

## **Charleston Friends Meeting response to Swannanoa Valley Friends Minute regarding SAYMA URJ**

On February 10, 2020 members of Charleston Friends Meeting and Greenbrier Valley Worship Group held a discussion on the minute from the Swannanoa Valley Friends Monthly Meeting from January 3, 2021. We thank them for their discernment and sharing of concerns.

From our own process and experiences over the past few years, we believe it is important to acknowledge and season minutes as they are raised in the yearly meeting. Each of us has a measure of Light, and therefore glimpses of the Truth. Only by holding, listening, and putting these pieces together will we even get near the full Truth of how we are being called and led. As our Quaker forebears understood it, perfection is a process not a destination. With that in mind, here is our contribution.

Our group has mixed feelings on the intent and wording of the minute, but feels we can lift up these thoughts:

- **First**, we recognize that this minute raises serious issues that SAYMA must address through consistent general policies and procedures. We have already urged SAYMA to do this in response to a request from the Ministry and Nurture Committee (Minute, January 26, 2020).
- **Second**, as we understand it, SAYMA is not a financial pass-through for URJ. SAYMA's policy dealing with earmarked contributions does not permit pass-through contributions. URJ funds are only to be spent in accordance with the document regarding URJ funding, which requires that they meet the mission and vision of SAYMA URJ. It does not authorize a mere pass-through. In addition, as a Yearly Meeting, we do need to be mindful of obeying the law with our finances.
- **Third**, SAYMA should not tolerate abuse in any form. However, focusing accusations of abuse onto one person does not feel helpful. We may disagree with how a person behaves, and still find value and community in what they bring to us. We encourage further exploration of how to address conflict in our yearly meeting.
- **Fourth**, we agree that no committee clerk or other individual, as such, can or should try to speak on behalf of SAYMA.

As noted above, we again see this as an opportunity to review our policies to bring clarity and integrity to our procedures moving forward. Like many North American Friends meetings, we are made up of white members and attenders. Our perspectives and experiences vary in terms of anti-racism work. We hope that in our own ways and as a meeting we are doing our best to grow, and support equality and equity for Friends of color. This is not a perfect process. We all will make mistakes. We ask for grace and clarity as we learn, just as we will do our best to offer grace to others.

*Approved at Meeting for Business March 7, 2021*