

Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business

Asheville Friends Meeting

3rd Month 13, 2022

Present via zoom: Bob Lackey, Clerk; Barbara Burke, Recording Clerk
Jim Barham, Ellie Cox, Beth Eddy, Mike Eddy, Rylin Hansen, Pat Johnson,
Gita Larson, Steve Livingston, Nick Mimken, Morgan Murray, Margaret
Normile, Donna Plaff, Kitty Reynolds, Adrienne Weir, Robin Wells.

Meeting opened with Silent Worship

The Clerk shared a reading out of silence.

“A Practical Mysticism: How Quaker Process Opens Us Up to the Divine”
by Elizabeth Meyer, *Pendle Hill Pamphlet 453. 2018.* Pendle Hill
Publications, P11

Friendly Practice 5. All Business Meeting Matters Are Spiritual

Everything brought to business meeting is a spiritual matter, not only the Worship and Ministry Committee report, but also those items that may seem mundane. We feel the movement of the Spirit when the Building Care Committee reports that the restrooms were reconfigured to accommodate a Friend struggling with access. We feel blessed when the treasurer expresses gratitude for financial contributions received. We feel the joy of service when the Hospitality Committee reports how fulfilling it is to coordinate memorial meeting receptions. These seemingly mundane matters are essential to our spiritual communities. They are services performed with care and love. They are spiritual.

If you find yourself growing impatient with a boring report, try listening with an inward ear. Ask the Inner Teacher to reveal the spiritual in the mundane. When you prepare a report or proposal, focus on the spiritual aspects. Articulate for Friends how the Divine has worked through the committee's work or why the proposed action is Spirit-led.

Minute # 1: The Second Month business meeting minutes were approved.

Announcements: Bob

Monthly Meeting Discernment Process of 118th Congress FCNL Legislative Priorities:

Members / attendees are advised to go to the site: [FCNL.org/priorities](https://fcnl.org/priorities) and familiarize themselves with “The World We Seek,” and the current priorities. On 3/20/2022, during the Second Hour, there will be a shared screen with an open Google doc. Barbara or I will type into the Google doc the priorities suggested during the discernment process. We must then choose 7 and rewrite each priority in 30 words or less. We will then see if we can add a citation link back to a policy that already exists within “The World We Seek.” This will be uploaded into an FCNL form and submitted before 4/12/2022.

A Friend feels the results should be addressed at Fourth Month Business Meeting, on 4/10/2022, as this will be a formal AFM response, before being submitted to FCNL, and those present agreed.

Committees:

Peace and Earth: Mike

AFM Land Acknowledgement to be inserted into closing script:

The Asheville Friends Meeting acknowledges, with respect, that the land we are on today is ancestral land of the Anikituwagi (Ah nee yun wee yah) more commonly known as the Cherokee. We also recognize all the varied Indigenous Peoples who have lived in and continue to live in and around these lands.

The Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians and Asheville Friends Meeting seek to affirm our work together to ensure a strong relationship. Therefore, we commit efforts and resources to the health and priorities of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. As these words are spoken and heard, we renew and reaffirm this property as Cherokee homelands.

There was discussion about the exact wording of the statement and a suggestion that the statement might need to be looked over by a lawyer, as it contains the mention of land matters. A Friend pointed out that we have only just begun with talks of reparative justice, and have more to discuss regarding issues of land matters. After much discussion, and sharing of ideas, it was agreed the statement would be amended and this met with approval. An attender asked if this statement would preclude us from making any similar statement for black, brown, indigenous or any other people of color, for what we are doing about racism, but it was felt that it would not.

Minute #2: Approved AFM shortened Land Acknowledgment Statement with changes made.

It was suggested that the same change in wording be made to the long version of the Land Acknowledgement Statement.

Minute #3: Approved changes in wording in the long version of AFM LA statement.

Minute #4: Thanks to the Committee members who worked on the LA statement.

As agreed upon in Second Month Meeting for Business, the Worship Closing Script and shortened AFM LA will be read after Joys and Concerns and visitor Introductions, and before announcements begin. This will begin at next week's Meeting for Worship.

Racial Justice Committee: Steve

Steve read a letter from our Meeting to the Atlanta Friends Meeting, the Clerk of SAYMA, and the SAYMA Ministry and Nurture Committee regarding the Atlanta minute:

We of Asheville Friends Meeting extend our sincere gratitude and heartfelt support for the Minute on Reparative Justice and Reconciliation presented by Atlanta Friends Meeting. We appreciate the clear apology and spiritual foundation of Atlanta's Minute, as well as the extent of its historical context.

Our Meeting is grateful to Atlanta Friends for providing an opening for deeper discussion of reparative justice. We are inspired to further action, including discernment of our own minute.

We look forward to our Yearly Meeting coming to unity on reparative justice (and reconciliation).

Robin Wells, Barbara Esther, and Bob Lackey, joined the RJC members, Steve Livingston, Gita Larson, Margaret Farmer, and Rylin Hansen in composing this statement.

Minute # 5: The letter was approved and will be sent to Atlanta Monthly Meeting, the SAYMA clerk and SAYMA Ministry and Nurture Committee.

Ministry and Counsel: Robin

Returning to Indoor Meeting for Worship:

As we all know, the COVID metrics are dropping rapidly. At some point this past week, the percent positive was reported at 3.8%. This is below the benchmark our Meeting approved as acceptable for moving meeting for worship indoors. With this in mind, Ministry & Counsel would like to propose to begin holding meeting for worship and first day school at the

Meetinghouse beginning on 3-20-22. Masks will be required while people are indoors and we will attempt to space the chairs a little bit. When outdoors, masks would be optional.

We have some other decisions to make:

- We currently require vaccinations to join meeting for worship in the Meetinghouse. Do we want to continue this?
- Not all children are old enough for the COVID vaccine and there may be some families not comfortable vaccinating their children. The families I have spoken to are comfortable with us allowing all children to participate in First Day School, whether vaccinated or not. We were reminded that children go to school everyday with unvaccinated children and they will be wearing a mask while indoors. We can limit the children to upstairs and outside to minimize contact with adults, if that seems necessary. We will contact families to let them know what we decide, so they can make their own decision as a family.
- Do we want to continue offering outdoor meeting for worship when the weather is good?
- We will need to purchase the TV monitor for our hybrid meetings. Has someone done this?
- If we agree to begin meeting in person in the Meetinghouse, can we also begin allowing groups to use our space?

Requirements for masks were discussed. Friends were in agreement that masks should be required, and one Friend asked that an emphasis on wearing the mask correctly be made.

Minute #6: We approved the opening of the Meetinghouse, for Meeting for Worship, beginning next First Day, with attenders wearing masks while indoors. We will continue to monitor the situation.

Whether to require vaccines to attend indoor worship and First Day School was then discussed and various opinions expressed as to whether

vaccines reduced risk, with new variants appearing, or if it would exclude people from attending.

Minute #7: Vaccines will not be required to attend either indoor Meeting for Worship or First Day School.

A Friend suggested we post a sign on the door indicating masks and social distancing are required for indoor worship and encouraging people to be vaccinated, where possible. A Friend suggested also asking if someone is experiencing signs of Covid, that person should not attend indoor Meeting for Worship.

Minute #8: Friends approved a sign on the front door of the meetinghouse encouraging vaccines, requiring masks and social distancing, and asking that if you suspect that you have Covid or other symptoms of contagious illnesses, please attend virtually.

After Meeting for Worship, all children are welcome and will need to be masked.

It was suggested that indoor and outdoor options as well as virtual streaming be made available where possible. We plan to begin this hybrid approach at our next Meeting for Worship, on 3/20/2022. A Friend indicated this could be a challenge due to equipment needed and the availability of people who are able to set up the equipment. It was agreed that a larger TV will be purchased, and others who are familiar with setting up the equipment volunteered to assist.

Outside groups that had previously used the meetinghouse for activities have asked about returning. It was agreed that renters be able to return to our space. There are currently air purifiers available for use. People using the meetinghouse will be asked to keep the air purifier downstairs on. The possibility of purchasing another purifier was mentioned. There are currently 4 air purifiers available.

Ministry and Counsel: Bob Lackey

Second Draft State of the Meeting 2021 document

The State of the Meeting report needs to be sent to SAYMA by March 31.

Asheville Friends Meeting State of the Meeting - 2021

The year began with the shock of the violent assault on the capitol. Through the year our country experienced progressive polarization as our interpretation of the significance of January 6 steadily emerged. Police violence against people of color and violence in general continued unabated. Our city and county have provided enticements and accommodations for an enormous new Raytheon plant producing jet fighter engines despite protests and other pushbacks.

It is impossible to reflect back on 2021 without viewing the year through the lens of the pandemic with its traumas and opportunities. Many of us felt relief at finally receiving our initial two vaccinations by spring and were hopeful that we would soon experience some degree of normalcy. Through the spring as vaccination rates steadily increased, infection rates were improving. Many of us were wanting to again experience in-person Meeting for Worship.

We proceeded with a plan in June for a hybrid model of virtual and outdoor meeting with face coverings, at first on the lawn and later on the porch. Our attendance of members and visitors grew steadily. In September, we opened the Meetinghouse for indoor worship, but most were more comfortable meeting on the porch or remaining virtual.

Reduced COVID-19 incidence and deaths were followed by new variants that brought new challenges. Business and government attempts to implement mandates of public health measures resulted in endless litigation up to the Supreme Court. Infection rates skyrocketed, and out of concern for the safety of our more vulnerable attenders, we had to abandon plans to resume indoor meetings in the Winter months.

Our families have been handling the stress of isolation, illness, caregiving, and recovery. Some of our children were suffering from Zoom fatigue. Some of the kids and the adults do not feel that they learn or communicate well on Zoom. First Day virtual check-ins which had been occurring since March 2020 have allowed for some pain and frustration to be talked about. Statements such as

“everyone’s bandwidth is so limited” and “not much flexibility to bounce” revealed the fragility of some of our families and children now. We have made mistakes in addressing the space for First Day attendees, our children, safety concerns of members being in close proximity to unvaccinated children, and making sure our young parents had their spiritual needs met. We eventually offered in-person First Day School, with some children not vaccinated, in the back of the meeting house. This allowed the children to be free to make noise and to better social distance from meetings on the front porch. Getting this right has been very humbling. As a Friend pointed out: being in a relationship, in part, is always facing the possibility of being wrong.

Our Meeting has often been silent, waiting on Spirit during our Meetings for Worship. We have found stronger vocal ministry sharing Joys and Concerns, which has provided many of us with a sense of connection and fed our hunger for community. Our Meetings for Worship With Attention to Business have been well attended and have felt productive.

We have gained some new active regular attendees. A returning member transferred back from a nearby meeting. We gained another member who was raised in our meeting and now in his 20’s accepted our invitation to join our meeting. We unexpectedly lost a beloved member, Pat Campbell, former Clerk of Lake Erie Yearly Meeting and our clerk of Finance. Pat’s tribute was brought to SAYMA remembrances. In September we held a memorial for the mother of a meeting member on the front porch and this felt like a Spirit-led event. One of our elderly attenders died in September, but we only recently held a memorial for her.

We have continued to have several unfilled committee positions, committees that do not meet, and committees without clerks. Some members have stepped back to take care of themselves. In some of our committees that continued to meet, it has felt less imperative to get things done. There seems to be less focus on accomplishments. Ironically, committees have accomplished a great deal. There seems to be more focus on relationships and successful interactions. Thus, it has been a good year for our Meeting, in some ways.

We have continued to work on racial justice in our Meeting and our community. Our Meeting has been fortunate to have gained a Person of Color who is a local racial justice activist. She has become a regular attendee of our Meeting for Worship and joined our racial justice book group. She has brought to us many ideas to mobilize and support the Black community in Asheville. The Tuesday racial justice discussion group finished reading *My Grandmother’s Hands* by

Resmaa Menakem and listened to and discussed the “Seeing White” podcast. We are learning more about seeking awareness of our bodies being settled and when we are triggered. We can use this in our antiracism work. As one Friend remarked, we are wrestling with racism and not each other. We are realizing that there is a wide range of how people feel safe, which it turns out is a pretty wide space. We are learning to trust each other’s decisions and what they know about their capacity. We are finding that stepping away from judgment is leading us to understanding one another. The Atlanta racial justice work was brought to us during the virtual SAYMA Annual Sessions and Retreat, which was very helpful and inspiring for many of us.

In an effort to address our relationship with Cherokee people and with consultation from Cherokee historian Watson Harlan we reflected, discerned and wrote our Land Acknowledgement (LA). In it, we acknowledge ,with respect, the Cherokee who have cared for the land. We recognize this statement as a first step to listen & learn from them and we affirm our work together to ensure a strong relationship. We accept responsibility to commit efforts and resources to the health and priorities of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI). We’re grateful to have read our LA at an EBCI Tribal Council meeting where it was accepted after a couple of comments.

In following up on our commitment, we collected donations to cosponsor UNCA Cherokee speakers. Annette Saunooke Clapsaddle, author of the novel *Even As We Breathe*, is the first enrolled member of the EBCI to have a novel published. Her novel also won the prestigious Thomas Wolfe Literary Award. Clint Carroll is an ethnobotanist from Cherokee Nation in Oklahoma who works on issues of land conservation and the perpetuation of land-based knowledge and ways of life. Our donations exceeded the needed funding so the excess provided gifts to 2 Cherokee UNCA graduates. We planned and promoted two second-hour virtual programs that attracted several Quaker meetings and other faith groups. Dr. Ben Steere, Anthropology professor at Western Carolina University presented “The Cherokee Ancestral Land” and Cherokee historian Watson Harlan presented “Cherokee Spiritual, Religious and Cultural Practices.” We look forward to continued collaboration with our Indigenous neighbors.

We began our year with our outreach budget at a lower level than we desired. Our Peace and Earth Committee struggled to decide how to disburse the greatly reduced outreach funds. They came up with a solution that did not eliminate any of the local organizations or Quaker organizations that had struggled through the pandemic. By the end of the year, we brought in enough contributions to restore

our outreach to our original levels. Our Communications Committee has kept us informed and connected through our weekly online Digest. We formed a new Ad Hoc committee to create our Meeting Handbook and to organize our Meetinghouse files. Our House and Grounds committee organized installation of new windows for the entire meeting house, stripping and painting an upstairs First Day room, and addressed termite treatment.

We have been able to continue our intergenerational activities such as Secret Pals and Simple Christmas craft making via Zoom. These meeting traditions brought us together at a much needed time. In another virtual meeting we held a very funny Nativity play and sang Christmas carols, which was a joy for us. In February our youth organized and held a nonperishable food collection and raised money for food pantries in our area. We continued to write cards and visit Friends, but again in this second year of the pandemic, we have painfully missed opportunities.

In December we held a farewell party for a much loved member of our community who was moving to the West Coast to be closer to her family. We were masked and socially distanced on the meeting house lawn. One Friend remarked how surprised and joyful it was to realize after several minutes of conversation just who she was talking to, the mask and the new hairstyle having made that a challenge. The year has been very hard, but Spirit seems to have given us gifts of being surprised by joy along the way.

Bob was thanked by those present for all the work he did on the State of the Meeting report.

Minute #9: State of the Meeting report was approved.

SAYMA: Morgan

SAYMA has a suggestion that they are contemplating: due to conflicts that have arisen over the past few years, the best way forward may be to take time off from conducting business at the SAYMA level and to focus on building relationships that are the foundation of the Quaker process.

A Friend asked if it was known how the relationship building process would be initiated. Committees that are essential, such as Finance, will continue to meet, but Morgan is not sure a formal program for establishing relationships has been developed yet. He suggested that these relationships could be developed, informally, by inviting others in SAYMA to our second hour events and discussions and by AFM Members attending via Zoom other meetings' events.

The worksheet presented at SAYMA is shown below:

| Then | If there is no unity but there is a Clerk | If there is partial unity but there is a Clerk | If there is no unity and there is no Clerk | If there is partial unity and there is no Clerk |
|---------------------|---|--|--|---|
| Laying down SAYMA | | | | |
| Re-organizing SAYMA | | | | |
| Pausing SAYMA | | | | |

Is the topic of unity calling a Pause in SAYMA's business?

If there is no unity and there is no Clerk: SAYMA will be able to make no decisions nor plans, nor at the rise of Annual Sessions have no avenue for beginning a meeting later to make any decisions.

Therefore, there has to be a decision made now that will call for specific action in the future. We have to agree now that SAYMA (whatever monthly meetings are willing to participate in a Pause) is in agreement to take up later in a Fall meeting (after the Pause is completed) in order to make further decisions.

If there is no unity regarding a Pause:

If there is partial unity regarding a Pause, then the Clerk for this type of SAYMA (to be defined) would also need to be defined:

The Yearly Meeting Planning Committee is working with Warren Wilson College on a possibility of having an in-person SAYMA Annual Meeting on campus in June. There will be a representative meeting in 2 weeks. An AFM member who is on the SAYMA Executive Committee feels taking a pause and attempting to ground ourselves in Spirit and community, both within our monthly meeting and reaching out to regional gatherings would be a realistic objective.

Due to all conflicts, the best way forward may be to take time off from business and focus on relationship building. How this will be accomplished has not yet been established. Certain committees such as Finance will continue to meet.

A Friend asked if the fact that the Clerk's term ends in June and no one willing to take the job as clerk after June is the reason for this pause. A Friend does not feel this is the reason.

The Friends Center for Racial Justice in Ithaca, NY will continue their Conflict Transformation work, even if a pause is instituted, and several Friends felt strongly that we should continue to support this work.

A Friend would like to see the pause well-defined and action statements define what needs to happen during the pause, possibly a list of what needs to happen during the pause.

Another Friend mentioned that smaller quarterly meetings are often held within other Yearly Meetings to dialogue, come to know each other, and address issues of these meetings.

A Friend suggested we invite other local meetings to AFM events and 2nd hours and have SAYMA discussions after that and attend other monthly meeting Zoom meetings to strengthen connections

A Friend feels a pause will help us return to the fundamentals of what it is to be a Quaker community, a spiritual community. He feels the Quaker process in the Asheville Meeting has helped him and he would like to take it to the SAYMA meeting.

The meeting closed with silent worship until the way opens for our next business meeting in the fourth month of 2022.