

Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business
Asheville Friends Meeting Agenda
12th Month 14, 2025

Present in the Meetinghouse: Joelle Swaggert O'Brien, Presiding Clerk; Elliott Jarrett, Recording Clerk; Katherine Kowal, Matt Utterback, Rylin Hansen, Kitt Reynolds, Adrienne Weir, Steve Livingston, Suzanne Junkin-Fredericks, Pat Johnson, Robin Wells, Margaret Farmer, Sarah Jane Thomas, Jim Barham, Rusty Maynard, Deanna Hatch, Liz Gooch, Ellie Cox, Tim Burgess, Bobby Carter, Jim Cavener, Kitt Reynolds

Present via Zoom: Gita Larson, Barbara Esther, Beth Eddy, Mike Eddy

The meeting will open with Silent Worship.

Out of the silence, the Clerk will share a reading from William Penn's *Some Fruits of Solitude* as excerpted in *The Quaker Reader*, edited by Jessamyn West.

If one went to Windsor Castle or Hampton Court, it would be strange not to observe and remember the situation, the building, the gardens, fountains, etc, that make up the beauty and pleasure of such a seat; and yet few people know themselves—no, not their own bodies, the houses of their minds, the most curious structure of the world, a living, walking tabernacle; not the world of which it is made and out of which it is fed, which would be so much to our benefit, as well as our pleasure, to know.

Presentation of the Agenda

Minute #1: The Agenda was approved.

Approval of 11th Month Minutes

Minute #2: The Minutes of the 11th Month were not edited for approval and will be ready for 1st Month's Business Meeting to approve.

Announcements

- On December 21, stick around after Meeting for our **Multi-Generational No-Rehearsal Christmas Play**. Even better, join in! Junior Business Meeting will be picking out the play. Light snacks will be served, but no meal so we can finish by 1:00 pm.

- December 28 is our regular Sandwich Sunday, but we will dress it up a little as our annual **Holiday Meal**. Bring one of your favorite dishes to share. We will follow the meal with an open mic format for people to share their music interspersed with a Christmas carol sing-along.
- We will begin our **Secret Pal** in January 2026! We have lots of kids who want to be a secret pal, so we will need lots of adults. Folks who want to participate should fill out a card and put it in the Secret Pal Box. Assignments will be handed out or mailed in mid January and gifts will be given each week until the Reveal Party on January 18th.
- On January 17th, the annual **Martin Luther King Prayer Breakfast** will take place at the Crowne Plaza at 8:00 am. Asheville Friends Meeting has reserved a table. If you want to go, write a check to AFM for \$30 with Prayer Breakfast in the memo line (or pay cash). Scholarship is available from the Meeting for this event.
- The Meeting has received several letters from students at Carolina Friends School. They have learned about the impact that Quakers have had on many Native People in North America. They ask what we are doing to repair our relationship with the Cherokee. We will be responding to each letter individually—thanking them for their efforts, telling them of our Meeting’s work on this issue, and what we plan to do in the future.

Ad Hoc Furnace Committee - Pat Johnson

The Ad Hoc Furnace Committee would like to report that the committee feels that its work is complete. Having done its duty we ask that the committee be laid down.

A Friend would like to express deep gratitude for the work of the Committee.

Minute #3: The Meeting approves with gratitude that the Ad-Hoc Furnace Committee be laid down.

House & Grounds Committee Report-Tim

The dead tree at the end of the driveway was successfully removed. Los Romero’s Tree Service did the work and we were very impressed with their work—including the clean up.

House and Grounds would like to propose that Doug Lane get paid for 3 hours a month beginning in 2026 to reflect the actual time he has been spending on our Meetinghouse. We pay him \$50 an hour which would bring it to \$150 per month.

A Friend feels like we should try to increase his pay if our budget allows it. He is nice to give us a discount. Paying him his normal rate would be an additional \$25 an hour.

A Friend points out that we should also consider inflation.

A Friend expresses deep gratitude to Doug and his kindness and professionalism.

A Friend suggested that we increase his pay to the standard rate of \$75 hour. A Friend reminds us that the proposed increase would total \$225 a month.

A Friend suggests that we pay the higher rate.

One Friend suggests that we should set a budget to take invoices and track all things that are accomplished. If there is a mandate that breaks the budget then it would be sent to House and Grounds. We need mechanisms for communicating what's been done and how to communicate a plan for budgeting.

A Friend believes that the proposal is not clear and may not reflect Doug's wishes. Independent contractors set their own rates.

A Friend states that he has agreed to \$50 an hour for three hours. The proposal is that we increase the rate to \$75 as an appreciation of his work.

A Friend suggested we approve the initial proposal and move the increased pay to \$75 an hour when we see our budget in January.

A Friend does not like the term generous. When you are doing business with someone who is doing labor we are valuing their work not being generous.

Minute 4: The Meeting approves that Doug Lane's hours per month be increased to three, resulting in the pay of \$150 a month.

Library Committee Report

For Fiscal Year 2025, the Library Committee of Asheville Friends Meeting has spent \$220.55 of its annual budget amount of \$300. Through December the

committee will spend the remainder of this amount on needed project supplies and new books for the library collection.

The Library Committee is requesting \$300 in the 2026 budget.

The committee will focus on Quaker life and practice as well as current concerns in Asheville Meeting, including the environment, immigration, racial justice, and indigenous history and culture. We invite Friends to recommend other topics and specific books for addition to the current collection.

Two ongoing projects for the coming year include updating our index of Pendle Hill Pamphlets and also printing approved business meeting minutes from past years for both the Guilford College archives and our own meeting archives.

We invite Friends and seekers to explore our library and give us your feedback. The Library Committee is open to anyone who wishes to join us and help this amazing resource better nourish our Meeting community. If this interests you, please talk with Kitti Reynolds, who clerks our Nominating committee.

The AFM Library Committee: Ellie Cox, Interim Clerk
Margaret Farmer
Marcia Master
Margaret Normile
Laura Yanasak

Minute 5: The Meeting offers appreciation and thanks for the work of the Library Committee as the Stewards of such an amazing resource for our Meeting.

Peace, Earth, and Justice Action Committee (PEJA) Report - Steve Livingston

Two years ago, Meeting began considering the establishment of an “Indigenous People’s Fund” as an essential step in moving ‘Beyond Land Acknowledgement,’ a means of answering in part to our accountability for the injustices perpetrated upon the original inhabitants of this land, from which we have materially benefited. Friends were encouraged to invest in this fund as they feel led. In 2nd month of 2024, Meeting agreed to a method for determining a specific amount of money to be budgeted each year from our General Fund as a community-wide investment. In the 7th month of this year Meeting agreed to an annual disbursement of the indigenous people's fund to the Center for Native Health in Cherokee.

On the 5th Sunday of last month, Dr. Trey Adcock, the Executive Director of the Center for Native Health, was our guest for a special second hour presentation describing the origins, staff, mission, goals, and ongoing work of the Center. The Meeting room was packed with 32 Friends in attendance, including Bob and Geeta McGahey of Celo Meeting several Friends on Zoom joined us as well.

On the 17th of last month, Bob had extended an invitation to our Meeting to attend a presentation on 12/6 in Celo by Scott Ashcraft, for 32 years the staff archaeologist for Pisgah National Forest, on the history of the Cherokee people's presence in the Toe River area. He said he hoped we'd bring a carload of Asheville Friends, and as it turned out, we did. Six of us attended the presentation, including three of our newer attenders. It was an excellent presentation, confirming for us that all evidence indicates only Cherokee presence in this region in the pre-Columbian era.

After the presentation, Celo Friends invited us to stay for a prayerful conversation as they embark on their own journey of discovery and commitment toward right relations with native peoples. It was a privilege and an honor to participate in this spirit- and community-building effort.

Asheville Meeting is a member of the local organization Faith Communities for Immigration Justice, and among other members we have been participating in the Love Thy Neighbor campaign to show our solidarity with our at-risk immigrant communities. As part of this campaign, we have distributed over fifty yard signs displaying the message "Love Thy Neighbor, Defend Immigrant Rights," and we have put up a large banner with that message at the entry to our driveway.

There were five Sundays in this past month, and typically our committee offers a topic for Friends to advocate by writing postcards to our elected officials. Last month we tried something a little different, offering pre-printed postcards on various topics in line with our Quaker values purchased from Signs for Justice, a Black-owned online family business. Rather than having to write out messages based on talking points provided by the committee as we have done in the past, Friends were invited to simply sign the card or cards they felt lifted up their shared concerns. We collected almost 80 cards, far more than we have ever gotten before. Stay tuned for further opportunities for Meeting-wide advocacy using these postcards.

Recommendations:

PEJA Committee brings two recommendations to the Meeting today. Earlier in the week we distributed a link to AFSC's statement on the genocide in Gaza so Friends would have an opportunity to examine it deeply in advance of the business meeting. We are asking at this time for Friends to unite on our Meeting being signatories to this statement.

The statement:

"We are for justice and mercy and truth and peace and true freedom."

— Edward Burrough, 1659

As Quakers, we recognize the divine imprint in every human being and confess the equality of all to live safely and without fear.

We are also compelled as Quakers to speak truth with integrity, including where it is uncomfortable, yet always to do so in love. This requires us to speak against the catastrophic violence in Gaza.

Friends have a long history of working for peaceful coexistence and justice for all people in the Middle East. We have witnessed times when Jews, Muslims, and Christians have enjoyed peace and cooperation in the region. Since the creation of the state of Israel, our organizations have supported nonviolent efforts among both Palestinians and Israelis to protect human rights, prevent violence, address the root causes of conflict, and promote peacebuilding. We still believe a peaceful future for all peoples is possible.

However, through our decades of humanitarian work and accompaniment with Palestinian and Israeli communities we have witnessed the relentless erosion of justice. This lack of justice and the current violence is rooted in the systemic and violent dispossession of Palestinians from their lands and decades of occupation, apartheid policies, and the systematic denial of Palestinian rights.

This history contextualizes the atrocities that are being perpetrated against Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank today by Israel's military and government – the starvation campaigns, mass killings, mass deportations, ethnic cleansing, settler violence, and calculated erasure of life. These are not

isolated horrors, but the brutal continuation of a 76-year project of displacement and denial of Palestinians' human rights.

These decades of dispossession, oppression, occupation, and violence are the backdrop to the cycles of violence in the region including the attacks, killings, abductions, and trauma suffered by Israelis on October 7, 2023.

After deep communal and prayerful discernment, informed by our direct witness in Palestine/Israel and our readings of the positions of international human rights organizations, international and Israeli genocide scholars, and experts on the UN Genocide Convention (1948), we are exercising our religious conviction to speak the truth as we see it. We believe with moral clarity, and in line with the definition of the crime of genocide, that the current actions in Gaza perpetrated by the Israeli government, constitute genocide.

Our peace and equality testimonies are clear: Apparent security for some, bought with the insecurity of others, tears at our shared humanity and cannot bring peace. Peace built on systematic oppression is a lie. We name what we see as genocide after deep discernment – not to incite, but to open eyes, minds, and hearts. We name this painful truth with the fervent hope that the violence it describes will cease, and with continued commitment to help heal the wounds of war on all sides.

Since the 7th of October 2023, we have witnessed the following realities:

- Approximately 1,200 Israelis killed, including over 800 civilians, 36 of them children, over 3,300 injured and 223 people abducted on October 7, 2023.
- Over 57,000 Palestinians directly killed in Gaza, with estimates of the number of people killed as a result of both the direct and indirect impacts of war rising as high as 300,000.
- In Gaza, at least 17,000 children killed, more than 35,000 injured, over 50,000 children lost at least one of their parents. Between 3,000 and 4,000 children in Gaza have had one or more limbs amputated – the highest figure for child amputees globally.
- Nearly 10,000 Palestinians held in Israeli military detention, over 3,500 of them without any charge or trial, and in facilities where they are regularly subject to violence, sexual abuse, torture, and killing.

- Over 200 Palestinian journalists killed.
- Deliberate mass starvation through the systematic obstruction of food, water, and medicine. which has claimed many lives.
- The destruction of over 70% of homes.
- Over 1,450 recorded attacks on health workers, patients, hospitals, and medical infrastructure with at least 1,500 health care workers killed and over 85% of hospitals bombed or besieged. Remaining facilities are systematically denied fuel and electricity – cutting power to incubators, dialysis machines, and operating theaters, directly causing preventable deaths.
- Forced displacement of 1.9 million people amid calls to erase Gaza and for the ethnic cleansing of the population.
- State-sanctioned dehumanization and incitement by officials with Palestinians called "human animals" and with politicians, media, and soldiers celebrating killings of civilians.

Article II of the UN Genocide Convention defines genocide as acts committed "with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group". We believe the Israeli actions in Gaza meet this threshold.

We cry out equally for the protection of free speech and the right to protest. The moral urgency of this moment demands space for dissent. Across the world, those calling for a free Palestine, an end to genocide, and compliance with international law face censorship, smear campaigns, and legislative criminalization and repression. This silencing – often falsely equating support for Palestinian rights and/or anti-Zionism with antisemitism – undermines integrity and is a betrayal of democracy and a tool of genocide denial. Quakers know well that speaking truth to power requires the freedom to dissent. This is reflected in the growing numbers of conscientious objectors who take the moral stand and refuse to participate in the atrocities through military service. We reaffirm our belief in the human dignity of all people and our opposition to all forms of discrimination.

All states have a legal duty under the Genocide Convention to prevent genocide. We call for:

1. An immediate, permanent ceasefire and full humanitarian access

- All parties must recommit to diplomacy and dialogue in order to reach a permanent ceasefire, ending all hostilities.
- Israel must open border crossings for unrestricted aid.
- The international community must fully fund UNRWA and other involved UN agencies.

2. The application of robust, targeted, and timebound sanctions, including a comprehensive arms embargo, aimed at ending Israel's genocide in Gaza and the related system of apartheid.

- Diplomatic: Use all diplomatic channels to exert pressure, including by denying visas to officials inciting or justifying genocide/apartheid.
- Economic: Suspend trade agreements and ban settlement goods devastating Palestinian livelihoods.
- Financial: Freeze assets of officials and settler militias; block transactions funding oppression.
- Military: Halt all arms sales, transfers, and military cooperation with Israel
- Transport: Block cargo sustaining genocide or apartheid.

3. Respect for international law and accountability

- The international community must hold Israel accountable to International Law and support the order of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) seeking provisional measures to prevent further harm, and remove any obstacles to support the International Criminal Court (ICC) investigations and rulings into war crimes and crimes against humanity, including apartheid.
- Demand transparent government reports on compliance with legal duties to prevent genocide and apartheid.

4. Protection of free speech and the right to protest

- Legislatures must reject all institutional efforts to criminalize solidarity with Palestine.
- Authorities must safeguard students, academics, workers, and activists from censorship, cyber harassment, or retaliation for advocating Palestinian rights, while ensuring public spaces remain open for peaceful assemblies demanding ceasefire and justice.

- Media outlets must center Palestinian voices, commit to facts without bias, and amplify independent journalism documenting Gaza's reality.

5. Dismantling of oppression and establishing a just and permanent peace

- End the occupation and apartheid policies across Palestine.
- Uphold Palestinian self-determination and refugees' right of return.
- Ensure equal rights, dignity, and security for Palestinians and Israelis and challenge efforts to silence them – rejecting any system privileging one group over another.

As Quaker signatories, we commit to:

- Advocate relentlessly for the end of the Israeli genocide in Gaza and the deliberate starvation campaign, a permanent ceasefire and accountability for atrocities committed in Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem.
- Boycott settlement goods and divest from companies profiting from occupation, apartheid, or genocide (e.g., arms manufacturers, settlement financiers).
- Reach out in love to Jewish, Muslim and Palestinian communities, confronting antisemitism, anti-Muslim and anti-Palestinian hate while refusing to be silent in the face of oppression.
- Highlight the voices of Palestinians, which have still been all-too-absent from media narratives.
- Support humanitarian relief for Gaza and communities suffering under occupation in the West Bank.
- Advocate for the universal human rights of all people in Palestine and Israel— ensuring they can live in freedom and dignity, without fear, and with lasting peace and security.

We hold in the Light all suffering peoples and leaders, praying they choose justice. In Palestine and Israel, peace built on equality is the only path forward.

American Friends Service Committee

Canadian Friends Service Committee

Friends Committee on National Legislation

Friends World Committee for Consultation World Office

Quakers in Britain/ Quaker Peace and Social Witness

Quaker Council on European Affairs
Quaker Service Norway
Quaker United Nations Office
A pdf of this statement is available [here](#).

We invite all Friends meetings, churches, schools, and organizations to endorse this statement. Sign onto the statement and access discernment resources.

A Friend expressed deep emotion and gratitude in hearing the Meeting loudly support this Minute. They expressed a wish that Suzanne Ohler were here to see this and spoke of the joy she would see in this Minute being approved.

Minute 6: Friends agreed to sign on to AFSC's statement affirming that the events perpetrated by Israel that have occurred and continue to occur in Gaza fit the criteria of a genocide, and calling for immediate and ongoing actions to stop the genocide, to uphold international law, and to protect human rights for all people.

Link to statement: AFSC genocide minute

<https://afsc.org/newsroom/quakers-discern-genocide-occurring-gaza-and-urge-courageous-action>

PEJA committee is also led to recommend that the Meeting agree to a labor acknowledgment to be spoken at the rise of meeting each week, along with our land acknowledgement. As a starting point we suggest wording to this effect:

"Asheville Friends Meeting acknowledges that we live in a region that was built in part with stolen labor of enslaved Africans and their descendants, and we benefit materially from their labor. We lament the incalculable deprivation and loss of life, and the resultant generational trauma exacerbated by injustice and inequality to this day. We acknowledge our responsibility to address these historical and ongoing harms through mitigation and reparative action. To this end we are committed to:

- * nurturing our relationships with Asheville's Black community,
- * following the guidance of Black leadership in efforts to stop the harm,
- * supporting and participating in the work of Black-led community organizations, and
- * providing reparative compensation through our Meeting's Reparations Fund."

We do not seek approval of this draft statement at Meeting today. We ask that Friends sit with it to begin discernment of our right action as Way opens.

Ministry & Counsel Report—Robin Wells

In our October business meeting, the clerk appointed an ad hoc Response Team for the possibility of a visit to the meeting from agents looking for undocumented immigrants. Our current Response Team includes: Matt Utterback (clerk), Barbara Esther, Steve Livingston, Pat Johnson, Joelle Swaggert O'Brien, Vinnie Grossi, and Barbara Burke. The team has met and discussed the protocol. At this time, M&C would like to propose some new members to this team for approval by Meeting: Margaret Farmer, Robin Wells, Deanna Hatch, Lizzy Markman, and Bob Lackey.

Approval Needed: Does Meeting approve the addition of Margaret Farmer, Robin Wells, Deanna Hatch, Lizzy Markman, and Bob Lackey to the Response Team?

Minute 7: The Meeting approves Margaret Farmer, Robin Wells, Deanna Hatch, Lizzy Markman, and Bob Lackey to the Response Team

Our Meeting has spoken with an attorney about representing us, should the need arise in the case of an agent visitation. His name is Curry First. He was active in the civil rights movement in the 60s and 70s and went to law school at Vanderbilt for this reason. After law school he became a lawyer with the Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors in Philadelphia. As reported by the Vanderbilt Law School, "Curry's experiences underscore the vital role of lawyers in championing humanity within the legal system, advocating for justice, empathy, and positive social change." He asks to be called if agents come to the Meeting, and he will come if he is able.

Approval Needed: Does Meeting approve meeting with Curry First to talk about being our attorney should we need one following a visit to Meeting by agents involved in immigrant removal?

A Friend thinks that given our positions and activities that retaining an attorney seems to be an absolute necessity.

A Friend asks if this would be a Meeting in the second hour or would this be a particular group.

A Friend points out that Curry is retired and wonders if he could still represent us

A Friend reminds us that Curry has visited our Meeting for worship.

A Friend does not know if Curry has ever been a member of the NC Bar. He has been here a decade but would be a wonderful consultant and could recommend.

Minute 8: The Meeting approves that the Ministry and Counsel and the Response Team meet with Curry First for advice on how to proceed in the event of a visit from Federal Agents involved in immigrant removal.

Ministry and Counsel has received feedback about our closing procedures for meeting for worship. New attenders have found our current practice confusing, so we are trying something new for a while. We have begun closing our meeting for worship with a silent handshake or elbow bump before we move on to introducing visitors and then sharing joys and concerns. After that, we continue with our acknowledgement and announcements. We will re-evaluate our closing procedures again in a month or two.

Discussion point: Greeting visitors is really important, but when is the best time to do this? Our conversations during the handshake/elbow bump have become long, and drawn-out. Can we pare this down and have deeper conversations when meeting closes?

No approval or action needed.

It has come to our attention that there is peeling paint in our plate and bowl cabinet. Lead testing for the underlying paint is showing up positive in the quick swab test. The cabinet has been taped closed and we will be using paper plates and cups for a while. Friends are welcome to bring a plate and cup from home. Ministry & Counsel will work with House & Grounds to seek professional remediation for this problem.

A Friend states that the insertion of the Greeting and Clip Board time feels jarring. It removes them from the reflective and communal state for Joys and Concerns.

A Friend strongly feels that Joys and Concerns is a part of Meeting for Worship

A Friend states that the reason that people become regular attenders is that “This is the place that they feel like they belong.” I am pleased that these people join our community and are going to be a part of our ongoing revelation. I think that some people feel that way and some people won’t and that is only natural. Maybe it is more important to find out why people do stay, not why people don’t stay.

A Friend states that people have reached out to them about why they left Meeting.

A Friend raises the question for consideration that we circulate the guest book if visitors would like to sign it.

A Friend understands Joys and Concerns as for what did not rise to the level of vocal ministry. They recognize these as two different and important aspects of our Meeting for worship.

We create safety by bringing our tender places to the Meeting.

Finance Committee Report - Beth Eddy

The finance committee sent out an urgent appeal to Asheville Friends Meeting for Worship attenders and members to donate to make our end-of-year goals for fundraising. We still do not have enough money to make our budget for the year! Please donate what you can!

Per our May meeting, we reiterated dividing up the work associated with writing the annual outreach checks and the preparation of charitable gift letters and the W-2 for Laura Wall in January 2026. Pat agreed to take on some of this responsibility.

The Board of Directors requested that the minutes of its 2025 annual meeting be incorporated into the minutes of Asheville Friends Meeting here.

The Annual Meeting of the AFM Board of Directors took place by Zoom on 12/9/25 at 4:00pm. Note, this meeting was later than the typical October date because we did not meet until May 2025 for the 2024 meeting.

Present were Board members Ellen Carr (Member of the Board as Assistant Treasurer of Meeting), Satchel Loftis (Member of the Board ex officio as Treasurer of Meeting), Kitti Reynolds (Member of the Board), Pat Johnson (Member of the Board), Beth Eddy (Member of the Board as Clerk of the Finance Committee), and Joelle O'Brien (ex officio as Meeting Clerk), which constituted a quorum. Pat Johnson, Ellen Carr, Satchel Loftis, Kitti Reynolds, and Beth Eddy are signatories for the Self Help Credit Union accounts. It was agreed that Joelle O'Brien will be added to the list of signatories at Self Help in January, schedules permitting, since all signatories must be present for a new signatory to be added.

Joelle O'Brien will become Chairperson, and Ellen Carr will serve as Secretary.

The Treasurer reported that the Meeting's finances are in good order.

The Board requested of Meeting that the minutes of this meeting be recorded in the Minutes of Business Meeting. There being no other new business, the Annual Meeting concluded at 4:18pm.

The Bylaws specify, "The Annual Meeting of the Board of Directors shall be held at the office of the Friends Meeting on the second Sunday of October of each year." The 2026 Annual Meeting of the Board of Directors is scheduled for October 2026, date and time TBD.

Respectfully Submitted, Ellen Carr, Secretary of the Board of Directors.

Minute 9 : The Meeting approved the appointment of Joelle O'Brien to the Board of Directors.

Minute 10: Meeting accepted the minutes from the Board of Directors.

Treasurer Report - Satchel Loftis

Satchel updated us on our income year-to-date as we approach the end of the fiscal year (2025-12-31). This includes unrestricted gifts and rental income to date,

the primary drivers of operating income, and thus any surplus or deficit for the year.

Satchel will present an initial Operating Budget for 2026 to be reviewed and discussed for approval at our 1st Month Meeting for Business.

More specific information about our reserve funds, tables, et cetera, will be available come this Business Meeting and will be put into the Minutes.

A Friend thanks Satchel for all the work he has put in.

Meeting closed with a moment of silent worship until way opens in first month 2026.