

Dear SAYMA Friends/friends,

Cookeville Monthly Meeting is feeling led to speak out again after the recent Representative Meeting held on Zoom on March 13th.

As a group of almost all friends of European descent we have been educating ourselves about our cultural “norms” and blinders. This is akin to a fish swimming in water becoming aware that there is such a thing as water and that they are living in it. White supremacy and the centering of whiteness is our home. We are comfortable in it. We breathe it, and can’t conceive of any other way to be. We have a complete mindset to step back from. We have centuries of patterns to unravel and understand. As Quakers we hold fast to certain beliefs and ways of doing things. We do indeed have rituals and we give them weight and value.

But we have found that to insist on doing things the way we have always done them is not being open to continuing revelation. We know experientially that Spirit manifests in many ways and forms, different parts of the same whole, if we could only be still, listen, and open ourselves to change.

SAYMA URJ has been a strong impetus and influence to help us begin to be aware of what we are blindly participating in. We committed to this work as a covered Yearly Meeting in session together. This is not a comfortable process. In fact, it can be messy, painful, and downright ugly. We understand that there are many among SAYMA Meetings and Worship Groups who cannot support SAYMA URJ financially right now. We have felt and heard some of the pain on all “sides” of the current issues that are stirring up such turmoil in our midst. We strongly urge everyone, ourselves included, to listen deeply to what Spirit may be calling us to do, experience, and grow toward. We also hold fast to our experience that way will open with time and move us all forward together.

Cookeville Friends have maintained a relationship with Paul Cuffee Worship Group and we ask that SAYMA formally recognize Paul Cuffee Worship Group as a part of SAYMA. We feel that this is the least we can do to offer our support. The Society of Friends is not hierarchical. Yearly Meeting cannot dictate to Monthly Meetings what they should do. The last word in the acronym of SAYMA is Association for a reason. Historically we do not seek to exclude or deny anyone’s existence or experience. All who wish to associate with us have been welcomed. Whether or not Paul Cuffee Worship Group wants to become associated with SAYMA we should offer this association to them in order to be consistent with our principles and traditions.

Cookeville Monthly Meeting 4/16/2021