

Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business
Asheville Friends Meeting
Second Month 11, 2024

Present in the Meetinghouse: Pat Johnson, Clerk, Kitti Reynolds, Interim Recording Clerk, Barbara Esther, Jim Barham, Steve Livingston, Joel O'Brien, Sara Jane Thomas, Jim Cavener, Sandra Parker, Robin Wells, Owen James, Elie Cox, Debra Rice

Present via Zoom: Gita Larson, Rylin Hansen, Edie Patrick

The Meeting opened with Silent Worship.

The Clerk shared a reading out of the silence.

A Living Faith An Historical and Comparative Study of Quaker Beliefs

By Wilmer A Cooper

Second Edition Copyright 1990; Second edition 2001. P. 107

The historic understanding of the Quaker business method is that it is first of all a religious undertaking, even though the results involve practical matters. Friends have always insisted that there should not be a wall of separation between our relationship with God and our relationship with matters of everyday life. If our lives are in tune with the Spirit of God, then it is incumbent upon us to seek God's will in the practical affairs of our lives.

Approve Agenda

Minute #1: Friends accepted the agenda with the understanding that we probably wouldn't get to the State of the Meeting.

Approve First Month Business Meeting minutes.

Minute #2: The Meeting approved the First Month Business Meeting Minutes.

Announcements: Pat Johnson

Our insurance is due for renewal so I met with a Southern Mutual Insurance inspector. He asked for copies of either the invoice or our check for the roof replacement. He reminded me that we need to let them know when we make any improvements as it will give us a better rate. The only recommendation he had is to place the CO monitor at the baseboard level rather than up toward the ceiling. CO moves down & it would take a long time to get up to the higher level. A Friend said he would work on that.

The Encountering Spirit Retreat, originally scheduled for February 16-19, 2024 to offer the opportunity to be together online as we dive deep into the theme of *encounter*. Due to low numbers, the retreat is postponed until April 12-14, 2024.

Reports: Pat Johnson

Beyond Land Acknowledgement: Toward Reparations and Healing Conference

A day-long conference on September 30, 2023 in consultation with Cherokees, Lynne Harlan, Patty Grant Edgemon, Lianna Costantino, and Trey Adcock brought together around ninety people to learn about the history, trauma, and healing of our Cherokee neighbors. Cherokee speakers included James Bradley, former Tribal Education Secretary, Patty Grant Edgemon, former Behavioral Health Consultant, Shennelle Feather, Education Program Manager of *The Museum of the Cherokee People* along with Nola and Dylan Morgan, Cultural Specialists, Lianna Costantino, Director, Tribal Alliance Against Fraud and a Street Medic, and Shannon Swimmer, former Associate Judge in the Cherokee Courts. Cherokee musicians Jamie Marie Spears and Jarrett Wildcatt completed the program.

This event was the continuation of presentations in 2017 by Mark Charles, Navajo Activist, discussing the Doctrine of Discovery sponsored by Friends of Swannanoa Valley Friends Meeting and Asheville Friends Meeting. Planned presentations sponsored by multiple congregations in 2019 under the auspices of the national project, *Toward Right Relationship with Native Peoples* were canceled due to the pandemic. Many area organizations have posted Land Acknowledgement signs and regularly read Land Acknowledgement but it's time to go beyond this first step.

Meeting approved co-sponsoring this conference with at least a \$500.00 donation. Members and attenders were asked to give as led to cover this donation. Our folks generously gave \$1,090.00 which was more than double the \$500.00 that some others gave. Eight other area Faith Groups, two UNCA Departments and the ACLU joined us in co-sponsoring this conference. In addition to substantial financial support, many of us at Meeting gave time and energy to attend this conference. It was very uplifting and

built connections to form an ongoing Alliance in support of our Native neighbors rather than just a one-time event.

Reparations Fund Caretakers Committee

The ad hoc Reparations Fund Caretakers Committee met on 1/28/2024 to consider whether their charge had been fulfilled and it was time to recommend laying the committee down.

The Committee was originally charged with discerning how to disburse the Reparations Fund. Over the course of the past two years, Meeting has approved two recommendations from the Committee; the first being that the Fund would be used to compensate people of the global majority who came to our community to share their wisdom, expertise, and experience to help us on our journey to become a more anti-racist, multicultural faith community, and the second being a method of determining how much of the Fund to disburse at the end of each year to the Reparations Stakeholders Authority of Asheville.

The Committee had also taken on the responsibility of discerning what was the appropriate amount of compensation for people of the global majority who offered us guidance on our journey, and we recognize that this will be an ongoing responsibility that is not appropriate for an ad hoc committee to carry. We suggest to the Meeting that this responsibility be divided between the Peace and Earth Committee if the person/s being compensated is/are of Turtle Island indigenous heritage and the Racial Justice Committee if the person/s is/are of another heritage. We suggest that the two committees continue the practice of consulting with one another, as was the original intention in creating the ad hoc committee with two representatives from each committee.

Minute # 3: Meeting approves that subsequent to the laying down of the ad hoc Reparations Caretakers Committee, the responsibility of determining appropriate compensation for people of the global majority who come to our community to share their wisdom, expertise, and experience to help us on our journey to become a more anti-racist, multicultural faith community be shared between the Peace and Earth Committee and the Racial Justice Committee.

Besides approval of this process, the Caretakers Committee suggests that Meeting be mindful going forward that the Reparations Fund, like any other Restricted Fund in the Meeting's budget, will need to be replenished or else we will not be able to meet the commitment we are making to engage in Reparative Justice. We want to remind the Meeting that in 2022, this was accomplished entirely through donations from community members inspired to "seed" the Fund at its inception, and in 2023 the Racial Justice Committee discerned replenishment of the Fund as an appropriate way to distribute a large portion of our Racial Justice Community Outreach. But there is no certainty that the RJC will continue this practice indefinitely, and so

the Caretakers Committee recommends that the Finance Committee consider and recommend other means of replenishing the Fund, including but not limited to encouraging earmarked contributions from individual Friends, as they do with all other restricted Funds. There is no amount of money that is "too much."

The Caretakers Committee also would like to acknowledge that, as with any other restricted fund, it is always the responsibility of the Treasurer to keep the Meeting informed as to the status of the Reparations Fund. A Friend reminded Meeting that it is valuable to remember what our Restricted Funds support.

Friends discussed the responsibilities of committees and we trust the committees to do the work of the Meeting. It is a matter of faith. We hold each other accountable as a community.

Minute #4: Meeting approves releasing the ad hoc Reparations Caretakers Committee from any responsibility for keeping Meeting informed as to the status of the Reparations Fund, and for encouraging individual Friends to make earmarked donations to the Fund. We recommend that Finance Committee bring to Meeting's attention the importance of contributing to the Restricted Fund.

Having approved these two suggestions, the committee feels that our work is completed and recommends that the ad hoc Reparations Caretakers Committee be laid down. We recognize that ad hoc committees generally are within the purview of the clerk of Meeting but we ask that Meeting support the clerk in this instance with a Minute acknowledging the laying down of this committee.

Minute #5: Meeting acknowledges that the work of the ad hoc Reparations Caretakers Committee has been completed and approves laying down of the Committee.

Committees:

Peace and Earth: Steve Livingston.

1. The SAYMA Earth Justice Committee recommends the following 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.

A Friend feels great urgency about this crisis and is wary of statements that don't have any teeth. Another friend suggests that this Friend connect with Roy Taylor to have him address his question and share his deep knowledge of the committee's work.

A Friend suggested SAYMA include an action, but doesn't know what to suggest.

Meeting did not reach unity on this SAYMA minute.

#2 Proposal to consider during our 2024 Budget discernment. Presented by Steve.

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.

The total of these amounts would be about \$900 /yr. And would go to the Indigenous People's Fun, a restricted fund. To begin the process we would set aside money as calculated above.

A Friend likes the proposal but thinks it seems to be a very European way of dealing with reparations. We need to continue a relationship with the Cherokee that would be meaningful to them. The Friend asked is there a Cherokee way of doing reparations? Is there any ceremony that would be meaningful to the Cherokee? Let's converse on that before the next P and E.

Another Friend suggested taking this step forward because we can always change, and encouraged us to do something!

A Friend acknowledged with respect what Peace and Earth has already done with this proposal and suggests one end goal could be involvement in the “land back” movement taking place among Indigenous People in North America. Steve suggested the Friend contact P and E on how we can continue this work.

Minute #6: Friends approved this proposal for funding the Indigenous People’s Fund.

Due to time constraints, Meeting did not consider **A MINUTE OF ACCOUNTABILITY FOR THE QUAKER INDIGENOUS BOARDING SCHOOLS¹**

Nominating: Kitti Reynolds.

Nominating Committee reports that Landon Ward is leaving Ministry and Counsel after serving for almost four years. We thank Landon for his time and efforts.

*Nominating Committee asks for your approval of Mike Eddy for Spiritual Enrichment and to thank him for his years of service on Peace and Earth, which he is rotating off.

*We also ask for your approval of Barbara Burke to be on Care and Nurture.

*And we recommend your approval of our attender Owen James, a student at UNCA from Boone, to be on Peace and Earth.

Let me remind Friends that the position of REcording Clerk is open - I am serving in an interim position, and will be away sometimes. We also need someone to represent us at SAYMA.

Minute #7: Friends approved these new members: Mike Eddy for Spiritual Enrichment, Barbara Burke on Care and Nurture, and Owen James on Peace and Earth.

Approval for Meeting Suggestion: Robin Wells asked Meeting to approve a Handyman Contract for two hours a month, similar to the contract we have for someone to do Grounds work.

Minute #8: Meeting approved establishing a handyman position and will reevaluate it in three months. We will pay the handyman \$100/month for approximately 2 hours/month, starting immediately. The contract will be offered to Doug Lane.

Finance: Satchel Loftis/Ellen Carr

Neither Satchel or Ellen are available to lead our discussion of the 2024 Budget. We will postpone further budget discussion until the Third Month 10, 2024 Business Meeting. Restricted Fund Balances as of 06/30/2023 are shown in the Attachment below.

We did not have time to consider the **Asheville Friends Meeting 2023 State of the Meeting Report** but will consider it at the Third Month 10, 2024 Business Meeting.

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

Attachments

<https://ashevillefriends.org/Documents/Funds202306.pdf>