

**Southern Appalachian Yearly Meeting and Association
Representative Meeting 152
Fourth Month, 6, 2024**

Hybrid, Via Zoom and at Atlanta Friends Meeting

152-01 Opening Worship and Centering

After a period of fellowship, Friends settled into worship at 9:02 am ET.

152-02 Co-clerks' Welcome ([Attachment A: Co-clerks' Letter](#))

Presiding Co-clerk Daryl Bergquist (Birmingham) welcomed Friends. He shared insights that have guided him in preparation for this business meeting. Ben Pink Dandelion, in his Woodbrooke address on "Reclaiming Our Quaker Voice," focused on four aspects of that voice - direct experience of the Divine, radical equality, ways of worship and discernment that nurture an encounter with the Divine, and a new way of life as a result of that encounter. Daryl asked that we conduct our business according to this voice. He also shared insights from Virginia Swain, a released New England Friend, who carries a leading on how we can build our spiritual muscle by first focusing on our own goodness and gifts as a foundation when we experience conflict, looking for the goodness and gifts also in others and moving from blaming others to accountability for our own actions.

Daryl referred to the Co-clerks' Letter as a good overview of business to be brought forward today. He then thanked Atlanta Friends Meeting (AFM) for their hosting of the meeting.

AFM clerk David Small welcomed Friends, and individual AFM Friends provided information about the meetinghouse as well as AFM's "microphone ministry" process for in-person Friends who are recognized by the Co-clerks to speak.

152-03 Roll Call and Visitor Introduction ([Attachment B: Attendance Roster](#))

The roll of meetings was called. Twelve monthly meetings and one worship group were represented, with two Associates and one visitor. The visitor was introduced. Stuart Greene, from Patapsco Friends Meeting with Baltimore Yearly Meeting on Piscataway land, holds a concern for SAYMA. He has come with a ministry of presence.

152-04 Agenda Review

The agenda was reviewed. There were no amendments beyond the late addition of the Young Adult Friends report.

The agenda was approved.

152-05 Reading / Expectations

Co-clerk Daryl Bergquist was joined by Susan Phelan (Huntsville) in offering readings on resilience that were penned by Susan Gorrell and Erin Reid for the recent Spring Concert performance of the Huntsville Feminist Chorus. Susan sings with the chorus, and other SAYMA Friends have participated in the past.

Community

Loving and Being Loved

We become resilient when we are loved and know we are loved. Our friends, our families (chosen or biological), our communities, generations of ancestors, even acquaintances with whom we share good will -- all enable us to stretch, grow, and develop resilience.

Asking Within

Letting Our Light Shine

Resilience lives inside of us, in our silence, in our singing, in our joy, our courage and our inner light... especially when we're able to get out of our own way and let that light shine.

Being Yourself

Growing Authenticity

Resilience comes from allowing yourself: to be your self, to listen to the stillness, to accept yourself as you are, to show yourself kindness, to sink your roots deep and open yourself to the nurture of this earth, welcoming the gift of every storm and season. In living this way, we grow beyond our small selves into a strength we could scarcely have imagined.

Changing Our Focus

Seeing Truly

We welcome resilience into our lives by changing our focus. We make the choice to see in others what is True in them, even when they are not behaving as we wish they would. We see them! We see through the cracks in their facade; and we become the sun shining in.

Let the elements waken your spirit to its connection to this earth. Know that just as the earth rotates, you can move on to a brighter day.

Embracing Change

The Gift of Change

The promise of a new day comes with hope, and also with fear. What will happen? How will things be different? How can I maintain my resilience in the midst of change? Fortunately, we are not alone as we face tomorrow. We have the

love of our community, the inner voice of our own authenticity, and a changed focus on what is True. But even more than this, we have change itself as our teacher. Change gifts us with resilience. We discover we too can make change. We can weave change into working for the greater good. When we ourselves become the change, we don't fret as much about the constant flux happening around us. We become powerful to make a positive difference in the lives of others and the world.

Presiding Co-clerk Margaret Farmer (Asheville) shared the discernment she and Daryl have been having about how to move forward through conflict in SAYMA. She emphasized that during the business meeting, when conflict emerges, we will enter into silence to remember who we say we are and to ground ourselves in Spirit while we are in conflict. Margaret also expressed gratitude for Friends helping to make possible this first hybrid Representative Meeting, with particular gratitude to Aaron Ruschetta (Atlanta, technology coordinator) and Allison Mawle (Atlanta, hospitality coordinator), as well as the Clerking Table support team Susan Phelan (Administrative Assistant) and Blake Burr (Memphis, Recording Clerk).

152-06 Nominating Committee: First Reading of Slate ([Attachment C: Nominating Committee Report](#))

Committee co-clerk Annie Black (Cookeville) presented the Nominating Committee's report and proposed slate. The following slate was presented to come forward for approval in the afternoon during its second reading:

Alexis Hamnett (Nashville Monthly Meeting), for Junior Yearly Meeting planning committee, 2024-2026. Alexis is the mother of two children and helped plan the recent retreat for JYM in Nashville. She brings new energy and experience to the committee.

Margaret Farmer (Asheville Friends Meeting), continuing as our Representative to Friends General Conference, 2024-2027. Margaret has been faithfully doing this work for three years and would like to continue deepening this ministry. She brings many gifts to FGC and brings back to us the information we need.

Lissa Place (Atlanta Monthly Meeting), as clerk of SAYMA Ministry and Nurture Committee, 2024-2026. Lissa has been attending the SAYMA M & N committee for several months. She has valuable clerking experience and knowledge of how racism works in the United States.

Diane Rowley (Atlanta Monthly Meeting), as a Representative to the American Friends Service Committee, 2024-2027. Diane has been led to work with AFSC

and has been serving for three years on one of the AFSC governance committees. She is also co-chair of the Black Thriving Initiative, a new working group that supports AFSC staff here in the US and abroad. She will be a great conduit of communication between that work for AFSC and SAYMA.

Friends are encouraged to reach out to members of the Nominating Committee with any questions prior to the second reading of the slate in the afternoon. Email addresses of committee members were provided.

A Friend noted that she has prepared a letter, with the permission and on behalf of the Friends of Color Affinity Group and Uplifting Racial Justice (URJ), and has sent this letter to the Nominating Committee recommending Star Smith (Paul Cuffee) as an FWCC Representative going as a Delegate to the FWCC Plenary gathering in South Africa. The co-clerk of the Nominating Committee noted that the committee has not been able to reach unity on this matter. One member of the committee expressed her personal apology for this lack of unity. The committee co-clerk noted that even without a formal nomination by the committee Star will be able to attend the Plenary gathering as a participant through funds raised by Friends and a report from Star about the gathering will be welcomed by SAYMA Friends.

Friends asked if the nomination of Star as an FWCC Representative and Delegate may come directly from the floor of a business meeting. Several Friends confirmed that there is precedence for this within SAYMA business meetings.

The letter from the Friend of Color was read and is reflected below:

Re: The SAYMA Friends of Color racial conflict transformation focus group, which includes some members of URJ, nominate: Sharon "Star" Smith to be our representative to FWCC.

Greetings:

In our last few racial conflicts transformation meetings, we have discussed a concern over the selection process for SAYMA representatives to FWCC. We invited Adrian Mehr, the current approved FWCC representative, who claims to be a Friend of color, to speak with us and got NO RESPONSE, not even an acknowledgment that he received our invitation. We feel his lack of regard for SAYMA Friends of color was unacceptable--especially for someone who is supposed to represent people of color. Particularly, to represent us in Africa, where African Friends representation is significant.

Therefore, at this time we again nominate and request Sharon "Star" Smith to be approved as a SAYMA representative to FWCC, specifically as a representative for SAYMA Friends of color. We approved and agreed that Star Smith is best equipped to represent SAYMA Friends of color at the FWCC World gathering. Her level of insight and awareness regarding the themes of the gathering, her record of service for SAYMA Friends of color as clerk of URJ, her knowledge and experience as an anti-racism analyst, and as the primary organizer of the SAYMA racial conflict transformation processes, she is perfect for representing SAYMA.

If this cannot be achieved for any reason, we request an immediate conflict resolution process around the denial of our request.

To date there has been no response from Adrian. We continue to be ignored by the designated representative, when all we wanted to do was communicate with him hoping to build a working relationship, in light of this important opportunity to represent American Friends of color in Africa. Why wouldn't Adrian respond? This is unacceptable.

We don't want this experience for our African Friends. Adrian, the current designee is missing out on an opportunity to build a relationship with us and represent us well. Thus, can not represent us and Star Smith should go and be the representative.

Please honor this request.

Thank you so much.

In Friendship,

SY Bowland

The Presiding Co-clerks welcomed process questions regarding this topic, with discernment comments deferred to the second reading in the afternoon.

A Friend asked how absent Friends' potential lack of unity may be incorporated into the business meeting's decision making regarding Star's nomination from the floor. Several Friends spoke of the Quaker tradition to make Spirit-guided decisions by the body that comes together for business and to not remain wedded to decisions or discussions from

the past. Discernment will take place in the afternoon, and Friends are encouraged to reach out to those not participating in the morning session who may want to be part of that discernment.

A Nominating Committee member asked why the letter was not introduced as part of the agenda (the topic was addressed in the revised Nominating Committee report distributed to the Presiding Co-clerks on Friday evening, read aloud in the business meeting, and reflected in these minutes). This committee member urged placing matters more explicitly on the agenda in the future to build greater trust among SAYMA Friends. A Friend of Color noted that URJ has experienced resistance from SAYMA's standing committees in the past and identifies business coming from the floor as an important means of addressing issues of equity within SAYMA.

Regarding a query about whether all FWCC Delegates are called to represent their full yearly meetings at the FWCC Plenary gathering, a Friend clarified that FWCC welcomes Delegates with special connections or leadings, for example representing Young Adult Friends.

Several Friends spoke of the related discussion in the fall Representative Meeting, in which Friends who have not participated in the Racial Conflict Transformation Program became dominant voices in the discussion. A white Friend spoke of the importance of representation of Friends of Color within Quaker gatherings and encouraged white Friends to support leadings of Friends of Color in the matter of Star's nomination. Another white Friend expressed the importance of participation of Friends of Color at a gathering in South Africa, where experiences of Apartheid and truth and reconciliation are so fresh.

From the floor, the following nomination was added to be considered in the afternoon for approval:

Sharon "Star" Smith (Paul Cuffee Worship Group), serving as an FWCC Representative and Delegate. Star is currently registered to attend the upcoming FWCC world gathering in an "open position" slot.

The Presiding Co-clerks provided timeline clarifications regarding the agenda's development for this Representative Meeting. The Co-clerks were aware of discernments and concerns within the relevant committees in the lead-up to this meeting, but the Co-clerks are dependent upon committee reports as submitted in developing the agenda. Co-clerk Daryl Bergquist urged a continued emphasis on improving communication among

ourselves, perhaps through additional written communications by committees between meetings.

The report was accepted.

Friends settled into silence. Out of the silence, Presiding Co-clerk Margaret Farmer read from *Tending the Fire: The Quest for the Ever-Present, Ever-Evolving Peaceable Kingdom*, adapted from talks by William J. Kreidler:

- First Query: Do We Love and Accept Diversity as a Gift from God? (pp. 27-28)
- Second Query: Do We Truly Love Conflict? (pp. 28-29)

Friends wishing to listen to William Kreidler's talks may find them on the web site <https://williamjkreidler.com/>. The queries above are from the July 22, 1999, address, "Seeking the Peaceable Kingdom," given to the New York Yearly Meeting.

Following a short break, the Co-clerks recognized Tom Kunesh (Nashville), who brings a concern that as an indigenous Friend of Color, he does not feel fully represented in SAYMA Friends of Color discussions. He is part of ongoing efforts by FGC's Institutional Assessment and Implementation Committee to do a full census of diversity within FGC yearly meetings.

Any Friends seeking contact information for SAYMA may reach out to clerk@sayma.org.

A Friend reflected on the Kreidler passages and thanked the Co-clerks for their sharing.

152-07 Announcement about the 2024 Ad-hoc Naming Committee

Referencing the Co-clerks' letter, Presiding Co-clerk Daryl Bergquist noted that the Nominating Committee needs four new members, one of whom will serve as committee co-clerk; therefore an Ad-hoc Naming Committee will be set up in advance of SAYMA's Annual Sessions and Retreat. Volunteers for the Naming Committee are being sought.

A Friend asked whether Young Adult Friends are welcome to serve on the Naming Committee. A Young Adult Friend responded that the YAFs are receiving many such requests and are addressing them in YAF business meetings as they are received. In general, YAFs need clear expectations about time commitments associated with various SAYMA roles. Co-clerk Margaret Farmer clarified that most Naming Committee time commitments occur during SAYMA's Annual Sessions and Retreat. However, this year Nominating has asked that the Naming Committee be formed earlier than is typical to

allow increased flexibility, given the need to identify multiple nominees. A member of the Nominating Committee shared that YAF participation is welcome even if a YAF committee member is not able to attend all committee meetings. Those led to serve on the Naming Committee should contact clerk@sayma.org.

152-08 Report from the Personnel Committee ([Attachment D: Personnel Committee Report](#))

Personnel Committee member Melissa Preast (West Knoxville) presented the committee's report. Special thanks were expressed to outgoing Administrative Assistant Susan Phelan who helped shepherd the yearly meeting's pandemic transition to online activity and then hybrid activity.

152-08-01 Minute: Rob Collins (Birmingham) is welcomed to the role of SAYMA Administrative Assistant, beginning May 15, 2024, with an official transfer of duties on July 15, 2024.

Friends approved.

The report was accepted.

152-09 Bookkeeper Announcement ([Attachment E: SAYMA Bookkeeper Job Position](#))

As mentioned in the Personnel Committee report, during the 2022 Annual Sessions the following minute was approved:

51-11-02 Minute: Friends approve the cost of a bookkeeper or service as a personnel expense for \$3,600. A job description will be developed and sent to the Personnel Committee for posting. Friends approved.

The Co-clerks have asked that the job description be included in the minutes.

152-10 Finance Committee Clerk's Report ([Attachment F: Finance Committee Clerk's Report](#))

The Finance Committee Clerk, Karen Morris (Atlanta), presented the committee clerk's report. She noted that a sizable stock donation has already been received. A Friend asked for more information about this stock donation. The Treasurer explained that stock donations go to Friends Fiduciary Fund, where they are converted into FFF's short-term fund. The recent referenced donation - which has a value of \$13,801 - will be a matter of business at the next Finance Committee meeting.

A Friend noted that the current Finance Committee handbook content does not reflect input from URJ (although a member of URJ serves on the Finance Committee). One Friend emphasized that an individual Friend of Color should not be a substitute for committee-level input on Finance Committee procedures.

A Friend suggested that Friends with legal background may be able to assist in identifying a solution regarding SAYMA's missing articles of incorporation that are needed for tax exemption status in Kentucky. Communication is welcome on this matter. The Finance Committee may be contacted through finance@sayma.org.

Email contact information for SAYMA committees is available on the web site (<https://www.sayma.org/contact.htm>). Additionally, the Administrative Assistant maintains a contact list for positions of responsibility. This list is available upon request. One Friend suggested that to balance privacy and the need for communication, SAYMA may be ready to explore a private account-based intranet.

The report was accepted.

152-11 Report from the Treasurer

Kendall Ivie (West Knoxville) updated Friends on his Treasurer role. He is able to keep bills paid; however, because of personal commitments, he has not been able to fully perform the duties of the Treasurer. He looks forward to the onboarding of a part-time bookkeeper. The Nominating Committee is actively seeking a nominee for Treasurer, to replace Kendall who has asked to step down after many years of service.

Kendall provided the following account balances as of March 31, 2024:

- PNC Bank - \$30,695.18
- Friends Fiduciary - \$13,801.00
- Self Help Credit Union - \$40,240.12
- First Bank (SAYF) - \$8,906.57
- Total - \$93,642.87

This total represents a slight improvement compared to our status on September 30, 2023 (\$90,895.64). Since that time, we have paid out \$6,000 from the FWCC Third World Delegate Fund, a set-aside fund that has been accumulating our donations for several years in anticipation for this year's Plenary gathering.

The report was accepted.

152-12 Ad-hoc Assessment Committee Announcement

As mentioned in the Co-clerks' letter, the Finance Committee has asked the Co-clerks to establish an ad-hoc Assessment Committee to explore monthly meeting assessments. Friends serving on this committee are Connie Hill (Birmingham treasurer), Diane McCluskey (Chattanooga treasurer and SAYMA Finance Committee member), and Paul Mangelsdorf (Atlanta Finance Committee clerk). Committee members will be reaching out to monthly meetings in the coming months.

152-12-01 Minute: Connie Hill (Birmingham), Diane McCluskey (Chattanooga), and Paul Mangelsdorf (Atlanta) are welcomed to the role of Ad-hoc Assessment Committee members.

Friends approved.

A Friend shared a message urging us to not hold too tightly to our opinions as we listen to God in the moment. Another Friend reflected an observed pattern of greater flexibility in incorporating Young Adult Friends than in incorporating Friends of Color.

Following a lunch break and centering worship, Co-clerk Daryl Bergquist asked that the minutes of the morning session be read in the face of the meeting.

The minutes thus far were reviewed in the face of the meeting and approved.

152-13 Nominating Committee: Second Reading and Approval of Slate ([Attachment C: Nominating Committee Report](#))

The slate as prepared by the Nominating Committee was read for a second time. A Friend spoke in support of the nominee for clerk of Ministry and Nurture.

The following proposed minute was brought forward:

152-13-01 Minute: All nominations are approved as presented and listed on the attachment:

- **Alexis Hamnett (Nashville), for Junior Yearly Meeting planning committee, 2024-2026.**
- **Margaret Farmer (Asheville), continuing as our Representative to Friends General Conference, 2024-2027.**
- **Lissa Place (Atlanta), as clerk of SAYMA Ministry and Nurture Committee, 2024-2026.**
- **Diane Rowley (Atlanta), as a Representative to the American Friends Service Committee, 2024-2027.**

Friends approved.

Annie Black, as co-clerk of Nominating, asked for clarification whether the FWCC Representative position's term of service should be specified within the second reading of Star Smith's nomination. Normally FWCC Representatives serve for three years. Several Friends asked for further clarification about the request within the letter received by Nominating on behalf of the Friends of Color Affinity Group and URJ. The letter used the term FWCC Representative. Star noted that the letter emphasized that the affinity group and URJ do not feel represented by the Friend currently registered as an official FWCC Plenary Delegate.

Co-clerk Margaret Farmer called for silence. Out of the silence, she read again William J. Kreidler's writings:

- Third Query: Do We Want to Listen to Each Other? (pp. 30-31)

A Friend asked whether having three FWCC Representatives will create future competition for the two Delegate spots at each Plenary. It was clarified that Jackson Napier (Berea) will attend as a YAF Delegate and will not be taking one of SAYMA's two Delegate spots. A Friend who previously served as an FWCC Representative for six years reminded Friends that in addition to the Plenaries held every three years there are many sectional and regional meetings within FWCC. Star noted that her participation as a FWCC Delegate is at the urging of FWCC Representative Geeta McGahey (Celo), who is unable to serve as a Delegate for this Plenary. FWCC Representative Adrian Mehr (Memphis) is registered for the ecology strand of the Plenary ("Care of Creation"). Star is registered for the racial justice strand ("Healing Historical Injustice").

One Friend suggested that we consider the roles of FWCC Representative and FWCC Delegate as separate. Another Friend observed that the FWCC Delegate role does not need to come for approval if Star is approved as a FWCC Representative.

The following proposed minute was tested for the sense of the meeting: "Sharon 'Star' Smith (Paul Cuffee) is approved to serve as an FWCC Representative (2024-2027)." One Friend stood in the way of this tested minute. A long conversation followed, without unity being reached. During the conversation, a Friend spoke on behalf of Chattanooga Friends Meeting. Her meeting has met on this topic and does not feel represented by Star but is choosing not to stand in the way of Star's participation in FWCC. A Friend of Color asked that the Friends referenced above be identified in the narrative minutes as white.

Co-clerk Margaret Farmer shared a fourth passage from William J. Kreidler's writings:

- Fourth Query: Are We Careful to Speak to Each Other from the Light? (pp. 31-33)

Further narrative minutes regarding Star's nomination were captured. However, there was not agreement in how to reflect this conversation in the narrative minutes. Upon the review of the narrative minutes for approval, a Friend reflected that the process of discussing the narrative minutes feels unorthodox and uncomfortable in the body. The Friend who stood against the tested minute asked that the narrative minutes reflect he feels led to leave the meeting and he perceives others may feel similarly.

Friends were urged to be in community and to see one another's point of view.

152-14 Racial Conflict Transformation Program Announcement ([Attachment G: Announcement regarding Racial Conflict Transformation](#))

The Co-clerks changed the order of the meeting agenda to focus next on the announcement about the planned "Meetings for Worship w/attention to racial conflict transformation" that will be held during the Annual Sessions and Retreat. Dr. S. Bowland (Atlanta) is one of the planned facilitators. Her bio is included in the attachments.

152-15 Yearly Meeting Planning Committee ([Attachment H: Yearly Meeting Planning Committee Report](#))

Jennifer Dickie (Atlanta), Clerk of the Yearly Meeting Planning Committee, presented the committee's report. A Friend asked if there are ways to support through travel funds those Friends living at a distance from their home meetings who want to attend SAYMA's Annual Sessions and Retreat. Jennifer responded that if you need funding support for any reason in order to be able to attend, you should start the request process by speaking with your home meeting; however, SAYMA also has funds and wants to ensure all who want to attend are able to.

The report was accepted.

152-16 Report of the Ad-hoc Faith & Practice Committee ([Attachment I: Report from the Ad-hoc Faith & Practice Committee](#))

Committee Clerk Melissa Preast (West Knoxville) presented a report of the ad-hoc committee that is drafting updates to the SAYMA Faith & Practice and making the document more interactive through video, audio, and hyperlinks. At SAYMA's Annual Sessions and Retreat there will be an interactive mindmap of potential improvements to

Faith & Practice. Requests to join the google group that is developing the mindmap may be sent to fandp@sayma.org.

The report was accepted.

152-17 YAF Report ([Attachment J: SAYMA YAF Report](#))

Darcy Phinney (Birmingham), as a member of Young Adult Friends, highlighted a minute approved by YAF at its most recent business meeting:

As Friends, we call for an immediate ceasefire in all of Palestine and ceasing of any and all US support (military, financial, and otherwise) to the Israeli government. As pacifists, we keenly perceive the difference between peace-keeping (which often obstructs true peace in favor of the maintenance of more implicit systems of violence) and peace-making (which centers justice and conflict reconciliation). We perceive that the language used by Friends must be clearer than "conflict" or even "war," when our practical and spiritual witness is that of Occupation and Genocide. We feel that the work to come in the aftermath of the attempted genocide of the Palestinian people must prioritize liberation, and center and lift up the voices of the oppressed.

We look at our Quaker histories of support for Palestinians. We hear our Jewish siblings and Black siblings who have articulated for many decades that collective liberation is a moral, political, spiritual, philosophical, and practical imperative. We uphold this call in America, in Palestine, and in every place that the light of humankind is burning.

Time did not allow for presentation of the full YAF report.

A Friend asked for clarification about the SAYMA process for minute amplification and consideration by the whole body. Traditionally, minutes that are developed by monthly meetings are the ones sent to the Peace and Social Concerns Committee for further seasoning. This minute, as well as the Earth Justice draft minute, were developed outside the monthly meeting structure. In response to a question from a Friend, Darcy expressed that YAF's goal was to have the minute read within the business meeting. Several Friends also noted the role SAYMA can play in bringing it to the attention of monthly meetings. Friends expressed interest in having the minute considered for adoption by SAYMA as a whole, and Friends celebrated YAF for "doing what we should have thought to do." A Friend noted that YAF may have been led to adopt a minute within the YAF structure because its processes move more quickly than SAYMA's processes.

The report was accepted.

152-18 Report from the Earth Justice Committee ([Attachment K: Earth Justice Committee Report](#))

No representative of the Earth Justice Committee was present to give the committee's report. The Earth Justice Committee has asked monthly meetings to season the committee's draft minute and to send their responses to the committee, with a hope that the minute is ready for consideration during the Annual Sessions in June. Responses may be sent to earthjustice@sayma.org.

The report was accepted.

The minutes for Representative Meeting 152 were reviewed and approved in the face of the meeting.

152-19 Closing Worship - 6:14 pm ET

Friends entered silent worship, after which RM152 was closed.

Respectfully submitted,

Daryl Bergquist and Margaret Farmer
Co-clerks
(archived copy is signed)

Blake Burr
Recording Clerk
(archived copy is signed)

Attachment A: Co-clerks' Letter

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Dear Friends,

April 4, 2024

How are we called by Spirit? How do we actively incorporate Spirit's guidance in all we do?

How might we develop a more compassionate community in which we recognize, honor and nurture each individual's gifts?

Work within SAYMA is progressing. Here are some updates of activity since our November Representative Meeting:

- SAYMA's Annual Sessions and Retreat will be held June 20-23, 2024, at Berea College in Berea, Kentucky. Activities will begin midday on Thursday with lunch at 12. This is the last call for submitting workshop proposals for annual sessions and retreat; here's the link to the workshop proposal form:
<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdo74II0nmC3N9qGUTq6eIV7-P0BEMu9ypHznvNdWtri8C27w/viewform>
- Susan Phelan is looking forward to retiring from her position as Administrative Assistant on July 15. She will begin orienting Rob Collins of Birmingham Friends Meeting to the position on May 15. We are deeply appreciative of the support and service Susan has been providing so faithfully.
- The Personnel Committee, assisted by the Finance Committee, has drafted a job description for a bookkeeper:
https://www.sayma.org/online_documents/bookkeeper_job.pdf Resumes should be sent to personnel@sayma.org by April 30.
- The Nominating Committee is seeking candidates for Yearly Meeting Planning Committee clerk, SAYMA clerk, and Treasurer. As SAYMA seeks a new treasurer, filling the bookkeeper position will alleviate some of the load of that office. We are very grateful to Kendall Ivie for his many years of service as SAYMA treasurer; he must retire from this position as he manages health and family concerns.
- The Nominating committee needs four new members, one of whom would serve as committee co-clerk; therefore an ad hoc Naming Committee will be set up.
- The ad hoc Faith and Practice Revision Committee is activated, with the addition of Joel O'Brien, a young adult Friend from Asheville Meeting. He is a graduate of both the Arthur Morgan School and Scattergood Friends School.
- The Finance Committee requested and helped SAYMA co-clerks establish an ad hoc Assessment Committee to explore monthly meeting assessments. Friends serving on this committee are Connie Hill (Birmingham Meeting treasurer), Diane McCluskey (Chattanooga Meeting treasurer and SAYMA Finance Committee member), and Paul Mangelsdorf (Atlanta Meeting Finance clerk).

The committee reports for the **April 6 Representative Meeting** are posted (as they arrive) on the SAYMA website (sayma.org). Please review these before the meeting, so you have time to reflect and season any responses. The meeting will be held at the Atlanta Friends Meetinghouse in Decatur, Georgia, and will also be accessible on Zoom for Friends not making the trip in person. Registration is required and will close Friday evening, April 5. Here is a link to the registration form:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeMQstvKGR90MDmJSIquaRb5aF2fQ7zbZGaY5iECMH217Nh0Q/viewform>.

We continue to work toward conflict transformation in our yearly meeting. Conflict is a natural process in communities, heralding that the beginnings of change are already upon us. How do we ask Spirit to guide us in recognizing conflict as an opportunity for both personal growth and deeper spiritual connection within our community?

Because we were unable to cover all items on our business agenda at the November meeting, we offer here, *as a reminder rather than "rules"*, guidance from Friends General Conference: [Participating in Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business](#).

Six wider Quaker organizations have united to form a coalition named Quaker Coalition Uprooting Racism (QCUR). The contributing organizations are Friends General Conference, American Friends Service Committee, Friends Committee on Legislation, Quaker Volunteer Service, Pendle Hill, and Friends Committee on Education. QCUR has published a document that outlines a few of the behavioral patterns that cause racial harm, linked here:

[Racial Wounding and Racial Justice in Quaker Communities](#) . An epistle from the SAYMA Friends of Color focus group, out of their lived experience, is linked here: [SAYMA BIFOC Epistle. June 2023](#)

As our term as your co-clerks draws to a close, we are thankful for the warm support we have received. We are thankful for the blessings of spiritual growth and new friendships that have come our way. Our wish list for SAYMA in the future:

- Creation of processes for both clearness committees and reconciliation work for tension between Friends
- More avenues for deeper sharing beyond and between monthly meetings
- Spiritual deepening retreats
- Continue the work of becoming a more inclusive and anti-racist community

Friends, what is on your wishlist? Please let us hear from you.

Holding our yearly meeting and each of you in the Light,
Daryl Bergquist and Margaret Farmer
clerk@sayma.org

Attachment B: Attendance Roster

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Attachment C: Nominating Committee Report

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Nominating Committee report April 2024

Since the Yearly Meeting gathering in June we have been meeting twice a month to try to fill four of the most important positions of responsibility that we have in our Yearly Meeting, our next clerk of yearly meeting, our treasurer, and the clerk of our yearly meeting planning committee. This process is usually deep and centering work where as a committee we worshipfully try to find the best person for a position. In order to get to know our community of individuals better we have begun the process of reaching out to young adult friends, SAYF, the URJ committee, and those people who attend yearly meeting sessions or clerk monthly meetings.

The current Treasurer of SAYMA took the position temporarily and we have been unable to find a new person for the job. As a committee we would like to add our voices to the finance committee and ask that SAYMA hire a bookkeeper to make being our treasurer a little easier.

We have had several meetings centered on bringing Star Smith forward as one of our three representatives to FWCC. We received a letter from the recently formed Friends of Color conflict transformation group asking us to do just that. In our committee work we encountered some of the conflict that SAYMA as a body is experiencing. We could not reach unity. Some of us are hopeful that we have built enough trust together that we can truly transform this conflict by listening to each other, learning from each other, and above all, listening to Spirit and remaining open to that transformation.

Listed below are our current slate of nominations to bring forward for your approval:

Alexis Hamnett (Nashville Monthly Meeting), for Junior Yearly Meeting planning committee, 2024-2026. Alexis is the mother of two children and helped plan the recent retreat for JYM in Nashville. She brings new energy and experience to the committee.

Margaret Farmer (Asheville Friends Meeting), continuing as our representative to Friends General Conference, 2024-2027. Margaret has been faithfully doing this work for three years and would like to continue deepening this ministry. She brings many gifts to FGC and brings back to us the information we need.

Lissa Place (Atlanta Monthly Meeting), as clerk of SAYMA Ministry and Nurture Committee, 2024-2026. Lissa has been attending the SAYMA M & N committee for several months. She has valuable clerking experience and knowledge of how racism works in the United States.

Diane Rowley (Atlanta Monthly Meeting), as a representative to the American Friends Service Committee, 2024-2027. Diane has been led to work with AFSC and has been serving for three years on one of the AFSC governance committees. She is also co-chair of the Black Thriving Initiative, a new working group that supports AFSC staff here in the US and abroad. She will be a great conduit of communication between that work for AFSC and SAYMA.

Kendall Ivie
Annie Black
Mark Gooch
Julia Ewen
Morgan Murray
Chuck Jones
Pat Gailey
Adrian Mehr

Attachment D: Report of the Personnel Committee

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The personnel committee has been unusually active this year. In addition to our normal duties of guiding the performance evaluation process, we had two positions to fill.

Honoring Susan Phelan's request to end her duties as SAYMA's administrative assistant, the personnel committee conducted a job search during December – January. Susan made significant contributions in her role, assisting two clerks in navigating the administrative duties required and guiding SAYMA through the challenges of COVID helping us switch from an organization that conducts our business in person to one that must navigate distance and electronic challenges to keep us connected and functioning. Thank you, Susan, for carrying us through those challenging times. The Personnel Committee appreciates the assistance Susan provided in updating the job description and helping with the interview process for her replacement, which is a tall order. Susan has also graciously agreed to continue in her role until after Annual Sessions which will be an enormous help to our new administrative assistant.

In response to the need to find a replacement for Susan, the Personnel Committee updated the job description, developed advertisements, and posted the job in various Quaker venues such as Friends Journal, on the SAYMA Website, with Monthly Meetings in SAYMA, and to yearly meetings surrounding SAYMA. Though the applicant pool was small, we were fortunate in that some very qualified candidates applied. We are pleased to announce that we have offered the position to Rob Collins, who has accepted. Rob attends the Birmingham Friends Meeting and SAYMA. Rob has strong computer skills, a love for organization, and he will help us leverage the possibilities of electronic document control along with the many other duties we have grown accustomed to for this role. Please welcome Rob to the role, which he will begin in May as we have a two-month overlap allowing Susan to mentor Rob who will assume sole responsibility for the role in July.

Per a minute from 2022, the personnel committee was asked by the Finance Committee to post a part- time bookkeeper position. We hope to fill this position with someone from within SAYMA in the next month or so. If you know someone who might be interested, please ask them to send a resume as indicated on the SAYMA.org website job posting.

Respectfully,
Robert McGahey, Committee Clerk
Melissa Preast, at large
Sherri Messimer, at large
Daryl Bergquist, SAYMA Co-Clerk
Margaret Farmer, SAYMA Co-Clerk

Attachment E: SAYMA Bookkeeper Job Description

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SAYMA Bookkeeper

Summary of Duties:

The bookkeeper is responsible for routine financial transactions of the Southern Appalachian Yearly Meeting and Association. The Bookkeeper follows the guidelines outlined in the SAYMA Finance Handbook.

Supervision:

The work is directed by the SAYMA Treasurer, in cooperation with the SAYMA Finance Committee.

Specific Duties:

The Bookkeeper's duties are time-sensitive with an estimated timeline as listed below.

Weekly

- Record deposits in all YM funds, including monthly meeting assessments, YM registrations, and contributions and gifts.
- Make all disbursements as requested by the Treasurer and keep appropriate documentation, compliance with budget, and availability of funds.

Monthly

- Verify payroll in QuickBooks online auto payroll Elite service.
- Reconcile accounts in accounting software.
- Maintain a well-organized system of electronic documentation of expenses, receipts, and reports.
- Prepare materials for the Treasurer to present at Finance Committee meetings.
- Attend Finance committee meetings as requested.
- Transfer Donor-Restricted donations to the appropriate fund.



Quarterly

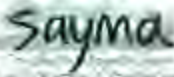
- Prepare information for the Treasurer's report at quarter's end.
- Transfer budgeted allocations to the appropriate set-aside funds.

Annually

- Provide data for annual budget planning and assist in developing a budget.
- Provide expense analysis to all committee clerks for review in preparation for the annual budget. (Feb)
- Assist in developing year-end reports.
- Assist in preparing and mailing year-end contribution letters.
- Use QuickBooks online to prepare W-2 forms for employees and 1099 forms for contractors and others.
- Assist with registration for Yearly Meeting in the spring and early summer.

Unscheduled, recurrent tasks

- Work with the Treasurer to verify that State requirements for employees are being met (worker's compensation and unemployment insurance, etc.)
- Maintain a backup system for electronic records.
- Follow the record retention policy.
- Maintain and update databases of contributors and vendors.
- Maintain financial records and reports in accounting software (QuickBooks).
- Collect and submit new employee forms as needed.
- Maintain good communication with the Treasurer and the Finance Clerk.
- Maintain frequent communication with Administrative Assistant.
- Learn the functions and operational budgets of the programs and special funds.
- Research and respond to various accounting/financial questions, policies, data requests, from the Treasurer and Finance



committee

- Support the finance committee in updating the Finance Handbook.
- Become familiar with the business and financial operations and assist in identifying areas for improvement and clarification.
- Provide documentation and information needed for audits/reviews.
- Perform other duties as assigned by the Finance Committee.

Hours:

The Bookkeeper is a part-time, salaried position averaging 10-15 hours a month. The workload is variable throughout the year with no set schedule. The average workload during slow periods is less than three hours per week. During busier times such as at year-end, the workload is about five hours per week.

Qualifications:

- Strong integrity and commitment to maintaining confidentiality.
- Basic skills in managing financial accounts, developing budgets, and maintaining accurate records.
- Basic computer skills in word processing, spreadsheets, and QuickBooks online accounting software.
- Good oral and written communication skills.
- Ability to work independently with minimal supervision.
- Ability to work cooperatively with the Administrative Assistant, the Treasurer, the Assistant Treasurer, the Finance Committee, and other SAYMA officers.
- Attention to matters of detail.
- Capacity to evaluate revenue and expenditure data, identify emerging patterns and trends, and advise the Treasurer as needed or requested.

Attachment F: Finance Committee Clerk's Report

[\(return to the minutes\)](#)

SAYMA Reps 152 Finance Report - April 6, 2024

The finance budget sub-committee is working on the Fiscal Year 2025 budget. We are thankful to have received many responses from people in SAYMA positions of responsibility about their needs for 2025, which begins October 1, 2024. We appreciate the Monthly Meeting treasurers who have reaffirmed their meeting's monetary support for SAYMA for the current fiscal year. If you have not yet responded to the finance committee's request for your budget needs for FY 2025, please send an email to me and the SAYMA treasurer. [saymatreasurer@gmail.com; finance@sayma.org]

Between now and Yearly Meeting Sessions and Retreat, the finance committee will review the sub-committee's proposed budget in mid-April and send the draft to Monthly Meetings in late April-early May for their discernment and recommendations. Finance encourages MM's clerks to engage their Meetings and/or finance committees in May for review of and input to the draft budget. Finance asks for MM responses by May 24.

The Finance committee can now accept donations of stock. This is possible through a new relationship set up in December with Friends Fiduciary, by the treasurer. Previously, donations of stock had to go through a cumbersome process through our bank account. To make a stock donation, email the treasurer.

The grants subcommittee finalized grant requests for the Racial Conflict Transformation program for the SAYMA co-clerks to send to 4 Yearly Meetings: Baltimore, New England, Philadelphia and New York. SAYMA co-clerks, Daryl Bergquist and Margaret Farmer signed the request and Susan Phelan sent them in early January.

We sent a bookkeeper job description estimating 10-15 hours per month to the Personnel committee with a proposed salary of \$3600/ year. This position will move the bulk of the numerous weekly and monthly tasks of the treasurer to a paid position, and help the Meeting find a volunteer treasurer to replace acting treasurer Kendall Ivie. We have asked the Personnel committee to send the notice of the new position and the job description to monthly meetings ASAP.

With Susan Phelan's help, I have begun the process of applying to the state of Kentucky for a sales and use tax exemption for SAYMA. Last year we paid over \$600 in sales tax for our use of Berea College facilities. One problem is a request for Articles of Incorporation to be included with the application. So far, those have not been located, and one original founder of SAYMA, Larry Ingle, doesn't think SAYMA wrote such articles. SAYMA has not filed annual corporation papers and fees in anyone's memory. Anyone with any knowledge about this, please contact me.

During the next year, our committee will be revisiting the Finance handbook description for changes in the last 4 years, since Carol Lamm made the last update in 2020.
Respectfully submitted, Karen terHorst Morris, clerk

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A Path to Racial Conflict Transformation

Goals:

Create an opportunity to build Friendships across differences, and uplift our Testimonies of, Integrity, Equality, and Community. Give special attention to racial tensions. A look at how institutionalized Quaker Practice enables racial strife.

Strategy: Three two-hour Meetings for Worship w/attention to racial conflict transformation at SAYMA Sessions 2024

#1. Threshing/Sacred Listening: Speaking from the heart. Releasing painful memories, making room for spiritual growth and healing. By Invitation*
(Thursday, 6/20/24 from 3:15 to 5:15 PM)

#2. Brave Dialogue: Analyzing our conflicts through an anti-racist lens. Clarifying what we can agree on and what needs more work. Creating paths for deeper understanding and compassion. Open to Everyone
(Friday, 6/21/24 from 3:15 to 5:15 PM)

#3. Plan for Success/Sacred Steps: Identifying opportunities for moving forward in community and the building blocks for right-relationships. How to avoid old steps and mis-steps while creating new steps. Sacred space for Truth, Restorative Justice, and Building the Beloved Community. Open to Everyone
(Saturday, 6/22/24 from 3:15 to 5:15 PM)

*For Friends unable to attend the threshing session yet would still like to contribute, please **email your** messages to prasirestorativepractices@gmail.com by June 8 th, at 5 pm.

There will also be 2 virtual opportunities prior to the scheduled hybrid event, June 8th from 6 to 7 pm, and June 9 from 8 to 9 PM pm

Follow up:

Explore the use of clearness committees and other conflict resolution processes such as, Mediation, Truth and Restorative Justice, and training in Systemic Racial Analysis.

Dr. S. Boland, J.D., A.B. — CONFLICT, RESTORATIVE, TRAUMA, ALTERNATIVE RESOLUTION CONSULTANT with extensive and diverse experience with individuals, families, communities, medical professionals, and educational institutions.

Areas of interest, research, teaching, and other contributions include Culture, Conflict and Community, Negotiation, Mediation, Conflict Resolution, Conflict Management, Leadership Development, Legal Reasoning and Conflict Management, Diversity Issues in Conflict Resolution, restorative practice, and Group Conflict Resolution.

Dr. Boland has served as a consultant, practitioner and educator happily for many years. Her work in higher education includes Morehouse School of Medicine's Family Practice Development Program, Tuskegee University's School of Business, Colgate University, and Columbia College's Master of Arts in Conflict Resolution, just to name a few.

Some of her contributions in this regard are past membership on the editorial review team of the Conflict Resolution Quarterly; written contributions and editorial contributions to: *Re-Centering Culture and Knowledge in Conflict Resolution Practice*, (**Syracuse University Press**), *Beyond Equity and Inclusion: Recentering the Profession of Conflict Resolution*, (Rowman & Littlefield, 2022).

Current Consulting Services Include Commitment to providing traditional and non-traditional resources to the field of conflict resolution in the areas of relationship building, bridge building, inspiring literature from traditionally underrepresented voices, and creating dialogue opportunities, through Practitioners Research and Scholarship Institute (PRASI), a collaboration of diverse and creative people in the world of conflict resolution devoted to addressing the needs of people of color and others who are conventionally overlooked. Commitment to understanding and exploring the impact of conflict resolution processes on Black communities.

Partial List of Available Trainings: General Mediation, Family Mediation, Juvenile Mediation, Arbitration, Transformative Mediation – General and Advanced, Peacemaking Circles, Restorative Justice, Large Group Facilitation, Community Mediation, Community Oriented Police, and Equal Employment Opportunity Training.

Dr. Bowland is a board member of the Georgia Council on Dispute Resolution; the American Association of Higher Education; the National Association of Mediators in Education; the National Women's Conference Committee Board and the American Society of Training and Development. S is also a Co-Founder of PRASI and current Chair of the board.

Credentials: Jurist Doctor, George Washington University
National Law Center, Washington DC
BA, Social Relations Colgate University, Hamilton, NY

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Yearly Meeting Planning Committee Report to SAYMA Representatives Meeting 4/6/2024

Greetings Friends

The Yearly Meeting Planning Committee has been hard at work building and scheduling this year's Sessions and Retreat. I have been reflecting on the tasks of the last three years - designing our first virtual sessions (2021), then our first hybrid sessions (2022), then our first hybrid sessions at Berea College (2023)! This is the first year in four that we have not had any major new adjustments to make which has resulted in a sense of ease and less urgency on the committee.

Our brief survey of Friends regarding the preferred length of SAYMA Session & Retreat showed that there was not a strong preference for either a 4 or 5 day event. However a review of the data suggested that a 4-day retreat would be more accessible for Friends who work full time, especially young adult Friends. We scheduled the event for 4 days.

We settled on our theme of Becoming Breath of Spirit after several worshipful meetings. The inspiration for the theme comes from the hymn *Spirit of God**, written by Miriam Therese Winter, 1976.

Things to look forward to at this year's SAYMA Sessions and Retreat:

1. As always there will be worship and business every day with business in the mornings and worship opportunities throughout the day.
2. We look forward to our afternoons - We will have racial conflict transformation sessions that invite all of us to be part of the conversation; Thursday afternoon opportunities to visit with local Berea scholars Sharyn Mitchell, Archivist from Berea College and Dr. Shadee Malaklou, founder and director of the bell hooks center. And on Friday and Saturday a rich offering of workshops!
3. We are thrilled about the Evening events - a plenary with the Executive Director of AFSC, Joyce Ajlouny who will speak to being a Palestinian Quaker; an evening of fun brought to us by the SAYMA Faith and Practice ad hoc committee in cooperation with SAYF-Back to the Future, A Dickens-Inspired Quaker Carol; and an evening of dancing and music with talented Berea artists.
4. JYM and SAYF planners are busy at work preparing parallel programming for these groups.

The Cost of registration is going up this year to ensure we continue to cover what we expect is a larger group of children attending as well as Friends of Color and so we can offer appropriate stipends to our guest presenters. The cost for our technology team also went up this year which was expected. We hope Friends will seek financial support from their home meetings if needed and if unavailable will request a scholarship through SAYMA.

If you have questions, I welcome them at YMPC@SAYMA.org

Respectfully submitted,
Jennifer Dickie, Clerk SAYMA YMPC

**Spirit of God, Miriam Therese Winter, 1976*

Spirit of God in the clear running water,
Blowing to greatness the trees on the hill,
Spirit of God in the finger of morning,
Fill the earth, bring it to birth, and
blow where you will.

Chorus: Blow, blow, blow till I be
But breath of the Spirit blowing in me. (2x)

Down in the meadow the willows are moaning,
Sheep in the pastureland cannot lie still,
Spirit of God, creation is groaning,
Fill the earth, bring it to birth, and
blow where you will.

Spirit of God, every one's heart is lonely,
Watching and waiting and hungry until,
Spirit of God, we long that you only fulfill,
The earth, bring it birth, and
blow where you will.

Attachment I: Report of the Ad-hoc Faith & Practice Committee

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Dear Friends,

A small ad hoc committee is experiencing the joy of updating A Guide to Our Faith and Practice. The current guide was created as a spirit-led process developed over ten years from 2002-2012 with a modification to queries published in 2021. In keeping with the principle of continuing revelation - we seek a document that carries us forward, guides us in our spiritual practices, and supports our faith for the next ten years and beyond.

We hope that you will participate in making this revision an inclusive and community-led experience. The committee intends to have sharing sessions and collect input from as many Friends as feel led to participate. We will attend affinity groups and also set up a Google Group to encourage and facilitate interaction and contributions.

We seek not only suggestions for updates, requests for additions, revisions to committee sections, and language modifications for inclusivity, but we ask Friends to provide spiritually uplifting items such as a poem you wrote, quotes from those who inspire you (with the attribution to the author), drawings or artwork that can be included in addition to text, this includes audio or video creations for the online version.

For access to the google group or to submit suggestions please email us at FandP@sayma.org

In Harmony,
Faith & Practice Ad Hoc Committee Members

Melissa Preast
Star Smith
Wood Bouldin
Kathleen Mavournin

Attachment J: SAYMA YAF Report

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SAYMA YAF Report - April 6, 2024

The SAYMA Young Adult Friends have had 2 business meetings since the SAYMA Yearly Gathering. We have a Discord server we continue to utilize where YAFs are welcomed to reach out and be in community with one another. Various meetings have hosted YAF potluck dinners and we are hoping to hold a retreat later on this year for all SAYMA YAFs. We've continued to check in on each other through the year, bonding with one another and holding each other in the light through joys and sorrows.

The SAYMA YAFs are incredibly grateful for the following individuals who have answered a calling to clerk for us: Guthrie (Atlanta Friends Meeting), Zoe (Asheville Friends Meeting), Levi (Berea Friends Meeting) and Jackson (Berea Friends Meeting). The SAYMA YAFs have adjusted the clerking rotation to better adapt to our commitment capacity. Once every three months we choose a new Assistant Clerk, and the prior assistant clerk becomes Clerk of the SAYMA YAFs. Two clerks allows us to ensure that no individual person feels the full weight of clerking alone, and the shortened timeline allows flexibility for changing commitments and availability. Currently our Clerk is Levi and the Assistant Clerk is Jackson. The best way to reach SAYMA YAFs is through yaf@sayma.org.

We are thankful for Laura (Atlanta Friends Meetings) and Lincoln (Berea Friends Meeting) who have stepped into the YAF finance committee to help us understand and steward the financial gifts that SAYMA has given us. Currently this money is used for retreat scholarships to assist YAFs as they travel for Quaker events or workshops. (should we include actual numbers here? Personally, I think we should be transparent here - it's a normal budget)

We are thankful for YAFs who have stepped into other SAYMA committees as well. Sven (Atlanta Friends Meeting) has stepped into the SAYMA Planning Committee since October 2023, Joel (Asheville Friends Meeting) has stepped into the Faith and Practice Review Committee since February 2024, and Maggie (Birmingham Friends Meeting) will be stepping down from the SAYMA Ministry & Nurture Committee after 2 years with them in June 2024.

We nominated and approved Jackson (Berea Friends Meeting) to represent SAYMA YAFs as he travels to South Africa and attends the FWCC International Friends Conference and the YAF conference that will happen prior as well. We also approved the use of funds from the SAYMA YAF trust that is being stewarded by our treasurers.

SAYMA YAFs have also approved the following minute about the Palestinian genocide:

As Friends, we call for an immediate ceasefire in all of Palestine and ceasing of any and all US support (military, financial, and otherwise) to the Israeli government. As pacifists, we keenly perceive the difference between peace-keeping (which often obstructs true peace in favor of the maintenance of more implicit systems of violence) and peace-making (which centers justice and conflict reconciliation). We perceive that the language used by Friends must be clearer than "conflict" or even "war," when our practical and spiritual witness is that of Occupation and Genocide. We feel that the work to come in the aftermath of the attempted genocide of the Palestinian people must prioritize liberation, and center and lift up the voices of the oppressed.

We look at our Quaker histories of support for Palestinians. We hear our Jewish siblings and Black siblings who have articulated for many decades that collective liberation is a moral, political, spiritual, philosophical, and practical imperative. We uphold this call in America, in Palestine, and in every place that the light of humankind is burning.

Attachment K: Earth Justice Committee Report

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Report of the SAYMA Earth Justice Committee
4/6/2024

Earth Justice Committee has developed the following draft Statement of SAYMA's concern and call for action regarding the Climate Crisis. We encourage Friends to bring this draft Statement to your Meetings as impetus to consider, discern, approve, revise, and/or create a statement of your own that reflects your Meeting's leading(s) with respect to the Climate Crisis. **Please send the results of your meeting's discernment to the Earth Justice committee via email at earthjustice@sayma.org.** We hope and expect to bring a Climate Statement to the Summer Sessions in Berea based on the feedback that we receive and discernment that will take place during the Retreat, in keeping with our established process for SAYMA's Peace and Social Concerns Committee.

We do not seek discussion of the draft minute by the Representative Meeting. We do not seek discernment about its content or any kind of wordsmithing exercise. If anyone has clarifying questions, committee member Roy Taylor will try to answer them.

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Climate Statement
[Draft Version]

Southern Appalachian Yearly Meeting and Association (SAYMA)

The Religious Society of Friends witnesses to the truth of our times. In this moment, we recognize that we are facing an existential crisis that requires a response greater than individual actions. The systemic structures as well as the daily choices of peoples, governments and faith communities across the globe must act in radical concert to address the climate catastrophe we have created.

World leaders will come together for the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention on Climate Change (COP29). SAYMA calls on them to acknowledge that the burning of fossil fuels is the primary cause of the climate crisis, and to recognize that many of the nations that are hardest hit by a warming climate have been the least responsible for the crisis and are least able to cope with the consequences. We call on COP29 to clearly state that the existential crisis of climate change requires more than merely an orderly transition. We must end our use of fossil fuels by 2030. We call on COP29 negotiators to commit to fully finance the Loss and Damage Fund to compensate developing countries, and the Green Climate Fund to implement renewable solutions in developing countries.

The continued burning of fossil fuels is destabilizing the climate, acidifying oceans, and destroying the natural systems that humans and all living creatures depend on. Friends in the Southern Appalachian region are guided by our query for Care of the Earth that asks "How do I hold in the Light the impact of climate change on the 'least of these,' the vulnerable members of the human, animal, and plant communities?"

Every Friend, household, and meeting in our community is asked to be responsive to this query and we all ask our neighbors around the world to take immediate and practical steps to reverse our dependence on fossil fuels and demonstrate a communal reverence for interdependent life.