

Celo Friends Meeting
Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business (MFWAB)
January 18, 2026

Present: Annie Barrus, Barb Wulff, Soleste Starr, Jennie Boyd-Bull, Rachel Weir, Gib Barrus, Joyce Johnson, Chip Poston, Mari Ohta

Clerking: Chip Poston

Minutes: Lucy Perry

Opening

The meeting opened with a few moments of silence.

The Clerk read two passages from *Friends for 300 Years*, by Howard Brinton, about Quaker decision-making process.

"The Quaker method works better in small than in large groups. This is true both of the meeting for worship and of the meeting for business. It is easier to achieve unity in an intimate group the members of which are well acquainted with one another than in a large group where there is bound to be more diversity."

"The Quaker method is likely to be successful in proportion as the members are acquainted with one another; better still if real affection exists among them."

1. Ministry and Care Report

Gib Barrus presented this report.

The Query for January is *"How can we as Friends model a radical faithfulness that is in the world but not of the world?"*

First Day School Update: The M&C Committee expressed appreciation for Tasha's gifts as a teacher.

The Adult Religious Education still does not have a clerk. The Ministry and Care Committee expressed appreciation for Joni's convening of the ARE committee.

2. Finance Committee Scholarship Request Report

We are revisiting a Friend's request for scholarship funds to attend an online educational program. The Hurricane Relief Committee already granted \$1425 toward this program. This request was brought to Meeting for Business previously.

The Finance Committee reconsidered this request and was unable to reach unity about granting the request. They made a three-part recommendation as follows:

- 1. The Finance Committee suggests that this Friend consider starting a GoFundMe site to raise the money. Individual Friends may feel a concern to support this training and donate directly to the GoFundMe.*
- 2. CFM would be willing to collect Friends' donations or checks written directly to the requesting Friend, but CFM would not be able to do a fundraising for this Friend as it would run afoul of the IRS guidelines.*
- 3. Once the bulk of the money has been raised, Celo Friends Meeting would contribute 10% (\$270) towards the cost of the training to be paid to the training entity or reimbursement afterward.*

We approved the Finance Committee's recommendation on this matter.

The Finance Committee's full report on this Scholarship Request is appended at the end of these minutes.

3. Nominating Committee Report

Rachel Weir presented the Nominating Committee report on Donna Idol's behalf.

The Strawberry Creek nominating process that was scheduled for Jan 25 has been postponed.

Soleste Starr has been proposed as a Finance Committee member. We approved her today as a member of the Finance Committee. This is the second presentation of her name for this role.

Donna Idol, clerk of the Nominating Committee, will be on sabbatical until Easter. Chip Poston and Rachel Weir will handle all Nominating Committee responsibilities in the meantime.

4. New person proposed as a Childcare provider

Gib Barrus presented Xylem Elliott's name to be on our list of approved Childcare Providers. This is the first presentation of his name. He will come up for final approval next month.

5. Update from the Ad hoc Committee to find a new meeting Caretaker

Barb Wulff gave an update from this committee.

The committee is running ads locally and also in Friends Journal. They have received applications. The applications come to Barb and she shares them with the other committee members.

6. Buildings and Grounds Committee update

Gib Barrus and Mari Ohta presented some updates.

Felix Stith did a survey and assessment of what trees need to be cut on the grounds of Celo Friends Meeting. Isak Pertee is working on an estimate to do this work. Mari Ohta is applying for Hurricane Recovery funds from the state to potentially cover the expense.

Mari has also gotten an estimate for putting more gravel on the parking lot. She is asking for Hurricane Recovery funds to cover this gravel.

The fence around the playground needs replacement. Mari is also getting an estimate for this work, and will include this in the request for Hurricane Recovery Funds.

Mari is working with Partnership for Children as she applies for these Hurricane Recovery Funds.

Mari will provide an example photo of the proposed new playground fence.

The Long Term Recovery Group may be an additional source of funds.

7. Proposal for Feb 22 training event

On February 21 Eileen Flanagan will be at the CCC with Elizabeth Kostova discussing her new book "Common Ground" .

There is a proposal for a training presentation by Eileen in the Meetinghouse on Sunday February 22, after Meeting and potluck. A mockup flyer is attached at the end of these minutes.

We approve this workshop proposal, with a \$200 honorarium. We will also invite monetary contributions at the event, and we will announce it in the Saturday update with a note that attendees are welcome to donate. This event should also be included in the Celo List. We welcome Eileen to sell her book at our event.

8. CFM Relationship with SAYMA

We have been considering our relationship with SAYMA for a long time, without making a decision whether to stay or go from our membership in that Yearly Meeting.

Nashville Monthly Meeting has withdrawn from SAYMA, although they are continuing to participate in SAYF. One of their concerns was reportedly the finances of participating in SAYMA. Minutes from their recent called meeting on this matter are included at the end of this document.

Boone Friends Meeting wants to be under the care of Celo Friends Meeting but does not want to have a relationship with SAYMA. SAYMA is currently holding funds from Boone Monthly Meeting from when it was previously discontinued. Are we able to accept Boone Friends Meeting under the care of our meeting, when they don't want to be part of SAYMA?

There are currently 8 monthly meetings participating in the SAYMA representatives meeting. Some of the monthly meetings have stopped participating. Approximately 6 of the member meetings have become independent from SAYMA.

One friend proposed contacting all the SAYMA monthly meetings and asking them for their minutes of discernment about their relationship with SAYMA. This might further inform our decision process about our own relationship with SAYMA.

Jennie Boyd-Bull is willing to contact the West Knoxville meeting and ask for their relevant minutes about SAYMA. She is willing to reach out to ask for minutes from other monthly meetings who have considered their relationship with SAYMA. Rachel will reach out to Friends World Committee for consultation (FWCC) to see what the process is for an unaffiliated monthly meeting to be affiliated with FWCC. Chip Poston and Gib Barrus (plus Lydia Wexler, Catherine Reid, and Bob McGahey if they are willing) plan to consider this new information and discuss further and make a recommendation to a future Meeting for Business.

In "Faith and Practice" it seems that a preparatory meeting under the care of a SAYMA monthly meeting, necessarily has a relationship with SAYMA, although this is not totally clear. We need to communicate to Boone Friends Meeting that the situation is complicated, and that we are working on clarifying our own relationship to SAYMA.

In March, Celo Friends Meeting will be hosting a SAYF retreat. We can continue to have a relationship with SAYF even if we decide to leave SAYMA.

Some friends pointed out that there are independent Quaker Meetings out there, not affiliated with a yearly meeting.

9. SAYF retreat in Celo March 20 to 22

We will need adults to serve as “night shepherds” for the upcoming SAYF retreat. These volunteers will need to have a background check. There is a well-defined process for night shepherds and how they enforce the guidelines.

We will need two night shepherds for each of the two nights, for a total of 4 volunteers. People who are interested should contact Julia Hudson.

Doing a background check is easy and can be done online.

Soleste and Paolo Rossi Evans are interested and will contact Julia Hudson about it.

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. Finance Committee Scholarship Request Report
2. Mockup flyer for Eileen Flanagan
3. Minutes from Nashville Friends Meeting's recent called meeting about SAYMA

Celo Friends Meeting

Finance Committee Scholarship Request Report

January 12, 2026

The Educational Enrichment Fund is a separate account set up in 2017 that must be approved by Meeting for Business after Finance Committee vets the request. The approved use of the fund is below.

In December 2025 the Finance Committee considered this request and could not find unity on a recommendation. At the December Celo Friends Meeting Worship with Attention to Business, Meeting considered this request and could also not find unity. CFM sent this request back to Finance Committee to reconsider.

This is the Meeting approved use for the Educational Enrichment Fund: (decided at the 6/2017 Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business)

At the February Business Meeting, CFM tasked the Finance Committee with developing guidelines for the use of the Educational Enrichment Fund, which was set-up in March 2017. After some discussion the Finance Committee recommends the following guidelines:

- **Scholarship requests of \$200 or more shall be seasoned first through a subcommittee of the Finance Committee and other committees as needed before being brought to CFM with Attention to Business.**
- **For large scholarship requests the Finance Committee will make a recommendation to CFM for how to split costs between the Educational Enrichment Fund and the CFM scholarship budget line.**
- **The Educational Enrichment Fund shall be for scholarships for CFM members and active attenders**
- **The Educational Enrichment Fund shall be used to attend Quaker events or entities that hold up Quaker values.**
- **The enrichment may be for the benefit of the participant attending, CFM or the Meeting being attended.**

Request-

██████████ has requested \$2,699 for tuition to attend an online certified soil food web lab tech program. The total cost of the program with supplies is \$4,699. The Hurricane Helene Fund provided \$1425 for supplies for this course. The training cost is \$3199 and ██████████ would pay \$500.

The Finance Committee re-read the original approved minute for the Educational Enrichment Fund and sat in the silence. The following concerns caused the committee to struggle finding unity.

- 1- The training seems outside the approved use of these funds as it is not a Quaker event or entity - although the values may align with good stewardship of the earth.
- 2- This request is 3 times larger than the average scholarship provided by these funds and would reduce the amount left in the Educational Enrichment Fund to ~\$1200.
- 3- The amount currently in the Educational Enrichment Fund is \$3937.
- 4- The Educational Enrichment Fund is not self-funding; it has no mechanism to replenish itself other than donation requests which will compete with Meeting donation requests for other needs.

Recommendation:

- 1- The Finance Committee suggests that [REDACTED] consider starting a Go Fund Me site to raise the money. Individual Friends may feel a concern to support this training and donate directly to the Go Fund Me.
- 2- CFM would be willing to collect Friends donations or checks written directly to [REDACTED] but CFM would not be able to do a fund raiser for Sierra as it would run afoul of the IRS guidelines.
- 3- Once the bulk of the money has been raised, Celo Friends Meeting would contribute 10% (\$270) towards the cost of the training to be paid to the training entity or reimbursement afterward.

Navigating the Unexpected in Dangerous Times



Authoritarianism thrives amid fear, chaos, and division. Fortunately, there are things we can do to keep ourselves and others grounded and effective, even in scary or chaotic situations. Whether you are showing up to protest ICE, joining large marches, or engaging in nonviolent direct action, this experiential training will strengthen your skills and confidence, while building community for these challenging times.

Eileen on right during a de-escalation training before the 2024 election. Photo Rachael Warriner.

Come learn and practice how to:

- Become more attentive to what is going on within you and around you.
- Acknowledge fear and anger without becoming overwhelmed.
- Stay spiritually grounded/centered when the unexpected happens.
- Assess complex situations and make decisions to maximize group safety.

Celo Friends Meeting

70 Meetinghouse Lane, Burnsville, NC 28714

Sunday, February 22, 1:30 – 4pm

EILEEN FLANAGAN is a Quaker nonviolence trainer with over thirty years of experience leading workshops and trainings. She has confronted corporate CEOs, prayed in their lobbies, and been arrested alongside Indigenous water protectors, Black preachers, and fellow Quakers. With Choose Democracy's Daniel Hunter, she helped craft materials now being used by tens of thousands of activists nationally. She will be speaking on Monday, February 23rd at 6pm at Scuppernon Bookstore about her book *Common Ground: How the Crisis of the Earth is Saving Us from Our Illusion of Separation*, which includes change-making lessons from the climate movement.

Nashville Friends Meeting

Called Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business: 24 Eighth Month 2025
Anne Williams - Clerk, Jenny Foster - Recording Clerk

Meeting Room Attendance: Jen Kenealy, Jan Stansel, Susan Davidson-Davis, Sam Singer, Anna Lister, Michelle McAtee, David Myers, David Foster, Meagan Irby, Beau Williams, Emily Bezuidenhout, Faith Rashidi-Yazd, Brian Wingate, Kate Wingate, Mark Wutka (Friendship MM Greensboro NC), Mary Linda McKinney, (Friendship MM Greensboro NC), Judy Chambers, Kandance Starr, Betsy Coughlin, Kristen Maggard, tom kunesh, Wesley Morris, John Bull, Carla Askonas (Chattanooga MM), Zachary Sardella, Michael Mason, Laurel Brown, Trina Baum, Kathleen Hardie, Gretchen Watts, Carol England, Thais Carr, Jenny Foster, Anne Williams

Zoom Attendance: Melanie Jones, Cole Steadman, Donald Anthony, Charissa Hoffman, Frances Linarducci, Elian Cox, Matthew Sheehan, Kevin Carroll, Diana Masso (Charleston), ? (Chattanooga), S.Y. Bowland, Sharon Star Smith

Discernment:

The Southern Appalachian Yearly Meeting and Association (SAYMA) does not serve the spiritual life of Nashville Friends Meeting at the present time. Therefore, Ministry & Counsel recommends that Nashville Friends Meeting withdraw its affiliation with SAYMA.

One Friend queried why this recommendation came about.

Another Friend explained that the monthly meeting supports individuals and the community so that we become a whole, a whole that nourishes us and enables Friends to do work in the world. SAYMA no longer nourishes us spiritually.

Another Friend said she felt the monthly meeting is the spiritual core for Quakers. SAYMA is no longer a spiritual core for this Friend.

Another Friend noted the value of Southern Appalachian Young Friends (SAYF). About half the of the SAYMA budget goes to SAYF. A SAYF fund is being set up: the retreats pay for themselves, but there are overhead costs for SAYF. This Friend recommended that if we withdraw from SAYMA, we should support SAYF through the fund.

Another Friend noted if we do disaffiliate with SAYMA, individuals can still be members of FGC. Also, Friends are welcome to affiliate with others who continue to be part of

SAYMA and attend SAYMA gatherings as individuals.

The treasurer noted that approximately \$3800 is sent to SAYMA annually, and it will continue to rise over the years. [Clerk's note: for FY25, the assessment is \$3375, which would likely rise to \$3800 for FY26.]

Another Friend felt during the pause from SAYMA, there was more accountability to each other. The Friend is excited about examining new ways to affiliate with other meetings.

Another Friend said that apart from the monetary contribution to SAYMA, it is important for Friends to have a spiritual center. There was a great distraction from the sense of worship, as we struggled to be in right relationship with SAYMA. This has been going on for some time. The pause helped us spiritually recenter.

Noted by another Friend: This meeting has not found clarity to serve in roles in SAYMA in the last few years, apart from SAYF.

After a few minutes of worship, the question to discern was raised. **Are we as Nashville Friends Meeting led to affirm the minuted recommendation by M&C to withdraw its affiliation with SAYMA?**

A friend spoke about the verse from Matthew 11:28-30, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light". Our yoke to SAYMA did not ease our burden, and we did not pull in the same direction. When we took our pause from SAYMA, we took on more work and yet the work became lighter.

Numerous Friends spoke approval of the above.

Another friend said we need to connect with Quakers outside our Meeting if we do not affiliate with SAYMA. In practice and spiritually, we as a Meeting have pulled away from SAYMA. It is accurate that the Meeting has pulled away, but this Friend feels chagrined we would withdraw - but would stand aside. This friend was energized at SAYMA and would return to the SAYMA sessions as an individual.

Another Friend spoke Pennington's quote: "Our life is love, and peace, and tenderness; and bearing with one with another, and forgiving one another, and not laying accusations one against another; but praying one for another and helping one another up with a tender hand." The Friend has been at other Yearly Meetings. SAYMA is working harder than most to bring together how we live together in such a complicated world.

Friend spoke we need to craft that “world that is not yet” with other Quakers.
Another Friend said we are in a, “What canst thou say” moment. How will we pull together, how we can we be an Association? Something to note.

Another Friend has asked that we extend the pause and for our Meeting to speak with the clerks of SAYMA.

Another Friend said she stepped away SAYMA several years ago. SAYMA used to feed this Friend, but it no longer does.

Friends approved withdrawing from SAYMA.

A Friend noted, we can change our minds later, things move over time.

The clerk inquired about the will of the Meeting to send the last check of the fiscal year (October-October) to SAYMA and found unity to send the last assessment of the year to SAYMA.

After a period of silent worship, the Meeting closed.