

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

**Present in the Meetinghouse:** Pat Johnson, Clerk, Barbara Esther, Stand-In Recording Clerk, Jim Barham, Steve Livingston, Debra Rice, Jim Cavener, Margaret Normile, Katherine Kowal, Rusty Maynard, Sarah Jane Thomas, Adrienne Weir, Ellie Cox, Joel O'Brien, Suzanne Friedrichs and Robin Wells.

**Present via Zoom:** Mike Eddy, Beth Eddy

The Meeting opened with Silent Worship.

The Clerk shared a reading out of the silence.

***Daily Readings from Quaker Spirituality***

Edited by Edward Cell. Templegate Publishers, Springfield, Illinois, ©1987

***The Inner Light and Informed Intelligence*** by Brand Blanchard (1959), p. 88.

...The Inner Light is not a lesser thing than the old Friends conceived it to be; it is a larger thing by far. Our whole nature is now its channel. There is no defect of feeling anywhere, and no dullness of perception, that does not in degree discolor it; there is no faculty, born or acquired, that does not add a beam to its radiance. Not our eye only, we are told, but our body, should be full of Light; for the spirit of man (and woman - pj) as a whole is the candle of the Lord.

Approve Agenda

**Minute #1:** Friends accepted the agenda as it is.

Approve Third Month Business Meeting minutes.

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

**Announcements:** Pat Johnson

Our Meeting now has its own laptop thanks to Kitti Reynolds who donated one she was replacing. We have prepared detailed instructions on providing tech support so we invite you to volunteer to help with this necessary task as you are led. First time volunteers can ask for help the first time or two.

Donna Smith has requested that we start providing meals again as her sister is going back home. The meal will be for her only as Bob is still in rehab. She has a small appetite due to chemo.

We have a free box and an “interesting items” box in the lobby. Please take anything you would like since the items will be donated, recycled or otherwise removed.

The ficus tree is sometimes in the way, blocking the access to the materials or taking up space in the meeting room. Friends are asked to think about what we should do with it. May 15 is a date it could safely be put outside.

Request for Help: Robin Wells

The meeting has received a request from someone working for the Tryon Daily Bulletin in Tryon, NC. We will want to prayerfully consider this request and decide whether we have the energy and the skills to help as we have been asked to.

Hello, my name is Storm Smith with the Tryon Daily Bulletin and I am currently working with the family that has a relative who has been serving a long-term prison sentence and been trying to find some people a group or someone who can help us with some advice or advocacy or point me in the right direction and my understanding is that occasionally members of your fellowship will will help in these cases or may know somebody who will. Once again, my name is Storm Smith 864-607-0038. I'm here in Tryon, North Carolina, I work for the paper and this man is a wonderful man who committed a horrible crime, of course, but he has been a model prisoner in it. Just looking for an opportunity to spend the last few years of his life, since he's on dialysis, with his family and he's 70 years old. And once again, you may not be able to help me. If you can't, don't worry about it. But if you maybe could even point me in the right direction, I would really appreciate it and y'all have a wonderful and blessed weekend.

Let's take a few moments to settle into worship and see how we are led to respond to this request.

Quakers have been involved in prison work since the 1600's, not always in ways that were positive. One Friend spoke of working as a chaplain in prisons and cautioned us to get more information before making any decisions. We need to find out whether the prisoner is even in North Carolina, and in which prison. It seems unclear how we can be helpful. Writing letters or sending reading material might be helpful. We could make a phone call to explore further, confirming that this is a legitimate request. One Friend lives near the writer's place of work and is willing to phone the Tryon paper to find out whether the request is truly from Storme or Stormy. Errors in the written transmission may be because the request came via voicemail. Friends agreed that phoning Storme Smith at the Tryon Daily Bulletin is a good first step. The fact that this came specifically to us, not as a generic request to all faith groups may rule out a suspicious source. A Friend reminded us that as part of this society, we are all involved in the prison system. Without a strong conviction to follow through, we will gather more

information and see whether way opens for us to do this work. The call was received March 30. Mike Eddy, as communications person, receives the voice mails, passes them on to the clerk and/or Ministry and Counsel Committee clerk.

### **Committees:**

**Peace and Earth:** Steve Livingston

## **Climate Statement**

### **Asheville Friends Meeting**

Asheville Friends bear witness 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 be radically transformed in order to avert the climate catastrophe we are creating. 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.

World leaders will come together for the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention on Climate Change (COP29). Asheville Friends call 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.

Asheville Friends 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 to demonstrate our communal reverence for interdependent life.

Let us all take immediate steps to reduce our carbon footprint, such as reducing or eliminating meat consumption, and switching to renewable electricity. Let us promote and participate in actions that directly impact the fossil fuel industry, such as fossil fuel boycotts and divestment. Let our lives speak of the radical transformation we know we must undergo, and let us advocate fiercely for radical transformation in our government and our economy.

A Friend asked who this would go to, considering the Quaker specific language included. This statement will serve as a document within Asheville Friends and our Yearly Meeting.

**Minute #3:** As a climate statement, Friends approved its use within the yearly meeting community.

## A MINUTE OF ACCOUNTABILITY FOR THE QUAKER INDIGENOUS BOARDING SCHOOLS<sup>1</sup>

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](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.<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup>

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.<sup>2</sup>

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.<sup>4</sup>

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. 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 support the identification of 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 Peace and Earth Committee has worked to create more communication with Native Peoples through this document. It describes that way Friends in our area were involved in the boarding schools that harmed Cherokee children and families. A Friend spoke of the word “But” in one sentence (in the Therefore section, fourth paragraph, second sentence). We decided that the word “but” could be removed. We appreciate the well researched template used in developing the first part of the statement.

After “Therefore” Friends by and large approved the Minute of Accountability for the Quaker Indigenous Boarding Schools with the one small change of removing the word “but”. The Peace and Earth Committee has already begun the research as described, and will continue the work as it, and its members, are able. Some Friends felt uncertain about the statement on identifying graveyards where Cherokee children may have buried. Some additional work will be done on the document which will come back in May for our review.

**Ministry and Council:** Robin Wells

**Offer to Paint the Meetingroom:**

One of the members of the Zen Center of Asheville that rents our Meetinghouse, has offered to paint the Meetingroom for us. We would supply the paint and he would put in the labor at no charge to us. He has years of experience and is confident he can do this in about three days. Mid to late May would be his goal. We have needed to paint this room for years and this would help us greatly. If we decide to take him up on his offer, I would like to propose that we decrease the rent we charge the Zen Center of Asheville by \$300 this year and supplement the loss in rent income with money from the Building Improvement Fund. Some of our paint will be donated, but the treatment for the oil-based trim to make it paintable by latex paint will be charged to the Building Improvement Fund as well. Robin explained that the person who made the offer to paint is a retired contractor whose skills are known to be exemplary.

Will we accept this offer to paint our meeting room and do we want to extend a kindness to the Buddhist group that is stepping up to help us?

One Friend asked whether this could engender bad feelings if we are unhappy with the quality of the work. Another Friend asked whether paying for offers made is a western mindset we should reject. Another idea was to ask the Zen center whether or not a donation would be useful. It will be painted in mid-May. By way of thanks Robin and her husband will be taking him and his wife to dinner. Robin will discuss the donation proposed at that occasion.

**Minute #4** Friends approved the painting of the meeting room by a member of the Zen Center of Asheville. Part of the cost of paint and materials will be donated and the remainder will come from the Building Improvements Fund.

**Nominating Committee:** Jim Cavener

The committee asks for approval of Annina Rusila to serve on the Peace and Earth Committee.

**Minute #5** Friends approved Annina Rusila as a member of the Peace and Earth Committee.

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