

Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business
Asheville Friends Meeting
First Month 19, 2025

DRAFT

Present in the Meetinghouse: Bob Lackey, Interim Clerk; Kitti Reynolds, Interim Recording Clerk; Katherine Kowal, Sarah Jane Thomas, Margaret Normile, Pat Johnson, Barbara Burke, Steve Livingston, Rylin Hansen, DeAnna Hatch, Suzanna Fredericks, Sandra Parker, Howard Brodt, Carly Grunwell, Jordan Cloninger, Rusty Maynard, Scotty Utz, David Pudlo, Bobby Carter, Adrienne Weir, Nate Andrews

Present via Zoom: Barbara Esther, Beth and Mike Eddy, Ellie Cox, Morgan Murry, Satchel Loftis, Gita Larson

The meeting opened with Silent Worship.

The Clerk read out of the silence:

To rest, go to the woods

Where what is made is made

Without your thought or work.

Sit down; begin the wait

For small trees to grow big.

Feeding on light and earth.

Their good result is song

The winds must bring, the trees

Must wait to sing, and sing
Longer than you can wait.
Soon you must go. The trees,
Your seniors, standing thus
Acknowledged in your eyes,
Stand as your praise and prayer.
Your rest in this praise
Of what you cannot be
And what you cannot do.

Wendell Berry

"The Farm," IX

A Timbered Choir: The Sabbath Poems: 1979 - 1997

The Clerk presented the agenda. The agenda was approved.

Minute #1: The 12th month minutes were approved with no edits.

Announcements:

Theme for Yearly Meeting Planning Committee. The Yearly Meeting Planning Committee has identified the theme for the Summer 2025 Retreat and Sessions in Berea KY. The theme will be "Nurturing Community in Our Broken Worlds." We will soon begin soliciting workshop proposals on the theme and seeking plenary speakers to address it.

Thanks to everybody who contributed to our multigenerational events in December. They were all very well received: Simple Christmas craft gathering, Christmas Play, and the Holiday meal. We separated the play and holiday meal into two days because of the Ethical Society using the Meetinghouse on third Sundays. It ended up being a good change, because it gave us more time for the meal on the 4th Sunday and we were able to add musical instruments.

The kids have asked that we do Secret Pals in 2025. Cards to gather information were handed out on January 5th and today. Assignments will be handed out on January 19th and begin on January 26th, unless the snow storm sets us back a week. The reveal party will be on February 19th.

Card Reading

Holiday Greeting from ASFC-

Dear Asheville Friends,

Sending holiday and New Year well wishes in what we know is an incredibly hard time for Friends and your community. We have followed the news closely and have gotten updates from Atlanta Friends with connections to your community. We hope that this season and the New Year shine the Light of renewal down upon you and yours. F(f)riends at AFSC stand in solidarity with you as you rebuild what has been lost.

In peace,

Jacob Flowers, Regional Director

A Gift from Maury River (Virginia)

Dear People of Asheville Friends Meeting,

We at Maury River Friends Meeting have heard of the hardship you have faced from the two recent hurricanes, causing so much damage.

We have been holding you and others in the Light during this difficult time. We hope this money can bring some relief and repair to help your Meeting.

We would welcome a visit to our Meeting sometime in the future!

In the Light,

Kathy Fox and Maury River Friends Meeting

A Thank You to AFM from Equal Plates Project

Dear Asheville Friends General Fund,

Thank you so much for your generosity in supporting Equal Plates Project, a tax-exempt organization under IRS code 501 © 3.

Your contribution of \$500 on 11-19-24 is deeply appreciated.

For tax purposes, our legal name is We Give a Share, Inc. and our EIN is 85-2809644. Equal Plates Project is our DBA.

Thanks to your generosity in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene, we've been able to strengthen our support of local farmers and provide thousands of meals to neighbors affected by the storm.

Please keep this document for tax purposes.

Thank you again!

Sincerely,

Equal Plates Project

27 Church Street
Asheville, NC 28801

Meeting Business:

Thank you to the Technology Team - Barbara Burke, Liz Gooche, Pat Johnson, and Steve Livingston, who help with Zoom for those who cannot be here in person. Thanks to everyone for your patience with our hybrid meetings. It's wonderful that we can provide a way for people to participate in meeting for worship and other activities when they are unable to join us in the Meetinghouse. We need 1-2 additional members to join the technology team and help with setup. They don't have to be experts in computers.

Computer problems during Meeting for Worship and 2nd Hour Programs - Steve Livingston: We have been having some problems with the operation of the computer donated to the Meeting during zoom calls. Steve's sense is that it lacks the processing speed and/or throughput to provide the necessary bandwidth. Its shortcoming/s were especially noticeable during the second hour presentation last week. Do we need to be looking for a more robust laptop, and we should set aside \$350 to purchase a 3-year old Dell. Mike Eddy has done analysis. We don't know what went wrong a few weeks ago. The Meeting computer should be adequate but its wi-fi card is suspect. We may need to reduce the bandwidth. Steve incorporated suggested changes and the Zoom call has been fine today. Mike thinks net-work congestion was the culprit.

Nominating Kitti Reynolds - Alice Lane and Nate Andrews have been nominated to be members of the Hospitality Committee.

Elliott Jarrett has been nominated as Recording Clerk.

Howard Brodt has been nominated as a member of the Peace and Earth Committee.

Nominating Committee would like to acknowledge the contribution of Owen Torpel to Peace and Earth (P&E)

Minute #2: All nominees were approved with great enthusiasm.

Peace and Earth (P&E) / Racial Justice Committee (RJC)—Steve read the following to our Meeting:

In the 12th month 2024 business meeting, Nick presented the “Statement of Accountability to Asheville’s Black Community,” drafted by the several Friends who have continued to meet on Tuesday evenings under the guidance of Dr. Melchor Hall, to advance reparative justice in our community. The letter was warmly received but we did not seek a formal approval. As we are now organizing an accountability team consisting of several members of the Black community, we seek the Meeting's approval of the principles and promises it contains. We are not looking for any sort of wordsmithing whatsoever, as it will subsequently be submitted to our accountability team and will likely be edited and then submitted a third time to the Meeting. We do want to be sure that the Meeting understands what it says and is on board with the commitments. We've been passing around a sign-up sheet for a few weeks.

Statement of Accountability to Asheville’s Black Community

Dear Sisters and Brothers of Asheville's Black Community

The Asheville Friends Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends is a faith community made up mostly of white people who come from various religious backgrounds. What holds us together is our confidence in the presence and gifts of the Spirit of the Divine in everyone, the discernment of truth through Divine revelation, and our commitment to live our lives to the best of our ability in keeping with

our testimonies of simplicity, peace, integrity, community, equality, and stewardship of the Earth. We embrace our relationship with the interweaving tapestry of all beings. In recent years we have felt led by the indwelling Spirit to delve deeply into understanding the white supremacy culture we live in, and that persists within us. Through that seeking we have come to acknowledge the value of cross-cultural relationships, the moral imperative of reparations, and our responsibility to take action.

As white people we are by default beneficiaries of white supremacy culture which has permeated our lives and our faith community. Over the last decade or so, we of Asheville Friends Meeting have begun to learn -- through book study, workshops, presentations, and weekly discussions -- the extent to which systemic racism and white supremacy culture have caused and continue to cause harm to you.

Through our participation in Building Bridges and Racial Equity Institute, and study of Dr. Dwight Mullen's State of Black Asheville Report and the Asheville-Buncombe Community Reparations Commission's report, we have begun to learn what you have known from your lived experience: the history of Black Asheville from slavery through Jim Crow, the systematic destruction of Black neighborhoods and institutions, unequal health care treatment and unequal educational and employment opportunity. We are troubled by the Red-lining Urban Renewal, the decimation of thriving communities and businesses, the trauma of upheaval, and the undercutting of generational wealth. We grieve the criminalization of Blackness, manifested in unequal enforcement, denial of justice, the school to prison pipeline, and disparities in sentencing and parole. We are outraged by the senseless loss of Stephens Lee High School, the disappearance and destruction of symbols of achievement of Black youth, and the separation of the student body from the leadership and guidance of their outstanding Black educators.

Through study and discussion of books such as "White Fragility" and "My Grandmother's Hands," films like "13th" and "I Am Not Your

Negro,” and podcasts like “Seeing White” and “Be Anti-Racist,” we have begun to learn what you have known from your lived experience about our white fragility, our white privilege, our racism denial, and how white supremacy culture permeates our perceptions, our language, and our practices. We have begun to learn what it takes to become a more anti-racist, multicultural faith community, and what it means to be anti-racist. We feel compelled by our sense of integrity to engage in a reparative process, to acknowledge these wrongs and to offer an apology to you from our community, and name our commitments toward stopping the harm and repairing the damage done.

These are the commitments that we feel able with our limited resources and personnel to undertake in the year 2025:

- Attend City and County government meetings and school board meetings when allies are summoned
- Work to disempower the white supremacy culture’s criminalization of Black youth
- Collaborate with Black leadership to improve the school experience for Black youth
- Offer experience and support when called upon by Black leaders to promote health care careers among Black youth
- Write letters and emails to advocate for Universal Health Care and a no-cost Insurance Healthcare Subsidy Fund
- Attend family-oriented multicultural events that welcome white participants, as well as events at communities such as Valley Street and Burton Street, focusing on spending money with vendors and organizations
- Join an already established network of faith communities working for racial justice
- Provide transportation when asked
- Support Black farmers and entrepreneurs actively and intentionally with sweat and dollars
- Listen to Black voices for guidance and feedback

In all of our reparations work we are determined to hear and follow the guidance of Black leadership. The actions we have listed are ones that we have heard the Black community wants us to do. We benefit when the Black community is healthy and strong. “Our liberation is inextricably tied to yours.”

We are planning to have an honorarium for our accountability partners: Landon Ward, Anthony Thomas, Libby Kyles and Torre White-Garrison.

Minute #3: The letter (statement of accountability) was approved.

Revised Cover Letter from Asheville Friends Meeting to Chattanooga Friends Meeting—Pat

Last month we approved our responses to queries that were sent by Chattanooga Meeting to all of the monthly meetings in SAYMA. It became clear that we needed more time to discern all that was presented in the cover letter. Today we are seeking approval for the cover letter accompanying our responses to the Chattanooga Friends Meeting Queries.

Revised Draft Cover Letter to Go With Our Responses to the Queries from Chattanooga Monthly Meeting, Presented at the 12th Month Business Meeting

Dear Chattanooga Monthly Meeting,

We want to thank you for sending these queries to our meeting and for all of the hard work you put into them. It grieves us to think of SAYMA without you. You are family to us and many of us have slept on the floor of your meetinghouse and spent time in your homes. We

hope you will stay with us to work through repairing relationships and strengthening bonds.

We put a lot of time into considering the queries and decided to share with you what individuals said during our worship sharings around them. You will see that they represent a range of perspectives. When we first began discerning the queries, we found that we had work to do in our own meeting community and we spent quite a bit of time doing that. We shared tears, memories, and feelings. Our general response to the idea of reading someone out of meeting, is that each person should feel accepted, loved, and included as part of the community. We want to labor with a person, rather than remove them.

But most people in our meeting agree that we should not ignore disruptive or harmful behaviors. On the other hand, unexpected behaviors can often be a source of enlightenment leading to a change of heart. Despite the efforts of several yearly and monthly meeting clerks, there have been times when Friends did not feel they had been heard. When emotions run high, we still continue to struggle to find a clear way forward. As part of our Quaker process, it takes every Friend present to reach inward to guide us.

Your presence, your voices, and your feelings matter to us. We hope you stay at the table as we commit to building bridges among Friends. Here in Asheville, we know how fragile and essential bridges can be. It takes many hands and goodwill to rebuild them.

Please know that we are holding you in the Light as you consider your way forward,

Minute #4 Approved as changed (one word changed)

Finance Committee—Satchel Loftis - **See attachments** Results of last year and budget for this year. These were shared on screen in Meetinghouse. 8 thousand dollar surplus over last year. Rental income was good. Assuming nothing changes we have a \$6200 surplus made up our \$1800 over budget. We may need to transfer more to Indigenous People's fund, because we got more from rent than we estimated. The over budget surplus money was from unrestricted donations. None of these funds were from Helene-related donations.

Steve - Racial Justice outreach. The Racial Justice Committee wasn't active in 2024, so Steve and treasurer Ellen Carr suggested that the Meeting disburse the same amount of money to the same organizations as we donated to last year, with the remainder going to the Reparations Fund. Some of the Reparations Fund will go to honoraria for our partners helping to hold us accountable for our reparations commitments to Black Asheville.

Our insurance went up in 2024 as we started the beginning of another 3 year contract with the insurance company.

Next year (2025) proposed budget. A balanced budget. Assuming - we bring in the same amount as last year, \$32,000. Same amount internal transfers (based on same rent income), Meetinghouse expense budget would need to increase by 10% due to increased cost of insurance. Proposal is for Religious Education budget to be 90% of last year's amount, because we only spent half of the request for 2024, Used all committee requests at full amount except for RE.

Scotty Utz asked, is there money in this budget for the Safe Surrender event? Last year it came out of a reserve fund we think, probably from Alice Brown fund. Satchel will check. Scotty is requesting funds for Raw Tools and for Safe Surrender this year. A Friend suggested that we set up a contingency fund for contributions for unexpected requests. The Friend suggested a small amount, \$300, that could be used flexibly. Another Friend asked if Peace and

Earth could contribute to Raw Tools as part of the P and E budget. A Friend agreed and asked if we could have a regular fund to support Scotty's work. We will consider these suggestions next month. Scotty will bring a request.

Steve agreed with the Friend that we approve a Contingency fund, a restricted fund in our 2025 budget that would address emergencies. Perhaps seed it with some of the surplus from 2024. This would be separate from Scotty's request. The Clerk asked the Finance Committee to bring a proposal as suggested.

Minute #5: Friends approved the operating budget as presented by Satchel for 2025, with the transfer of \$1600 from Racial Justice Committee to Reparations.

A Friend suggested maybe \$500 could be sent to Orange Grove Meeting in Pasadena for fire relief. Ministry and Counsel (M&C) will discuss that suggestion at the next M&C meeting.

Peace and Earth - Steve will defer to next month.

The Meeting closed with silent worship until the way opens for our next business meeting in the second month of 2025.

[statement of accountability to asheville's black community.pdf](#)

[250117 statement of accountability.pdf](#)

[250117 statement of accountability with changes emphasized.odt](#)

[AFM - Operating Activity FY2024 - as of 2025-01-16.pdf](#)

[AFM - Business Meeting - Finance Report - 2025-01-19.pdf](#)

[AFM - Operating Budget - 2025 - PROPOSED 2025-01-18.pdf](#)