

**Southern Appalachian Yearly Meeting and Association**  
**Representative Meeting 148b**  
**Fourth Month, 30, 2021**  
Online, Via Zoom

**148b-01 Opening Worship**

Clerk Robert McGahey encouraged Friends to settle into worship at 9:00am EDT

**148b-02 Greetings, Clerk's Remarks (Attachment A: Attendance, Attachment B: Ad Hoc Committee Transition Guidance)**

The Clerk welcomed Friends and read the Ad Hoc Committee for SAYMA's Transition Guidance and clarified the term for the Ad Hoc Committee as only until the rise of Yearly Meeting 51. There were approximately 36 Friends in attendance as recorded on attachment A.

The Clerk reminded us we were not making final decisions at this meeting but testing a sense of the meeting to bring to Yearly Meeting 51 for discernment. The clerk stressed the need to retain our nonprofit status which requires a clerk and treasurer.

**148b-03 Monthly Meeting Representatives Reports (Attachments C-M)**

On April 1 and 5, 2022, the SAYMA Clerk requested Monthly Meetings season a minute from Nashville Friends Monthly Meeting on the future of SAYMA and provide minuted responses in preparation for this called Meeting. Representatives from eleven monthly meetings read their minutes, in addition the Atlanta and Memphis Representatives stated they did not have a minute but their meetings have been discussing this topic.

Friends Accept the Reports.

**148b-04 Worship Sharing, Queries, and Discernment**

The Clerk asked Friends to join pre-determined breakout groups to conduct an hour of worship sharing on queries: How do I feel about a pause in SAYMA Business Meetings? Is there another path forward we are overlooking?

The groups returned to share with the Meeting as a whole. The term pause was not a good descriptor for what we are deciding. Friends preferred discernment over the future of how SAYMA meets.

There was diversity in thought and suggestions but there was no unity or sense of the meeting. Therefore, the clerk has decided to exercise his prerogative and convene the Clerk's Advisory Committee.

**148b-05 Naming Committee**

The clerk received several names to consider for the naming committee. Three of those names will be brought forward for discernment at a meeting to be set prior to Yearly Meeting 51.

**148b-06 Clerk’s Advisory Committee**

Friends asked what constitutes the committee working on the path forward in how SAYMA meets? In response, the Clerk defines this group as the Clerk’s Advisory Committee consisting of clerks of standing committees, the SAYMA Clerk, assistant clerk, treasurer, recording clerk, and others the committee may invite to assist in their discernment.

**Closing Worship - 1:39 pm**

Friends accepted this narrative in the face of the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert McGahey  
Clerk  
(archived copies signed)

Melissa Preast  
Recording Clerk

## **Attachments**

- A. Attendance
- B. Ad hoc Committee Transition Guidance
- C. Asheville Minute
- D. Berea Minute
- E. Birmingham Minute
- F. Celo Minute
- G. Charleston Minute
- H. Chattanooga Minute
- I. Columbia Minute
- J. Crossville Minute
- K. Greenville Minute
- L. Nashville Minute
- M. West Knoxville Minute

**Attachment A: Attendance**

List of attendees in archived print copy only.

## **Attachment B.**

### Ad Hoc Committee for SAYMA' s Transition Guidance

The SAYMA clerks committee will serve in this ad hoc role, charged with working out details of SAYMA's staffing and reduced activities during suspension of regular business meetings for one to two years, as proposed in the Nashville minute. SAYMA will continue to sponsor an annual retreat at the time of its yearly sessions in June 2023 and 2024. The committee will act as a liaison, aided by the administrative assistant, with FCRJ as they pursue the racial justice work that SAYMA has requested and was agreed to in a letter addressed to SAYMA and FCRJ August 20, 2021, signed by the Presiding Clerk.

As stated in several minutes reviewed at RM 148, SAYF will continue to function under its present structure, and be financially supported by SAYMA. Specific details for other necessary yearly meeting functions during this period of renewal during suspension of regular business will be worked out by the committee and presented to the body at YM 51 for approval. Among these procedural details, it is important to decide who gives authority for dispensing funds, and who has check-signing privileges. The committee may designate sub-committees to work out some of the details (for instance, financial ones) and may also recruit others from SAYMA with necessary skills or information, as needed.

The ad hoc committee will terminate its functions at the close of YM51, and be laid down.

**Attachment C.**

**From Asheville Friends Meeting response to Nashville Minute**

**4/10/2022**

**Minute #2:** We support the Nashville Monthly Meeting statement, and we have a concern about the composition of the Ad Hoc Committee. We hope the Ad Hoc committee has members who have the spiritual gift of discerning the path forward in a spiritual way.

**Attachment D.**

Berea Friends Meeting Business Meeting April 17, 2022, approved this minute:

"Berea Friends Meeting finds unity with SAYMA not being laid down. We propose that a Naming Committee be approved by the representatives at the April 30th Rep Meeting. All decisions regarding the disposition of the budget surplus should be delayed until we have the necessary tools of discernment."

Beth Parrish,  
Recording Clerk

**Attachment E.**

**SAYMA**

After much discussion and careful consideration Birmingham Friends unite in support of the Ad Hoc Committee for support of SAYMA's Transition Guidance. BFM supports the committee's commitment to working with FCRJ and agree that FCRJ should be compensated by SAYMA for this work. BFM supports suspension of SAYMA regular business for two years and the continuing support of SAYF.

Birmingham (AL) Friends Meeting

Birmingham, Alabama

4/3/2022



## **Attachment F.**

Assuming that the proposed pause of regular SAYMA business will be approved at YM 51, we are in unity with the clerk's proposal that the ad hoc transition committee be composed of the members of the clerk's committee as it is described on page 27 of SAYMA's new Faith and Practice: "Clerk's Advisory Committee, established in 1999 by the yearly meeting, is comprised of the clerks of the standing committees of SAYMA".

We also agree with Nashville Friends Meeting in prioritizing conflict transformation, spiritual grounding, and the renewal of Quaker process, followed by attention to anti-racism and racial justice work. Our primary concern during the renewal period is that trust and goodwill are restored as we undertake the deep, difficult work of progressing toward racial justice, confronting white privilege, and making SAYMA and its monthly meetings a welcoming place for people of color. To that end, we hold up Nashville's support of monthly meetings doing their own anti-racism work using outside resources. We commend the members of Atlanta Friends Meeting who are working for racial justice, as well as the Black Quaker Project and other organizations working on anti-racism as resources for monthly meetings as they undertake their work on these issues.

Approved by Celo Friends Meeting, April 17, 2022

## **Attachment G.**

Charleston Friends Meeting Minute Responding to the Nashville Implementation Minute

Charleston Friends find much to approve in the spirit and in most of the particulars of the Nashville minute but have reservations about implementation and the chance of success. A year of inaction and uninformative communications leads us to wonder if Friends Center for Racial Justice can be helpful. Given the history of FCRJ's involvement with SAYMA we also worry about a conflict of interest in its approach to SAYMA's difficulties. In any case, after several years of conflict within SAYMA capped with months of COVID isolation, a one or two year respite from most of SAYMA's usual institutional life may leave no meaningful organization to return to. This possibility will be an inevitability if, as is not unlikely, it turns out that we were just kicking the can further down the road, wasting the respite because we were unable to overcome the weaknesses in Quaker spirituality and process that have sunk us in our present morass.

If the Clerks Committee works in the Spirit, seeking together a common truth in the hearts of all, it will make progress toward a plan. But is there enough time in a month or so to formulate a plan and send it out to Friends far enough before Yearly Meeting to allow for informed discernment in monthly meetings? There are so many financial, legal, and bureaucratic questions that must be resolved in detail. Exactly how will the transfer from the present organization to the respite order be carried out? What steps will be required to return to SAYMA "normality," and what sort of SAYMA "normality" will that actually be? There must therefore be arrangements somewhere in the respite process for careful thought about the new "normal", about possible permanent transformations of SAYMA and about how to dissolve SAYMA should no way forward appear.

Despite these concerns Charleston Friends support moving forward with the Nashville proposal using the Clerks Committee for initial planning. We do so, however, with the understanding that the primary goal of the respite is, as suggested in Nashville's minute, the pursuit of intimate and sturdy habits of ethical/spiritual interpersonal connection among Friends. Only on this basis can we hope to engage with compassion and religious integrity in the very necessary business of exploring our various senses of what is needed in the area of race relations.

Respectfully submitted April 24, 2022

Abbey Pratt-Harrington and Diana Masso, Co-Clerks, Charleston Friends Meeting

## Attachment H.

Minutes Special Called Meeting for Business 4/21/22 via Zoom

Present: Laura Seeger, Bill Reynolds, Carla Askonas, Vonna Stratton, Larry Ingle, Becky Ingle, kate anthony (Clerk), Chuck Jones, Diane McCluskey

This Meeting was called to complete the process of coming to a response to the requests/proposal from SAYMA (Southern Appalachian Yearly Meeting). The proposal was basically to have an Ad Hoc Transition Guidance Committee to come up with options for SAYMA to move forward and have them ready for the June SAYMA sessions. The committee would be comprised of the current SAYMA Clerks Committee. The request was for suggestions for how to use \$34,000 in undistributed SAYMA funds.

We had discussed the proposal in our regular Meeting for Business on 4/17 and had basically arrived at a statement. The statement had been circulated for people to see. We reviewed that statement today and made slight changes. The Minute below was approved:

\*We agree with the need for a pause in SAYMA business meetings until some of our problems are resolved.

\*Chattanooga Friends cannot unite with the proposal as it stands.

\*We agree that there should be an ad hoc committee for guidance and to make a proposal on a way forward, but differently constituted.

\*We believe that transition committee should not include Star Smith who is not a member of SAYMA or any of its monthly meetings. Star Smith has been personally responsible for much of SAYMA's lack of ability to function in the past few years, disrupting process and standing in the way of coming to agreement or even being able to complete our agendas.

\*We feel that Meetings (monthly and yearly Meetings) have a right and a responsibility to protect themselves and their ability to function as a place of spiritual nurture. One disruptive person should not be allowed to destroy that for everyone else. Many Meetings over the years have come to the conclusion that for that protection, they must unfortunately exclude someone. That decision is always reached reluctantly, after long struggle, and with grief, since Quakers value their ability to be inclusive.

\*CFM strongly recommends that every effort be made for AdHoc committee to include some other representative(s) of Persons of Color.

APPROVED in called business meeting 4/21/22. kate anthony Clerk

We also discussed the financial issue SAYMA had raised. We were told that if SAYMA has no Clerk and no business meetings, its funds could be seized by the state of Alabama, where it is registered. In order to forestall that, the following disbursements were suggested in order of priority: Funds would go to SAYF and JYM to amply provide for their continued operation during our pause. Funds would go to pay Susan Phelan's salary for this year and next year. There will still be committees operating and relying on her. Funds would go to enable delegates to attend FWCC in South Africa. If there are moneys left over, they would be distributed to the Wider Quaker Organizations to which SAYMA has traditionally contributed.

## **Attachment I.**

### Columbia Friends Meeting

1. The Meeting approves the following six points as proposed by the Nashville Friends Meeting with regard to how SAYMA should proceed:

- Prioritizing the conflict transformation process led by Friends Committee for Racial Justice, with an understanding that SAYMA will prioritize building a healthier foundation for the future, not relitigating the past;
- A suspension of ordinary SAYMA business (with exceptions for core functions that must be performed);
- For SAYMA to devote its shared time primarily to worship-sharing related to issues of spiritual grounding and Quaker process, followed by attention to antiracism and social justice;
- Monthly meetings doing their own anti-racism work/confronting white privilege on a local level using outside resources;
- Monthly meetings reporting to SAYMA the anti-racism work that they are doing/have done; and
- More small regional meetings of monthly meetings that would build regional Friends knowledge and understanding. After our spiritual bonds have been tended to, we may be able to move forward as a Yearly Meeting.

We look forward to hearing from the committee regarding process on the issue of conflict transformation.

2. The Meeting approves the formation of an ad hoc committee to carry SAYMA through June.

## **Attachment J.**

Minute from Crossville Monthly Meeting of Friends to SAYMA Representatives Meeting on 4/30/2022

In response to the Minute from Nashville Friends Meeting of 3/6/22

We cannot unite with Nashville's Minute.

George Fox received a message from God which contained much good news but was also a radical statement for the time: He was told that God (Jesus) could speak directly to each of us and guide us. He then went out and shared that message, preaching in public that we could and should be guided directly. This message was perceived accurately as a threat to the power and authority of the Anglican Church (Church of England) which was the state religion and had the power to tax, accuse, and punish people. Many of Fox's early followers found themselves imprisoned for spreading Fox's message. Out of a need to support each other under this persecution, a formal structure was formed, "Meetings for Sufferings," which eventually became the Religious Society of Friends. For the first 200 years or so, Friends were not confused about who was a member and who was not, nor were they unwilling to expel people, whose behavior they found was inappropriate for people of God. They believed that people should be guided by the Spirit, but after James Naylor, they recognized that the Society of Friends as well as the individual could be harmed if those leadings were not "seasoned." That did not mean, however, that people were not able to follow their own leadings.

There have been many disputes within the Society of Friends that have led to fractures; some of which have healed, others have not. When Philadelphia Yearly Meeting decided that slave ownership would no longer be tolerated in 1776, slaveholding Friends were not given the opportunity to block that Minute. Many slaveholders manumitted their slaves, other left the Society of Friends. Not every decision requires unity. No one at that time suggested that the Yearly Meeting be laid down, even temporarily.

More to the point of Nashville Meeting's Minute, Philadelphia's minute against slavery did not require members to make anti-slavery work a priority and to devote their time to discussing how to effectively overcome slavery. Of course, many individuals did in fact take that course but others were led in other directions and found service to the poor, orphans, and widows, or to those in prison, or the mentally ill, to be what they were called to do.

We certainly recognize the difficulties that SAYMA has had in conducting business where a relatively small group of people has stood in the way of even routine business. But we do not agree that the solution is to lay down the Yearly Meeting or to freeze the finances, beyond paying core expenses. We do not understand the conditions that would have to be met in order for SAYMA to begin operating "normally" again, and we do not understand who would be responsible for picking up the pieces if there are no longer people filling roles of responsibility for the Yearly Meeting.

It is clear to us the Yearly Meeting is no longer in unity around the URJ committee. It then makes sense to us to suspend that committee until unity can be restored. We ask those who are blocking action on other matters as a way to force action on the URJ to stand aside. This is not how unity is achieved.

Bullet points 4, 5, and 6 from the Nashville Minute are problematic for us, not because we object in any way to Meetings that want to prioritize anti-racism work, but because it seems to require that every Meeting do so. There are two difficulties here. First whose definition of anti-racism are we to use? Some definitions are quite broad and would include climate action work while others are much more narrowly focused on the justice needs of BIPOC. The second is that we object to coercion on the spiritual

path. No one has the right to claim that their calling takes priority over another's calling. Yes, you can share information and queries about anti-racism work and ask me to hear and consider that information. You cannot require me to make it my priority. It implies that only you know God's mind and everyone else is misinformed. That is not a message that brings unity to a group.

As a small Monthly Meeting that holds the historical place where SAYMA was founded, we are distressed by where the Yearly Meeting finds itself. Though small, we are not going away. If the decision is made to lay down SAYMA, we will keep connections with others who want to affiliate for primarily spiritual purposes to create a new Yearly Meeting. It should never have come to this.

Approved at special called meeting on April 28, 2022  
John Strain and Susan Stark, co-Clerks

**Attachment K.**

GREENVILLE FRIENDS MEETING

Submitted by Alan R. Johnson  
Representative to SAYMA

From Minutes of Meeting for Business (4/10/22):

The Presiding Clerk of SAYMA has asked that Greenville Friends discern a response to the 3/16/22 Minute of Nashville Friends Regarding SAYMA, and proposed transition.

In answer: Greenville Friends reaffirm our Minute of 1/9/22: "That Greenville Friends are not led to respond at this time," and to again affirm our Minute of 11/25/05, already reaffirmed on 3/13/22, expressing "continuing support for the testimony of equality."

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**November 25, 2005**

The Greenville Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends takes this opportunity to express its continuing support for the Testimony of Equality, the oldest Quaker precept.

The Greenville Monthly Meeting believes that all people possess inherent worth, dignity, and the capacity to perceive the Inner Light. Whatsoever their understanding of God might be, we welcome all who wish to join us in silent worship and/or in our community activities. We do not discriminate against, or make distinctions among, seekers on the basis of their race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, economic status, spiritual views, political affiliations, social creeds, physical or mental condition, criminal record, age, or education.

Submitted on behalf of the Greenville Monthly Meeting by Scott Henderson, Clerk.

**Attachment L.**

**Minute Approved by Nashville Friends Meeting, 4/17/22**

Nashville Friends Meeting (“NFM”) is hopeful that its minute can play a role in SAYMA finding a way forward. NFM supports the formation of an ad hoc committee in whatever form can find unity among SAYMA. NFM has trust and faith in its SAYMA Representative to evaluate proposals and amendments to proposals and act consistently with the spirit of NFM. We suggest the clerks of full committees gather to determine who is best suited for the transition committee.



## **Attachment M.**

Called Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business  
West Knoxville Friends Meeting  
April 24, 2022

### MINUTE

Friends are mindful of the complexity and powerful expressions of views regarding the status and future of SAYMA. Some Friends expressed concern about the framing of the “existential crisis.” Friends hope to bring renewed trust and deepened attention to Spirit in considering the way forward for SAYMA. We urge attention to civility and mutual respect while remaining brave in our truths.

The Berea Meeting Minute speaks our mind in that West Knoxville Friends Meeting finds unity with SAYMA not being laid down. In addition, we propose to forgo a Naming Committee in this instance and recommend that the SAYMA Nominating Committee fill their vacant positions now and begin their work now. Of priority are nominations for Clerk. We also recommend that each Monthly Meeting send a representative to serve on the Nominating Committee as soon as possible. The Committee must encompass the diversity of views in the Yearly Meeting.

If way is not open to appointing a new Clerk during Yearly Meeting, we propose the Clerk’s Advisory Committee act in the role as a collective clerk at the rise of Yearly Meeting until a sense of the meeting is clear. Thus, avoiding the need to shut SAYMA down.

For some Friends, the Nashville Meeting Minute speaks their mind in calling for a focus on the conflict reconciliation process led by Friends Committee for Racial Justice (FCRJ) and should be supported immediately.

West Knoxville Friends was not united on whether a pause is the most beneficial way forward. However, if a pause were to happen the duration should be based on outcomes rather than a prescribed timeframe. We were united in the idea that if business meetings were paused it should be for a short time to focus on worship and fellowship and that there should be a clerk nominated and approved to serve during that time. The pause does not need to be tied to FCRJ and the conflict reconciliation process which some Friends believe may take considerably longer than expected. We approve the Clerk’s Advisory Committee to serve as a mechanism for discerning the governance process in the event of a pause.

West Knoxville Friends Meeting appoints Carol Nickle to serve as our Representative at the SAYMA Representative Meeting on April 30. If Carol is not able to attend, WKFM appoints John Innis to serve for this purpose.

APPROVED