

Celo Friends Meeting
Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business (MFWAB)
January 19, 2025

Present: James Roeder, Barb Wulff, Jennie Boyd-Bull, Joni Thibault, Rachel Weir, Lydia Wexler, Charley Cloak, Donna Idol, Joyce Johnson, Catherine Reid, Sierra Anway, Joni Thibault

Clerking: Catherine Reid

Minutes: Lucy Perry

Opening

The meeting opened with a few moments of silence.

The clerk read a passage from Walter Bruggeman on the importance of questions/ queries in Quaker worship:

*“The practice of listening brings people together. It reminds us that we are not alone. When people gather, the right questions bring the sacred into the room—questions of connections, not opinions. If you bring questions of depth, questions that are personal, the experience of being together shifts. When we ask questions that are an invitation to hear each other, something is created. The Quakers understand this.... The question itself has force, spiritual force. It creates a clearing. It enables people to hold open the space for listening and depth. A good question always initiates this. Good questions can be considered as sacraments of silence.” (Walter Bruggemann, from *An Other Kingdom* and quoted on our website).*

1. Corrections to the December minutes

Donna Idol's name was left off the list of attendees, but now has been added.

David Senseney's name was mis-spelled and now has been corrected.

These corrections were approved today.

2. Schedule of business meetings

Catherine Reid will continue clerking business meetings every third Sunday morning of the month. If Catherine is unable to attend, she will tap someone from the Ministry and Care Committee.

The next meeting for business will be Sunday, February 16, at 8:45.

3. Ministry and Care Report

This report was presented by Bob McGahey.

The query for this month is: "Trusting spirit, what is mine to do?"

Charley Cloak brought a handout from Durham Friends Meeting about their meeting for business. The Ministry and Care committee discussed how to use this document and share its content. Joni agreed to clerk an ad-hoc committee to edit this document for CFM use. If you want to work in this committee with Joni, please contact her.

The Ministry and Care Committee affirmed Tasha Shannon's gifts and contributions to our First Day School. The committee discussed how to streamline the process for First Day School volunteer substitutions. Volunteers will have a list of all the other volunteers and their contact info. If anyone is unable to find a substitute, they will reach out to the coordinator (Julia Hudson for Childcare and Gib Barrus for First Day School.)

4. Nominating Committee Report

This report was presented by Donna Idol.

Donna began by outlining the process for the next few months of nominating committee activities.

a) The current slate of roles and committees will be presented today asking for final approval.

b) Committees will be asked to decide how to clerk their group. They can have one clerk or they can have a rotating clerk. They should report to the Nominating Committee **before February meeting for business**.

c) Job Descriptions of roles and committees to be reviewed by individuals and overseeing committee. They should report any changes in job description to the nominating committee **before the March meeting for business**.

Donna presented the slate of persons in 'Roles and Responsibilities' of the meeting. We made a few corrections as these names and positions were read out loud from the website. Here is the corrected list:

Meeting co-clerks: Anne Maren-Hogan, Catherine Reid

Recording Clerk: Lucy Perry

Record Keeper & Archivist: Sierra Anway

Bookkeeper: Jo Ann Fernald; Assistant: Jim Erlandson

Website Coordinator: Lisa Rose

Treasurer: James Roeder

Committees:

Adult Education

Clerk: *currently unfilled*

Committee Members: Jerry Cade, Geeta McGahey, Catherine Peck, Joni Thibault, Lydia Wexler (interim convener)

Buildings and Grounds

Clerk: Richard Martin

Committee Members: Eric Gilmore, Gred Gross, David Senseney (workday coordinator), Jim Stockwell

Conscientious Objection Resources

Clerk: *currently unfilled*

Committee Members: *currently unfilled*

End of Life

Clerk: Donna Idol

Committee Members:

Cemetery: Becky Gray

M&C Representative: Charley Cloak

CCI Representatives: Cedar Johnson, Lila Stith

Finance

Clerk: James Roeder

Committee Members: Jim Erlandson, Jo Ann Fernald, Joyce Johnson

First Day School

Clerk: Gib Barrus

Committee Members:

FDS Coordinator: Tashsa Shannon

Childcare Coordinator: Julia Hudson

Ministry and Care Representative: Gib Barrus

Volunteers: Annie Barrus, Jerry Cade, Astra Coyle, LuAnn Crissman, Becky Gray, Meg Guzulescu, Kavita Hardy, Julia Hudson, Richard Martin, Bob McGahey, Geeta McGahey, Sam Maren, Izzy Miller, Barbara Perrin, Drew Perrin, James Roeder, Lisa Rose, Judy Scheckel, Jake Silver, Peggy Tibbits, Carly Todd, Diane Walker. Also for approval today: Ben Peverall, Cami Prada, Skylar Miller, Sierra Anway.

Teen Helpers: Gabe Becker, Juniper Chappelle, Cosmo Evans, Oliver McCade, London McLellan, Ollie Meyer-Bell, Andy Prather, Oscar Rouse

Library

Clerk: *currently unfilled*

Margithaus

Clerk: *currently unfilled*

Committee Members:

Caretaker: Rachel Weir

Finances: James Roeder

Maintenance: Gred Gross

Buildings and Grounds Representative: Richard Martin

Ministry and Care

Clerk: *rotating clerks*

Committee Members: Annie Barrus, Gib Barrus, Jennie Boyd-Bull, Charley Cloak, Bob McGahey, Anne Maren-Hogan, Philip Mitchell, Catherine Reid, Joni Thibault

Nominating

Clerk: Donna Idol

Committee Members: Chip Poston, Rachel Weir

Potluck

Clerk: Richard Martin

Committee Members: Jennie Boyd-Bull, Peggy Tibbits, Danny Blose, Damon Rouse

Racial Equity

Clerks: Geeta McGahey & Lydia Wexler

Committee Members: Jennie Boyd-Bull, Sam Maren

Representatives to Wider Quaker Organizations

FCNL and FCNL NC: Jim Stockwell

Quaker Earthcare Witness: Bob McGahey
SAYF: Julia Hudson
SAYMA: Lydia Wexler
SAYMA Ministry and Nurture: *currently unfilled*
SAYMA Nominating: *currently unfilled*

Trustees

Clerk: *currently unfilled*

Trustees: Gib Barrus, Bob McGahey, Barbara Wulff

Welcoming

Clerk: Lydia Wexler

Committee Members: Jerry Cade, Astra Coyle, Tim Evans, Judy Scheckel, Jim Stockwell

We approved this entire slate of people.

The Conscientious Objections committee is re-forming and will be meeting this month.

Committee members will be: Danny Blose, Damon Rouse, Oscar Rouse, Tim Evans, Jake Silver. Joyce will convene this meeting.

This mention is the first naming of these people for this role, and we will give them final approval next month.

Friends expressed appreciation to Joyce for her years of Service to Celo Friends Meeting, and the thoughtful way in which she is handing over responsibilities.

Bookkeeper position

James is the Treasurer and Clerk of the Finance Committee. Jo Ann Fernald is currently serving as bookkeeper and is ready to train the next person and pass along this role. It is about a 1-hour commitment per week on average.

The nominating committee has tried to find someone for this role and so far has not been able to find a person to accept the position.

The Nominating Committee was approached by one Friend who is proficient at Quickbooks. There is a question on the table of whether to offer a \$100/month stipend to this person, for a duration of one year, to compensate them for taking on the bookkeeper responsibilities. A number of Friends expressed support for the idea of paying this person (or potentially another person) for bookkeeping. There were also concerns and hesitations. Some concerns centered around a reluctance to create another paid position in our meeting, and also about how we commit our limited resources.

A couple of other names were brought up as possibilities for this role. Another potential solution is that James would be willing to take on the bookkeeper position, if someone else wanted to serve as Finance Clerk.

We decided to wait until the February meeting to make this decision. Meanwhile the Nominating Committee will talk with the various individuals who were mentioned.

Positions still unfilled

Some positions are currently unfilled. These are: bookkeeper, librarian, one Margithaus committee member, SAYMA ministry and Nurture committee member.

Lydia Wexler has been proposed as our representative to SAYMA's nominating Committee. This is the first naming for her in this position.

5. First Day School Committee Report

This report was presented by Catherine Reid.

We heard the second reading of these names for First Day School Volunteers: Sierra Anway, Ben Peverall, Cami Prada, Skylar Miller

We approved these names.

6. Report from Hurricane Helene Relief Fund Committee

Gib prepared the written report and Charley Cloak read it aloud in our business meeting. It included a letter of thanks from a recipient. (The written report is appended at the end of these minutes.)

Rachel clarified that the fuel fund has already been allocated to recipients. Rachel has been working on getting a professional to repair someone's heater, with the fuel fund paying for this.

Catherine read another letter of thanks from a recipient of aid from our Hurricane Helene Restoration Fund.

There is still a note on our website, saying that people can continue to contribute to our Hurricane Helene Restoration Fund.

7. Offers of help with hurricane relief

This item was presented by Catherine Reid.

Charlotte Friends Meeting has sent a note asking where they should contribute money for hurricane relief.

One friend suggested Reconciliation House and Samaritan's Purse. You can speak to Catherine if you have other suggestions.

8. Finance Report of Fiscal Year 2024

This report was presented by James Roeder

James handed out a document showing the End of Year Statement of Financial Position, as well as a Budget vs Actuals report for Fiscal Year 2024. These documents are appended at the end of these minutes.

James noted that our financial position is healthy.

In the Budget vs Actuals report, you will see a few lines where money was budgeted but not spent. Also more money came in than was expected. For the coming year we may have more funds to work with than we expected.

9. Donation from CFM to Ramallah Friends School through Friends United Meeting

This item was presented by Joyce Johnson

Ramallah Friends School in Palestine has been heavily affected by the war, since parents lost their jobs and so have been unable to make their tuition payments.

There was a song written by the children of Ramallah Friends School, included as a link in our Saturday update on Jan 11.

We agree to make a \$100 donation from our meeting, which will come out of our operating budget.

We will ask for individuals to make donations to Celo Friends Meeting with a note on their check designating the donation for Ramallah Friends School. Joyce will announce this at the rise of worship today, and clerks will include this in the Saturday update. These individual donations can be put in the box in the foyer, and should be made by Feb 28.

We approved this proposal.

10. Asheville Friends Meeting Minute of Accountability

This item was presented by Catherine Reid

Asheville Friends Meeting has been working on making amends to the Cherokee Nation for the Quaker Boarding School injustices against native American children and families. They have sent a Minute of Accountability on this matter. (The text is appended at the end of this document.)

There will soon be a ceremony for amends. Catherine will send out details when they become available in the Saturday update.

11. Latest Chattanooga Friends Meeting communication, withdrawing funds from SAYMA

This item was presented by Catherine Reid.

The CFM ad-hoc committee to respond to Chattanooga friends meeting will convene tomorrow.

Chattanooga Friends meeting has sent a new letter, stating that they intend to withhold funds from SAYMA for this coming year. (This letter is appended at the end of these minutes, along with a response from SAYMA's Racial Conflict Transformation Team.)

Our involvement with SAYMA is something we still need to discern.

There is an option for a SAYMA representative to come speak with us in person.

Our ad-hoc committee can decide what they want to bring to our February business meeting for our consideration.

Closing

The meeting closed with a few moments of silence.

These minutes were approved in the face of the meeting.
Respectfully submitted, Lucy Perry

Appendix:

1. Report from the Hurricane Helene Relief Fund Committee
2. Finance Report of FY 2024
 - a. End of Year Statement of Financial Position
 - b. End of Year Budget vs Actuals
3. Asheville Friends Meeting Minute of Accountability
4. Latest letter from Chattanooga Friends Meeting to SAYMA, Dec 2024
5. Letter to Chattanooga Friends Meeting from SAYMA RCT Team, Jan 2025

Report from the Hurricane Helene Restoration Fund committee.

Celo Friends Meeting received a generous donation of \$100,000 from Ethan Grossman to distribute to families and businesses in need in the South Toe Valley. Please note that Mr. Grossman is fine with his name being shared but he specifically asked that it not be published in social media. Our committee went to work quickly, and distributed all of the funds to 49 individuals. Most of those individuals had catastrophic losses of homes. Some had also lost business property, or income due to the flood. Most grants ranged from \$1000 to \$3000. In the first round of applications we considered, we recommended three additional grants that were not covered by the initial \$100,000 donation. These three grants totaling \$7500 were generously covered by Camp Celo. Our initial work got off to a slow start, because of the banking paperwork that it takes to transfer a large amount of money to a tax exempt church organization. We received commitment for the grant October 10. We proceeded to allocate the money but the first checks weren't written until November 16. All checks were mailed by November 24. Thanks to Jo Ann Fernald for her patience and persistence to make these transactions happen,

Celo Friends Meeting has also received directed donations specified to be used for fuel cost related to the hurricane. We have distributed four grants of \$500 from the fuel fund. There is still \$1000 available. We also received money specified for use by undocumented migrants who might be unable to access other funding sources. We have had no specific request for the fund for undocumented individuals. There is \$750 available in that fund.

Since we completed distributing the initial grant from Ethan Grossman, Celo Friends Meeting has continued to receive donations to be used for Hurricane Helene relief and restoration. We have received a total of \$21,150 to be used for this purpose. So far we have granted 11 requests for funding. There is currently \$6900 available in this fund. We have two requests so far pending for use of this remaining balance. It is worth noting that the most recent donation to this fund of \$3800 was made on January 17. It is also important to note that the initial grant was to be used for needs in the South Toe Valley. These new funds have no restrictions, and are available to anybody in flood stricken areas.

We have received just over a dozen, thank you notes that I'm aware of. We plan to bundle them and share them with Mr. Grossman soon.

[The report contained a thank you letter from a recipient of funds. This letter has been redacted since it contains personal information.]

For the HRF committee, Gib Barrus

Celo Friends Meeting
Statement of Financial Position Comparison
As of December 31, 2024

	Total	
	As of December 31, 2024	As of December 31, 2023 (PY)
ASSETS		
Bank Accounts		
Abrahamson Fund Principal- Latino Credit Union		
3 year Certificate of Deposit	\$12,000.00	\$12,000.00
5 year Certificate of Deposit	\$13,000.00	\$13,000.00
Checking Account	\$38.60	\$38.38
Shares Account	\$100.00	\$100.00
Total Abrahamson Fund Principal	\$25,138.60	\$25,138.38
Reserve Funds- Self Help Credit Union		
Money Market- Undesignated Reserves	\$10,442.35	\$13,487.22
Certificate of Deposit	\$3,500.00	\$0.00
Total Undesignated Reserve Fund	\$13,942.35	\$13,487.22
Operating Acct - United Community Bank	\$20,845.03	\$18,982.07
Special Accts - United Community Bank		
Abrahmsn Spend	\$3,286.14	\$2,493.47
Cap Improv Fund	\$3,483.69	\$1,083.69
Dig In Fundraising	\$75.00	\$0.00
Ed. Enrichment	\$4,337.29	\$3,337.29
Emergency Caretaker Fund	\$3,300.00	\$2,100.00
Feed A Child	\$0.00	\$0.00
First Day School Fundraisers	\$0.00	\$0.00
Fundraiser for Refugees	\$0.19	\$0.19
Meetinghouse Safety	\$169.25	\$169.25
Special Concerns	\$1,122.20	\$1,622.20
Total UCB Spec Accts	\$15,773.76	\$10,806.09
Total Bank Accounts (non-Hurricane Relief)	\$75,699.74	\$68,413.76

Hurricane Helene Relief- United Community Bank	Remaining on 1/1/25	Funds Rec'd prior to 1/1/25
1 Charlotte Donor	\$0.00	\$107,500.00
Hurricane Assistance all	\$14,700.00	\$19,000.00
Hurricane Assistance for Undocumented	\$740.00	\$740.00
Hurricane Fuel	\$2,500.00	\$3,000.00
Total UCB Hurricane Relief	\$17,940.00	\$130,240.00

Celo Friends Meeting
Budget vs. Actuals: Fiscal Year 2024
January - December 2024

	Total			
	Actual	Budget	over Budget	% of Budget
Income				
Donations				
Unrestricted -Operating	20,841.29	17,000.00	3,841.29	122.60%
Total Donations	\$ 20,841.29	\$ 17,000.00	\$ 3,841.29	122.60%
Rental & Misc Income	202.00	650.00	-448.00	31.08%
Total Unrestricted Income	\$ 21,043.29	\$ 17,650.00	\$ 3,393.29	119.23%
Interest	1,310.38	850.00	460.38	154.16%
Total Revenue	\$ 22,353.67	\$ 18,500.00	\$ 3,853.67	120.83%
Expenditures				
Annual Donations- Community	2,200.00	2,200.00	0.00	100.00%
Annual Donations- Quaker	1,975.00	1,975.00	0.00	100.00%
Budgeted Expenses			0.00	
Adult Religious Education	0.00	300.00	-300.00	0.00%
Advertisement/Outreach	0.00	150.00	-150.00	0.00%
Caretaker Pension Fund	1,200.00	1,200.00	0.00	100.00%
CCI Lease and Taxes	363.24	225.00	138.24	161.44%
End of Life Committee	0.00	100.00	-100.00	0.00%
FDS Child Care	480.00	500.00	-20.00	96.00%
FDS General Needs	205.00		205.00	
First Day School/Youth	137.33	150.00	-12.67	91.55%
Hospitality/Refreshments	0.00	100.00	-100.00	0.00%
House and Grounds	30.00	1,800.00	-1,770.00	1.67%
Insurance Expense	2,096.00	2,100.00	-4.00	99.81%
Library	130.00	125.00	5.00	104.00%
Margithaus Committee	0.00	100.00	-100.00	0.00%
Ministry and Care	171.74	200.00	-28.26	85.87%
Office Supplies	224.39	250.00	-25.61	89.76%
Peace and Social Concerns	0.00	100.00	-100.00	0.00%
Racial Equity Committee	65.00	400.00	-335.00	16.25%
SAYMA Givings	3,225.00	3,225.00	0.00	100.00%
The Welcome Committee	8.21	100.00	-91.79	8.21%
Travel and Scholarship	399.12	1,200.00	-800.88	33.26%
Utilities	3,860.46	3,500.00	360.46	110.30%
French Broad Electric MC	1,013.07		1,013.07	
Frontier	740.97		740.97	
Propane/Kerosene	1,663.22		1,663.22	
US Mobile Telephone	215.94		215.94	
Zito Internet	227.26		227.26	
Total Budgeted Expenses	\$ 12,595.49	\$ 15,825.00	-\$ 3,229.51	79.59%
Total Expenditures (Budget + Donations)	\$ 16,770.49	\$ 20,000.00	-\$ 3,229.51	83.85%
Net Operating Revenue	\$ 4,272.80	-\$ 2,350.00		

Thursday, Jan 09, 2025 07:13:03 AM GMT-8 - Accrual Basis

A MINUTE OF ACCOUNTABILITY FOR THE QUAKER INDIGENOUS BOARDING SCHOOLS¹

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 North Carolina 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. 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 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.

Dear Friends,

Quakers value seeking decision-making on a spiritual path and resolve to find harmony even amidst division. After years of watching the Yearly Meeting devolve into dissonance and strife and our Monthly Meeting's subsequent distress at the turmoil, we have come to some clarity

and are resolved to follow as the Spirit leads. Even so, this decision is a compromise and is not meant to close any doors permanently. This letter is to inform SAYMA of our decision.

To start, our current sense of our Meeting is:

1. We will withhold our annual giving to SAYMA for the calendar year 2025 AND
2. We will reevaluate this decision and our status within SAYMA at the end of the calendar year 2025.

SAYMA is aware that we have been considering our relationship with it for some time. To leave would be difficult and, for some—heartbreaking. CFM has had a long history with SAYMA. Some of us have watched our children grow to adulthood participating in SAYF and seen how valuable that was. Many of us have found spiritual nurture through attendance at Gatherings and working on YM committees. Yet SAYMA has become less nurturing and more painful over the past five or more years. Chattanooga Friends has mostly withdrawn from SAYMA de facto because few found any personal benefit in attendance. Worse, several formerly active SAYMA members now refuse to have any connection with SAYMA due to their anger/ sadness/ distress at how things have been conducted.

We believe that SAYMA is veering farther away from following Quaker principles and practices.

We have seen shouting during business meetings, rants, name-calling, bullying, and other antagonistic conduct that went unchecked. This unfriendly behavior continued through several clerks without the YM establishing firm boundaries for meeting etiquette. Keynote speakers were interrupted and verbally attacked. For many business meetings, no business could be conducted, because one person and her concerns were allowed to dominate at the expense of other agenda items. This year, partly in response to a letter from CFM, SAYMA clerks implemented Guidelines for Participants in Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business. This did succeed in making meetings more orderly, but did not stop Star Smith's ability to control the agenda. Our concern is not mainly the behavior of one or a few people, it is that the leadership of SAYMA has allowed this to go on for so long. Hateful speech has been not only tolerated but, at times, celebrated as confronting racism. When Swannanoa Meeting sent a letter expressing their pain at feeling that they had to leave SAYMA, a public comment was made that literally said, "Goodbye and good riddance!" No one felt the need to suggest that this is unkind and destructive to unity.

We believe tolerating all this violates our testimonies of peace, integrity, and equality. CFM is also concerned that far from containing Star Smith, she has been allowed more support and power in SAYMA. It did not seem appropriate to us to send someone to Friends World Committee on Consultation who has little regard for Quaker principles, practices, and testimonies. Likewise, it seems self-defeating to appoint someone to the Faith and Practice revision committee who has made public statements to the effect that Quakers' testimonies and customs are mere tools of oppression.

Given these observations and experiences, we find it troublesome to continue financially supporting an organization that seems to no longer hold Quaker practices and testimonies in regard. We do not wish to choose between our membership in SAYMA or our devotion to Quaker faith & practice, but if we must, the latter has our fidelity.

We recognize that the response to our letter by SAYMA-URJ will be an accusation of racism and white supremacy. This is certainly not our intent and our commitment to racial justice remains steadfast. SAYMA URJ was created to help the YM move towards anti-racism and racial justice, creating an inclusive space where everyone could feel they belong. Yet, in the years since, no progress has been made, and SAYMA has become a space where no one feels comfortable. We believe that without a change, an openness to listen, the freedom to ask questions, a return to civility in the pursuit of unity, working towards decisions through Spirit led guidance—a return to Quakerliness—the durability of SAYMA is in jeopardy.

We love SAYMA, the monthly meetings in its affiliation, and its people. Our hope is that we can galvanize one another and move toward restoration. We wait for the Spirit's guidance and the peaceful resolution of these concerns. We will continue to care about SAYMA and to hold it in the Light and watch where it goes next. In a year we will revisit all this and review the action we have taken now.

In the Light

Chuck Jones, kate anthony, Matthew Ludwikowski

For Chattanooga Friends Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

December 2024

January 2025

Dear Friends,

We are sharing this response as the Racial Conflict Transformation [RCT] Team of SAYMA. We have received your letters and held them in our hearts reflecting on your words and Spirit.

We find ourselves in agreement in some places and in disagreement in others which feels uncomfortable. One thing we know well is that grappling with discomfort is the work of the RCT Team and Quakers generally. Monthly and Yearly Meetings across the world are struggling with new understandings of previously accepted norms and practices. How could we not, as people of continuous revelation? SAYMA as an organization continues to be deeply committed to Quaker testimonies and practices even as we remain open to the possibility that they may look different through the process of spiritual transformation and revelation.*

We hold a vision of SAYMA as a stronger, more spiritual, diverse and actively anti-racist body, with children, teens and young adults flocking to our sessions. The need to overcome the culture of racial bias within the Society of Friends and SAYMA is indeed important. We see the YM taking steps toward becoming an anti-racist community and understand that the journey will take many years.
[CFM Letter 10/2024]

In this we agree. We are not where we want to be AND we are not where we were. We are a community in transition. We value the spiritual growth implicit in learning how to be in community with those who are different from ourselves. Monthly meetings and individual Friends are in different places on this journey. It is not comfortable nor easy. As your letters reflect, in years past we have experienced business meetings that were uncomfortable, and to some, untenable. We have to varying degrees felt challenged by differences in the ways Friends respond to injustice. However, we recognize that these experiences are not universal, and we disagree with CFM's assertion that *"... no progress has been made, and SAYMA has become a space where no one feels comfortable."* [CFM Letter 12/2024] As we continue to allow Spirit's movement, individuals and communities have responded as led. SAYMA, as a coalition of monthly meetings, and SAYMA Uplifting Racial Justice [URJ] have taken steps to bridge some of the differences among us including an effort to build a common language around anti-racism. We offer this list of some of the work that has been done and is ongoing and faithfully acknowledge that Star Smith has been instrumental in initiating and contributing to much of it.

- SAYMA URJ maintains a list of anti-racism resources on SAYMA.org that Friends are encouraged to explore individually and as monthly meetings;
- We established and are in the 3rd year of a Racial Conflict Transformation Program helping Friends to deal with their discomfort and the paradoxes in racial justice work. All Friends are invited to participate in the program of year-long affinity groups and 3-teaching modules;

- We invited Friend Angela Hopkins, from the Friends center for Racial Justice, to work with us to focus on Quaker process and our struggle with racial justice issues (YM 2022);
- We held threshing sessions and conversations with professional facilitators, SY Bowland and Ukumbwa Sauti, that helped us to address some conflicts between individuals and understand better some of the history of various concerns (YM 2024);
- We established guidelines for meetings for worship with attention to business (YM 2024); ● We established the Racial Conflict Transformation Team** to help us move forward in less harmful ways (RM 153).

The Racial Conflict Transformation Team is tasked to develop processes that can effectively address racial conflict in the yearly meeting, identify Quaker resources available to aid us in this work, and to implement the process as needed to address racial conflict. While we are new at this, we have identified some guidelines we find helpful and we invite you to use them to support us all in this conflict.

- ★ We will look for and affirm that of God in ourselves and others. (YM 2024)
- ★ We will listen in a spirit of continuing revelation. (YM 2024)
- ★ We will listen for truth and refrain from put-downs of ourselves or others.(YM 2024) ★ We can disagree, recognizing that of God in one another. (YM 2024)
- ★ We will experience and examine our discomfort recognizing that it is part of the work of becoming an antiracist community. (Singleton, G., 2006)
- ★ We will refrain from centering our anger, hurt, or frustration on one Meeting, group, or individual recognizing that we are all deeply involved in the conflict and must work together to transform ourselves, our monthly meetings, and SAYMA and avoid factionalization. (RCT Team 2025)
- ★ We will stay engaged and take care of ourselves. If we need to take a break or ask for help, we will so that we can stay engaged for the long term. (Singleton, G., 2006)

As the RCT Team continues to identify systems and procedures for addressing conflicts we invite Friends to stay engaged as much as they are able. We too hold this truth, *“We love SAYMA, the monthly meetings in its affiliation, and its people. Our hope is that we can galvanize one another and move toward restoration.”* [CFM Letter 12/2024] We recognize as we move forward into unfamiliar and perhaps uncomfortable territory of reconciliation and transformation, we may lose some Friends and we may gain new ones. We cannot force Friends to stay, nor to leave.* This is a process for each to discern for themselves as we move forward.

Below are queries we invite Friends to consider as we move forward with racial conflict transformation.

1. How do we reconcile historic Quaker practices that feel freeing to some while feeling oppressive to others? 2. How do we both expand our community and care uniquely for each member? How do I answer that of God in you, even if it looks different from that of God within me? [modified from

[Lauren Brownlee, Quaker Speak. 10/26/2023\]](#)

3. Are we ready to let go of a need to justify and defend ourselves in order to acknowledge the painful experiences of Friends of Color? [[FGC, Living the Truth of our Testimony of Equality](#)]

In a Spirit of conciliation,

Members of the Racial Conflict Transformation Team

Daryl Bergquist, Treasurer (Birmingham FM)

Jennifer Dickie, SAYMA Presiding Clerk (Atlanta FM)

Margaret Farmer, SAYMA Asst. Clerk (Asheville FM)

Patricia Gailey, Racial Justice Working Group (Berea FM)

Angela Hopkins (Friends Center for Racial Justice)

Kendall Ivie, Asst. Treasurer (West Knoxville FM)

Karen Morris, Finance (Atlanta FM)

Lissa Place, Ministry and Nurture (Atlanta FM)

Melissa Preast, Yearly Meeting Planning Committee (West Knoxville FM)

Tribal Raine, Uplifting Racial Justice (Paul Cuffee Worship Group)

** [FGC, Becoming an anti-racist Quaker Meeting](#): Don't be surprised if there is shame and bullying of one another (though it's important to interrupt these behaviors, and encourage everyone to use "I statements" when sharing their thoughts and feelings). Don't be surprised that Friends step away from Meeting, both Friends of Color and white Friends. Don't be surprised that Friends' understanding of Quaker testimonies are individual and conflicting. Don't be surprised when discernment seeps into social media (a place better built for education, not for the process of decision-making). Don't be surprised that in times of struggle it is surprisingly easy to spread rumors ("this Friend told me..."). Don't be surprised when leaders are attacked. Don't be surprised when white fragility stops progress. None of these are fatal, and we owe it to our loved ones who are hurt most by racism to work through them.*

**** Ad-hoc Racial Conflict Transformation Team**

Charge: (i) To develop processes that can effectively address the racial conflict in the yearly meeting. (ii) To identify Quaker resources available to aid us in this work. (iii) To implement the process as needed to address racial conflict.

Members: (i) Interested SAYMA Friends of Color. (ii) SAYMA Presiding clerk(s) (iii) Clerks or representatives from M&N Committee, Yearly Meeting Planning Committee, the Racial Justice Working Group, and Finance Committee and/or SAYMA Treasurer (iv) Additional members may be added as needed for the work.