - but they are all white. We will discuss this more when we get to the budget.

The Sign for the Playground

Last month we approved the sign that will be erected in our front lawn. The wording would be:

Welcome to
Asheville Friends Meeting

- Playground open sunrise to sunset only
- Use playground at your own risk
- Adult supervision required - put this first
- No rough play allowed

The children have requested that we add wording to the effect of:

- Please respect the equipment as if it were yours and put it back when you leave.

We are asking for approval to add this wording to the sign. 5

M&C is in the process of working with the signmaker. She recommends that it not be wood, but be made of a sturdy polymetal for longevity. We will be meeting with her next week. Her prices are very reasonable and we would like to have a cost of \$200 be approved to come from the Building Fund.

Minute #5: The Meeting approved the sign wording as amended and that the signmaker is approved with a cap of \$200.

Vinnie volunteered to help with the installation.

Finance: Satchel Loftis

We made it to our 2023 budget goal, we got \$7000 in late December. We have a \$250 surplus for 2023. Finance Committee line is used as a catchall for some unexpected expenses. A Friend commended Satchel for his budget layout showing the percentages of our budget in broad categories.

2024 Budget Draft was presented by Satchel

Robin asked about \$1200 /yr for MH handyman, a position similar to Tim's. The money would only be for the labor. It's not in our 2024 budget. A Friend is concerned about items not in the budget when we are asked to make individual contributions to a particular item. She proposes a contingency fund that might not be used every year but could be used to fund special projects as they come up. A Friend is concerned that adding the handyman proposal be kept separate from the budget discussion until we have discussed it more. We can amend the budget later, but let's decide now if we approve the proposed budget. A Friend said this is our first budget discussion, so this is the appropriate time to present the handyman item, however the \$1200 is not in the budget now. Clerk suggests we think about this and look at the budget next month. A question came up about individuals paying for items out of pocket. We may need to put more money into the H and G budget. A Friend pointed out we have a committee that is not sticking to its charge. He is disappointed that we have to hire a person to do what we should have a committee to do. Another Friend pointed out that we don't have enough people on H and G. Obadiah (a young boy in a series of books about early Friends) could only spend his money at Quaker booths. We shouldn't have H and G feel frustrated because there aren't enough people on the committee. A Friend pointed out that things ebb and flow - the committee could get bigger. Who is going to get on the committee if it's a gigantic commitment?

The Library committee has asked for \$300 not \$150 as shown in the budget if the Meeting wants to purchase new books.

A Friend reminded us that RJC might need money next year. The clerk of Racial Justice Committee explained that the committee's budget request for \$0 is because they anticipate our

primary Racial Justice work this year will be with Dr. Melchor Hall, who has requested not to be compensated by the Meeting. The committee may well request more funding in the future.

Clerk asks us to consider the budget and we will discuss it next month.

Peace and Earth: Steve Livingston.

We were asked to defer the items below except to co-sponsor the visit of Samer Badawi.

Samer Badawi was a correspondent for the news organization + 972. + 972 is the country code for Israel/Palestine

#1 Samer Badawi Presentation sponsored by Just Peace for Israel/Palestine.

Minute #6: Meeting approved co-sponsoring Samer Badawi's presentation at AB Tech Feb 4, 2-4- PM.

The following items were deferred until the next Meeting for Business.

#2 Proposal to consider during our 2024 Budget discernment

We have come to understand that when we purchased the title to the tract of land that the Meetinghouse sits on, we were receiving stolen property. We acknowledge that it is stolen land every Sunday at Rise of Meeting for Worship, as we have done for several years now. Our testimony of integrity would naturally lead us to return this property to its rightful owners. What efforts have we made, or can we make, to do so? What steps have we taken, or can we take, to compensate the rightful owners for our continued occupation of their land?

Suggestion: We currently collect a fee from other entities for use of the Meetinghouse that sits on this stolen land without giving any consideration to compensating its rightful owners. According to the Buncombe County Registrar of Deeds, the stolen land comprises 20 percent of the total value of the property to which we hold title. Therefore 20 percent of the money we receive in usage fees from other entities should be set aside in a fund to compensate the rightful owners of the land once the proper means of compensation is discerned. For example, in 2022 we collected \$1431.75 in usage fees from outside entities. 20 percent of this amount would be \$286.35.

Similarly, we should set aside money to compensate the rightful owners for our own use of their land. This amount should be 20 percent of the hourly rate we customarily charge to other entities for use of the space, multiplied by the number of hours we occupy the space. At a minimum this would amount to 20 percent of \$15 per hour times 4 hours per week: \$12 per

week or \$624 per year.

The above are suggestions from P&E on how we can move beyond Land Acknowledgement, and the Committee asks for further suggestions from the Meeting.

#3

The SAYMA Earth Justice Committee recommends a Minute on the Climate Crisis. Our AFM Peace and Earth Committee recommends that the Meeting unite with this Minute.

In keeping with the established practice of the YM's Peace and Social Concerns Committee, individual Meetings are encouraged to either unite with the Minute as it reads or else submit a Minute of their own in response to the suggested Minute. We have no such established process for Earth Justice but the Committee is comfortable with adopting this process in an effort to move the Minute forward in anticipation of a YM Minute being approved at 2024 Summer Retreat & Sessions.

Climate Statement

Southern Appalachian Yearly Meeting and Association (SAYMA)

The Religious Society of Friends witnesses to the truth of our times. In this moment, we recognize that we are facing an existential crisis that requires a response greater than individual actions. The systemic structures as well as the daily choices of peoples, governments and faith communities across the globe must act in radical concert to address the climate catastrophe we have created.

World leaders will come together for the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention on Climate Change (COP29). SAYMA calls on them to acknowledge that the burning of fossil fuels is the primary cause of the climate crisis, and to recognize that many of the nations that are hardest hit by a warming climate have been the least responsible for the crisis and are least able to cope with the consequences. We call on COP29 to clearly state that the existential crisis of climate change requires more than merely an orderly transition. We must end our use of fossil fuels by 2030. We call on COP29 negotiators to commit to fully finance the Loss and Damage Fund to compensate developing countries, and the Green Climate Fund to implement renewable solutions in developing countries.

The continued burning of fossil fuels is destabilizing the climate, acidifying oceans, and destroying the natural systems that humans and all living creatures depend on. Friends in the Southern Appalachian region are guided by our query for Care of the Earth that asks “How do I hold in the Light the impact of climate change on the 'least of these,' the vulnerable members of the human, animal, and plant communities?”

Every Friend, household, and meeting in our community is asked to be responsive to this query and we all ask our neighbors around the world to take immediate and practical steps to reverse our dependence on fossil fuels and demonstrate a communal reverence for interdependent life.

This statement has been brought forward by SAYMA's Earth Justice Committee, which plays the essential role of helping SAYMA be accountable to our commitment. We acknowledge the work of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting and PYM's Climate Witness Stewards, from which we have drawn much of the language in this statement.

#4

A MINUTE OF ACCOUNTABILITY FOR THE QUAKER INDIGENOUS BOARDING SCHOOLS¹

1/11/2024 draft

To: The Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians

From: Asheville Meeting, Religious Society of Friends

On May 11, 2022, the United States Department of the Interior released volume 1 of the "Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative Investigative Report." The report outlines the forced assimilation techniques employed to erase the names, languages, religion, customs, and cultural identity of Native American children. The report says that thousands of Native children were forced away from their families and communities and subjected to military-style discipline, forced labor, and institutionalized living in 408 federal Indian boarding schools. The report also identified sites where children who died at the schools were buried; the Initiative will press forward to identify all such sites.

(https://www.bia.gov/sites/default/files/dup/inline-files/bsi_investigative_report_may_2022_508.pdf)

In 1902, 3 girls drowned in the Oconaluftee River trying to escape the Eastern Cherokee Boarding School. One was buried on school property before her parents were notified.² Asheville Friends Meeting has been unsuccessful in finding the names of these girls. Worldwide thousands of indigenous children have died at boarding schools, including in the United States. Sometimes the families weren't even notified when their children died.³

According to the Interior report, the initial investigation showed that approximately 50 percent of Federal Indian boarding schools may have received support or involvement from a religious institution or organization, including funding, infrastructure, and personnel. The U.S. Senate has recognized that federal funds from the 1819 Indian Civilization Fund “were apportioned among those societies and individuals—usually missionary organizations—that had been prominent in the effort to ‘civilize’ the Indians.” (report, pg. 11)

In the next phase of its work, the Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative will take further steps to investigate the degree to which federal funds, including monies held in Tribal trust accounts, were paid to religious organizations and institutions to operate Indian boarding schools. It will also continue to investigate where Native children have been buried.

Members of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), both individually and as regional and local Meetings, were directly involved in the founding, financial support, and administration of Indian boarding schools under the federal government's effort to eradicate Indian culture by eliminating all traces of Indian identity from upcoming generations. In 1882, Quakers contracted with the government to open a Cherokee Boarding School for 20 girls & opened a separate school for boys the following year. While most students were Cherokee, some came from all over the Southeast US. Students at the Cherokee school knew where the “crying tree” was. They would go there to hug the tree & cry when bad things happened like getting whipped for getting sick at dinner or disciplined with rulers. Many students ran away but truant officers would search for them & bring them back.²

Barnabas C. Hobbs, representing Western Yearly Meeting of Indiana, which included several Friends from NC and with aid of the Western Yearly Meeting and North Carolina Yearly Meeting, also reopened day schools at Bird Town, Soco, Big Cove & Snowbird (Cheoah) using interest from tribal funds, organizational funds and governmental funds.⁴

In 2015, the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition (NABS), called upon the religious denominations to investigate their involvement in the operation of Indian boarding schools and to make amends for their complicity in this genocidal enterprise. Paula Palmer of Boulder, Colorado Meeting was motivated by this call to do preliminary research on Quaker involvement. (See her reports at <https://vimeo.com/192219802/376f2f1ddb> and <https://www.friendsjournal.org/quaker-indian-boarding-schools/>)

However, given our local and regional organizational structure, no comprehensive denominational response has yet been made by the Religious Society of Friends.

Both NABS and the Department of the Interior report call for support of pending legislation that would establish “The Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies in the U.S. Act” (H.R.5444 and S.2907). Friends Committee on National Legislation has called on Quaker organizations to voice support for this legislation, and several monthly and yearly meetings have done so. (See <https://www.fcnl.org/issues/native-americans>)

THEREFORE

Asheville Friends Meeting apologizes, especially to the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, for the Religious Society of Friends actively promoting and participating in the Indian Boarding School system. This caused Indigenous communities to suffer intergenerational trauma.

We apologize that Quakers punished you and your ancestors for speaking your own language. That is an act of oppression and cultural annihilation. To attempt to force you to replace your own mother tongue with English was egregiously wrong. We are deeply sorry.

We apologize that Quakers also banned dancing, teaching that it was evil and creating repercussions across generations. To lose dancing is to lose an important way to celebrate, communicate, share stories, and get to a deeper spiritual place. For the dancers who were stopped, and the community dances lost, we sincerely apologize.

We apologize that Quakers did not respect your ways of living and for our participation in forcing a Western way of life upon you. We apologize that Quakers wanted you, your ancestors, and your children to feel that your customs and worldview were wrong. But we were wrong to believe that Western European worldviews and practices are superior to ones that you built with each other and the other living beings of your homeland for thousands of years. We regret and reject these attitudes and actions, which we acknowledge we still carry to this day. Our behavior means that Friends actively denied and failed to see your full humanity. We are painfully aware that the direct harm caused by our failure remains personal, cumulative, and ongoing.

It is not the responsibility of Indigenous Peoples to help us to transform our behavior. At the same time, we see that our acting without first listening has contributed to great harm. We seek your guidance and input to ensure reparations are done on terms that will help your communities heal.

We will do more than simply acknowledge the harm we have caused. We pledge to teach ourselves and our children about this wrong. We will formally and collectively ask ourselves what wrongs we may still be perpetrating in ignorance or bigotry.

We resolve to undertake a thorough and comprehensive review of records to determine what financial support Quaker institutions received from the federal government and other sources to operate the Eastern Cherokee Boarding School;

We resolve to identify any graveyards where Cherokee children may have been buried in conjunction with the operation of the Cherokee boarding school and to report our findings to NABS and the Department of the Interior, and to continue to search for the names of the girls who drowned in the Oconaluftee River;

We resolve to publish a report of our internal investigation;

We endorse the formation of a federal Truth and Healing Commission on the Indian Boarding School Policies and will continue to support Indigenous rights, self-determination, and sovereignty. We encourage individual Friends and monthly and yearly meetings to urge their U.S. senators and representatives to cosponsor and support passage of the “Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies in the U.S. Act” (H.R. 5444 and S.2907).

We ask for forgiveness and pledge to walk beside you as we work together for healing and transformation.

Note 1: This model minute was drafted and approved by Decolonizing Quakers and Friends Peace Teams, and also endorsed by Quaker Earthcare Witness

For more information, please contact:

Paula Palmer, paulaRpalmer@gmail.com, Co-Director, Toward Right Relationship with Native Peoples, a program of Friends Peace Teams

John Meyer, john.meyer.quaker@gmail.com, Decolonizing Quakers

Note 2: Hill, Sarah H., *Weaving New Worlds: Southeastern Cherokee Women and Their Basketry* (Chapel and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997. Pp209.

Note 3: Excerpts taken from Alaska Friends Conference, Annual Session 2022. Prepared by Alaska Quakers Seeking Right Relationships with Indigenous Peoples Committee.

Note 4: Friends Review: a Religious, Literary and Miscellaneous Journal (1847-1894); Feb 13 1886;39, 28; American Periodicals. Pg 436

The Meeting closed with silent worship until the way opens for our Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business on the Eleventh Day, Second Month, 2024.

Attachments

[AFM Operating Budget - 2024- Preliminary](#)