

Asheville Friends Meeting for Worship with Attention to Our Business

9th day 3rd month 2025

Interim Clerk: Steve Livingston
Recording Clerk: Elliot Jarrett

Friends present at the Meetinghouse: Kitti Reynolds, Jim Barham, Pat Johnson, Margaret Normile, Barbara Esther, Bob Lackey, Sarah Jane Thomas, Robin Wells, Matt Utterback, Rusty Maynard, Rylin Hansen, Jim Cavener, Adrienne Weir, Suzanne Junkin- Fredericks, Keller Berry
Friends present via zoom: Margaret Farmer, Beth Eddy, Mike Eddy, Gita Larson, Bobby Carter

The Agenda was accepted

Opening Reading: To Be Of Use, by Marge Piercy

The people I love the best
jump into work head first
without dallying in the shallows
and swim off with sure strokes almost out of sight.
They seem to become natives of that element,
the black sleek heads of seals
bouncing like half-submerged balls.

I love people who harness themselves, an ox to a heavy cart,
who pull like water buffalo, with massive patience,
who strain in the mud and the muck to move things forward,
who do what has to be done, again and again.

I want to be with people who submerge
in the task, who go into the fields to harvest
and work in a row and pass the bags along,
who are not parlor generals and field deserters
but move in a common rhythm
when the food must come in or the fire be put out.

The work of the world is common as mud.
Botched, it smears the hands, crumbles to dust.
But the thing worth doing well done
has a shape that satisfies, clean and evident.
Greek amphoras for wine or oil,
Hopi vases that held corn, are put in museums
but you know they were made to be used.
The pitcher cries for water to carry
and a person for work that is real.

A period of silence followed the reading.

Approval of Second Months Minutes

Minute #1 The Meeting approved the Minutes of the Second Months Business Meeting

Announcements

Welcome to Solomon Fox Canary-King

Please join us on March 23rd, Sandwich Sunday, as we welcome baby Solomon to our Meeting family. We will present the family with the prayer flags we made for them, along with a children's book. We hope you will come celebrate with us!

A Celebration of Author, Jim Cavener

Join us at rise of meeting on April 6th, as we celebrate author, Jim Cavener, and his newly published book, *But I Digress...* We will have books available for those who are interested. Judy Geary, who helped Jim publish his book, will be with us to talk about the publishing process.

Donation Acknowledgement Letters Will Be Sent Soon

Satchel is working on the letters and they will go out soon. He apologizes for the delay.

State of the Meeting Report - Barbara Esther

The State of the Meeting Report has been rearranged and revised for clarity and was read aloud by many friends:

State of the Meeting Report

Asheville Friends Meeting

3-9-25

How have our practices in meeting for worship and business helped move us toward or away from unity as a spiritual community? How have we as a spiritual community encouraged each other to answer the urgings of the Spirit? What kept us from encouraging each other? How have we as a meeting and as individuals used our worldly activities as acts of witness to answer that of Spirit in others?

At least two dozen Friends have regularly attended our meetings for worship each week and about twenty attended our meetings with attention to business each month. Each week we are blessed with visitors, and a few have become regular attenders. We were overjoyed that some new attenders jumped right in to participate in the work of the Meeting, bringing their energy and perspectives to all our activities. One Friend transferred their membership to our Meeting, and one of our young families was blessed with the birth of a child. We take time to share our joys and concerns at the end of the first hour meetings for worship. This practice brings us closer together, offering opportunities for more intimate and personal interactions. The positive effects of coming to meeting for worship and of participating in committee work rippled outward into the wider community.

Our First Day School program involved more than a half dozen adults and often a dozen or more children ranging in age from toddler to teen. The children conducted junior business meetings regularly, and adults joyfully united with them to support their community service work. Other activities that brought our different generations together for fun and community building were our Secret Pals gift exchange in the Winter, our annual Youth Celebration and cookout in June, and our holiday programs at the end of the year: on three successive Sundays we enjoyed simple gift making, a Nativity play, and a holiday potluck and carol sing with some talented Friends playing musical instruments. Our children and young people encouraged each other to share their thoughts, their gifts and acts of service in their schools and in the community. They – and we – held each other, as well as the local, national, and global community, in the Light.

Committees concerned with the upkeep of the Meetinghouse met regularly and guided us in many necessary tasks. The House and Grounds Committee organized two work days to attend to our neglected yard and gardens, and the Library Committee restored good order to the library, finding better homes for the various items that had accumulated there during the pandemic. One of our meeting community members opened a business as a handyman. We have benefited from his diligence and competence after hiring him to work on projects that had been pending for some time.

Our spiritual enrichment programs have been rich and varied, encouraging us to seek and follow the leadings of Spirit. Reflection on vocal ministry helped us to answer Spirit's urging. We opened our hearts in worship-sharing on the wars in Ukraine and Gaza. We learned more about Climate Change and steps we can take personally and as a community to mitigate or forestall the looming catastrophe. Our post card writing on each fifth Sunday throughout the year gave us the opportunity to communicate with our elected officials on matters of concern to us as Quakers. Among other things, we lobbied our members of Congress for a cease-fire and humanitarian aid in Gaza, and thanked our County Sheriff for rejecting the demand that his deputies act as agents of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency.

We engaged in a project of Truth and Reconciliation with Asheville's Black Community, facilitated by Dr. Melchor Hall, executive director of the Solidarity Arts & Education Decolonial Initiatives Collective. We met weekly among ourselves and monthly with Dr. Hall throughout the year, our efforts culminating in a draft Statement of Apology to Asheville's Black Community and commitments to engage in repair of historical and present-day harms. Some of our members attended meetings of the Community Reparations Commission and reported back. One Friend attended the Health & Wellness Impact Focus group that met every two weeks during the time that the Reparations Commission met.

There has been a spirit of community in our business meetings both in handling our day-to-day operations and in considering the many deep and difficult topics that have come to the fore. Friends felt the presence of Spirit as we opened to each other's leadings and listened intently to what each of us was called to share in words and actions, carefully considering what was offered so that we better understood each other, our meeting, our local community, and the world. In our meetings for business in 2024, Friends united in creating an Indigenous People's Fund, seeded with a percentage of our property value and a portion of the money we collect from other groups who rent our building. The Meeting agreed to purchase renewable energy credits each month to compensate for our fossil-fuel-derived electricity consumption, and to invest in clean energy and clean water in underdeveloped regions through a carbon offsetting fund.

We have been looking for a presiding clerk since the term of service for the previous clerk ended in September. In the meantime, former clerks have been taking on this responsibility a month at a time.

As individuals, we did myriad varieties of work in the world, sustained by the nurturing we received amongst ourselves. By reporting on community and non-meeting programs and events, or announcing them in advance, we inspired one another to be more involved. We participated in educational programs that made us aware or gave us insight into others' situations. Friends helped feed those who were hungry, and worked with children in schools or in our meeting as they tried to make sense of interruptions and difficulties that their families faced. Some of us worked to protect our electoral process. Volunteers drove people to voting sites. One of our families spent six months in Ghana. The parents taught in the local university and the children went to school in the community.

Friends supported members who had a felt call to a particular project. One Friend, a professional blacksmith, brought us to participate in a national "gun surrender" project, transforming surrendered guns into garden tools. Some Friends worked with the Zig Zag Zoom initiative of one of our attenders, which supports Black festivals and entrepreneurs in the Asheville area. They helped set up tents, carried materials for vendors, and served water and coffee to vendors and seniors. Other Friends participated in establishing an Alliance for Beyond Land Acknowledgement, to promote right relations with peoples of Turtle Island, especially Eastern Band Cherokee Indians.

Several of us attended the SAYMA Retreat and Sessions in Berea, Kentucky. A member of our community offered a Forest Bathing workshop at SAYMA gathering, providing SAYMA Friends the opportunity to share their experience of communing with God/Divine/Spirit in nature.

We held a memorial in June for Bob Smith, longtime and cherished member of our meeting. We hosted over 100 people from the Asheville community and around the country to celebrate the life of this beloved Friend. We sought and hired a Black professional videographer to record the event. Even before Bob's death, we had been providing a weekly meal for him and his wife, Donna. We continued this practice after his passing, offering companionship for Donna as well as help around the house and in the garden when needed.

As Asheville faith communities joined with Veterans for Peace in observing the International Day of Peace on September 21, Friends shared among ourselves and with them our anger and grief regarding the starvation and slaughter in Gaza and in other wars across the world.

On September 27th, six days after the International Day of Peace, Hurricane Helene struck communities in western North Carolina. Many of us had never before experienced a major natural disaster. Residents of our area died. Homes, businesses, and the Swannanoa Valley Friends meetinghouse were all destroyed. Most of us were left without power, water, and other utilities, some for weeks. Many in the broader community were without shelter and adequate food. We tried, as a meeting and as individuals, to restore our lives and the meeting process for worship and business.

In our grief and fear we attempted to cultivate a culture of peace, a safe space in our meeting despite enormous anxieties, discouragements, and exhaustion. During the time after the hurricane, we reached out to neighbors and community members to share resources and support. We took food, water, and phone-charging batteries to shut-ins. We found that the community work was spiritual work, that new relationships could be formed through our interactions. Our young Friends held a bake sale to raise money for the Asheville-Buncombe Community Christian Ministry's (ABCCM) Transformation Village, and the Beloved Community. They wrote letters of encouragement to them and thank you notes to Red Cross Disaster Relief, World Central Kitchen, and Mercy Chefs who helped our community so much during the devastation after the storm.

We encouraged and received funds from far and wide after Helene ravished our area. We facilitated disbursement of these funds as requested by concerned Quakers and others nationwide and from Canada and Great Britain. With the meeting's approval, we disbursed those contributions to those in greatest need, especially our sister meetings in Swannanoa and Celo. Friends opened their homes after the hurricane for people to do laundry and have showers. A group from Athens Meeting in Ohio that came to help with the Helene devastation stayed in a home provided by one of our members. It made us feel useful to be able to help others. Sharing helped us all to heal as a community. When we acted with integrity, all of the efforts deepened our spiritual lives. We developed into a more loving, supportive community, even though we were sometimes so busy with mundane tasks that we neglected to encourage each other, and sometimes we had great ideas, but didn't follow through on them.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Helene and the run-up to the elections, fear and anxieties ran high. We received inspiration from one another responding to the callings that resonated most deeply for each of us and felt authentic. Some of us did not ask for help, sensing how exhausted many in our meeting and our community were and still are. Some of us felt regret and guilt for not doing more. Our families supported each other through challenges, struggles, and concerns as well as celebrations.

We have been helping each other process the outcome of an election in which a convicted criminal and sexual predator received enough votes to lead the nation. We heard and loved each other as we processed current events and sought a just world in which to live. In North Carolina we were warned by reputable watchdog groups such as the Carter Center that there might be tampering with our elections. We helped each other find balance in our lives as we searched for answers, scared and worried about the state of our country. We have seen increased attendance since the election.

It was a challenging year all in all, reminding us that the well-being of each of us is linked to the well-being of everyone. We listened and encouraged each other to respond to the needs of our Meeting and our community as we were led and had the capacity to do so. We tried to serve those in the community at large with integrity and love. We expanded our connections to other like-minded communities by offering our meetinghouse for a modest fee to a Zen Buddhist meditation group and to the Ethical Humanist Society of Asheville. Their activities reflect our Quaker belief in the Light in all beings. One of the Zen practitioners offered to paint our meeting room for us, if we provided the paint. It was such a thoughtful offer and the newly painted meeting room looks awesome. We are grateful for our Buddhist friends and the Ethical Society. A Black Lives Matter banner

stretches across our porch along with peace prayer flags made by our young Friends. All of these things remind us of the Quaker testimonies that provide guidance in our daily lives.

Discussion

There will be copy edits to correct verb tenses and other minor changes.

Minute #2 Friends approved the State of the Meeting Report with these minor changes.

Committee Reports

Discussion on how to apply Hurricane Helene Relief Funds- Ministry and Council- Robin Wells

The Finance Committee reports that we have \$3,966.23 left in our Helene Relief Fund which has been donated to our Meeting by individuals and meetings in the US, Canada, and England. Ministry & Counsel was asked to make a recommendation for the use of these funds. Business meeting can then consider this request and decide how to proceed:

* Swannanoa Communities Together, a Swannanoa-based relief group doing work similar to Grace Covenant: \$1000

* Additional Funds to Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church's hurricane relief fund for eviction relief: \$600

* Swannanoa Valley Friends Meeting (we think they are awaiting word on a grant, which will help determine how they move forward): \$1000.

* Habitat for Humanity Disaster Home Repair for Low-Income Homeowners \$1000

* Amount Retained for Asheville Meeting Needs: \$366

Discussion

A Friend was happy to see that we are supporting the Swannanoa Friends Meeting and reminded us that Yancey county is still in need.

We are currently trying to work with Swannanoa Valley Friends to assess long term needs.

A Friend expressed gratitude for the committee that is doing this work.

A Friend suggested that we just send the money and they can figure out what to do with the money. Friends agreed.

Minute #3 Friends approved the disbursement of Helene Relief Funds as presented, with \$366 being retained by the Meeting for our own needs.

Ad Hoc Committee formation for Furnace-For House and Grounds - Robin Wells

Our Meetinghouse has two furnaces—one heats the east side of the Meetinghouse and one heats the west side. The west-side furnace, installed in the 1980s, is dying. We will need to replace it with a new heating system that

will heat the entryway, downstairs library, and two First Day School rooms upstairs. We would like to propose an ad hoc committee be formed to look into potential heating systems. Ideally, House & Grounds would have someone on this committee.

Discussion

A friend shared that the city and the county have set a goal of not having any fossil fuels by 2042. Electrify Asheville will help you set this up.

A Friend suggested Howard Brodt to be on the committee

A Friend advocated for a member of House and Grounds to be included in the committee

We will reach out to Matt and Howard to see if they would also like to join.

Minute #4 Friends approved the clerk creating an ad hoc committee to explore options for replacing the furnace on the west side of our Meetinghouse building and make recommendations. Clerk appointed the following Friends to serve on the ad hoc committee: Adrienne Weir, Pat Johnson, Mike Eddy, Rusty Maynard.

Establishment of the Name and Stewardship of the Community Support Fund- Peace and Earth Pat Johnson

Peace and Earth will take responsibility for the new restricted fund, which we will call the Community Support Fund. The initial amount in this fund is \$2000, as decided in the last Meeting for Business. Peace and Earth will disburse these funds to organizations outside of Meeting. Our decisions on these expenditures will be made in a timely manner, using a called Zoom meeting of Peace and Earth if necessary. We would then report the expenditures to Meeting for Business. We will ask for a line item in the 2026 budget for this fund.

Discussion:

A Friend asked if this is different from Peace and Earth's Outreach Budget. This is different.

A Friend made the distinction that this is a reserve fund that would be saved year to year, not spent every year.

A friend suggested that Peace and Earth would like to work with the Ministry and Council to collaborate on the use of these funds.

Another Friend asked what effect this would have, other than slowing the process. Friends agreed that collaboration with Ministry and Counsel could be helpful due to their different focus, but should not be required.

Minute #5 Friends approved naming a new restricted fund approved at last month's meeting for business "the Community Support Fund." Friends approved Peace and Earth shepherding these funds, collaborating with Ministry and Council as needed

Fayetteville Meeting's "Minute of Intent to Protect- Peace and Earth

Peace and Earth recommends that Meeting sign on to the Fayetteville "Minute of Intent To Protect" that appeared in our weekly digest last month. Pat read the English version of the Minute allowed:

A Minute of Intent to Protect, Approved March 9, 2025

As human beings we are all children of God and recognize that among us are many dear friends, family, neighbors, coworkers and others who are immigrants in this country or otherwise marginalized. Some of us have achieved citizenship, some have green cards, some have visas, some are in pending status or similar legal limbo, and others still lack official documentation. Often, this variety of circumstances exist within a family, and the resulting vulnerabilities can be very real, complex, and difficult.

As faith communities inspired by a common sense of divine standards in goodness and compassion, we join in publicly stating our intent to peacefully yet determinedly defend the defenseless and vulnerable in their need. In all morally upright and ethically sound matters we will continue as faithful Americans to cooperate with our government and receive all government agents in goodwill; however, if a case arises of persecution, oppression, or forcible removal of immigrant populations from among us, we will weigh human authority against our leadings to submit to Divine Authority regarding disgraces against the humanity of those in our community. As and when the situation calls for action, we will readily provide shelter, cover, aid and advocacy for our beleaguered neighbors.

We earnestly hope that such a preemptive posture as represented by this minute may prove unnecessary. Yet behind our hopes and prayers, and even as we operated from a general stance of political neutrality, we yet agree to stand ready together to physically assist those persons who may seek out help, to facilitate legal assistance as far as possible, to persistently petition legislators, to send delegations and speak with key government officials, and/or to publicly denounce inhumane government policies which would aim to tear apart immigrant families or inappropriately harass harmless people. We hereby state our intent to take these and similar peaceful actions as such needs may arise.

Remembering that we are all flawed and oft-mistaken human beings, we take this stand not from a spirit of pride or conflict, but in a soul-searching hope for an American future of harmony, peace on earth, and goodwill toward everyone.

(Authored by the Fayetteville Friends Meeting, Fayetteville Nc. Approved at the Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business, Asheville Friends Meeting on March 9th, 2025)

Un Memorando De Intención De Proteger, approved March 9, 2025

Como sarees humanos, todos somos hijos de Dios y reconocemos que entre nosotros hay muchos queridos amigos, familiares, vecinos, compañeros de trabajo y otra personas que son inmigrantes en este país o que están marginadas de alguna otra manera. Algunos de nosotros hemos obtenido la ciudadanía, algunos tienen Tarjeta de Residente Permanente (tarjeta verde), algunos tienen visas, algunos están en un estado pendiente o en un limbo legal similar, y otros aún carecen de documentación oficial. A menudo, esta variedad de circunstancias existe dentro de una familia, y las vulnerabilidades resultantes pueden ser muy reales, complejas y difíciles.

Como comunidades de fe inspiradas por un sentido común de normas divinas de bondad y compasión, nos unimos para manifestar públicamente nuestra intención de defender pacíficamente pero con determinación a los indefensos y vulnerables en sus necesidades. En todos los asuntos moralmente rectos y éticamente sólidos, continuaremos como estadounidenses fieles a cooperar con nuestro gobierno y recibiremos a todos los agentes gubernamentales de buen voluntad; sin embargo, si surge un caso de persecución, opresión o expulsión forzosa de poblaciones inmigrantes de entre nosotros, sobre la autoridad humana frente a nuestra dirección para someternos a la Autoridad Divina en lo que respecta a las desgracias contra la humanidad de quienes forman parte de nuestra comunidad. Cuando la situación lo requiera, brindaremos refugio, protección, ayuda y defensa a nuestros atribulados vecinos inmigrantes.

Esperamos sinceramente que una postura preventiva como la que se presenta en este memorando resulte innecesaria. Sin embargo, más allá de nuestras esperanzas y oraciones, y aunque actuamos desde una posición

general de neutralidad política, acordamos estar listos para ayudar físicamente a aquellas personas que puedan solicitar nuestra ayuda, facilitar asistencia legal en la medida de lo posible, presentar peticiones persistentes a los legisladores, enviar delegaciones y hablar con funcionarios gubernamentales clave y/o denunciar públicamente políticas gubernamentales inhumanas que apuntan a destruir a familias inmigrantes o acosar inapropiadamente a personas inofensivas. Por la presente, declaramos nuestra intención de tomar estas y otras acciones pacíficas similares cuando surjan tales necesidades.

recordando que todos somos seres humanos con defectos y que a menudo cometemos errores, adoptamos esta postura no por un espíritu de orgullo o conflicto, sino con la esperanza de un futuro estadounidense de armonía paz en la Tierra y buena voluntad hacia todos.

(Authored by the Fayetteville Friends Meeting, Fayetteville, NC. Approved at Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business, Asheville Friends Meeting March 9, 2025)

Discussion

A Friend wondered if this is intended for just immigrants or also marginalized peoples of other statuses.

Others observed that it allows for us to support other groups if in need.

A Friend recalled stories of native peoples being detained by ICE.

A Friend reminded us that our LGBTQ and particularly Trans folks are also marginalized and this could benefit them.

A Friend asked for clarification that this is “The Fayetteville Friends Meeting”

A friend suggested posting in the Mountain Express. Urban News, Pasa La Vos, Jan Pro

A Friend suggested and others agreed that we should send it to our Yearly Meeting.

A Friend reported that he had been asked by FCNL to hand deliver it to Senator Thom Tillis

A Friend let us know that SAYMA’s upcoming representative meeting is this weekend. To send to the Yearly Meeting it would go to SAYMAclerk@gmail.com

A Friend reminded us that there are immigrants that are not Spanish speakers.

A Friend pointed out a rhetorical problem not expressed in the letter, that there have been so many religious and government collaborations around immigration.

Minute #6 Friends approved signing on to the Fayetteville Friends Meeting Minute of Intent To Protect

Minute #7 Friends instructed the interim clerk to see to it that the letter is published in the name of the Meeting in print and social media.

Bob Lackey Steps Down from Ministry and Council- Kitti Reynolds

Nominating Committee announces that Bob Lackey is laying down his work on Ministry and Counsel and we would like to thank him for his valuable service.

Minute #8 Meeting extends its gratitude to Bob Lackey for his years of faithful and valuable service as a member of the Ministry and Counsel Committee.

FCIJ Collaboration - Adrienne Weir

Adrienne will reported and will continue to update us on her association with this newly created support group, Faith Communities for Immigrant Justice (FCIJ), and asked if Meeting is willing to sign on as a co-sponsor.

Their purpose is to support our immigrant neighbors who face animosity and worse due to the current political and social climate by working together to strengthen our support infrastructure, organize across institutions, and collaborate with other groups. Peace on Earth agreed to disburse the \$100 suggested dues from our newly created Community Support Fund.

Discussion

Friends supported this initiative and asked for the representative to report back to Meeting

A Friend suggested that this become a planned part of the budget the \$100 due is an annual fee

Minute #9 Friends approved co-sponsorship of, and participation in, Faith Communities for Immigration Justice. Friends approved Adrienne Weir as Meeting's representative to FCIJ. Friends approve the use of the Community Support Fund.

Personal concerns

A Friend made a request that we could consider starting Meeting half an hour later during Daylight Savings time.

Tribal Raine, a Friend from Paul Cuffee Worship Group, suffered a stroke and has a high medical bill. Friends were encouraged to contribute funds to defray the expense.

Closing silence: Meeting closed with a period of silence.