

# ATLANTA FRIENDS MEETING NEWSLETTER

## FEBRUARY 2024



Current and back issues of the newsletter are available at <http://atlantaquakers.org/archive.htm>

The most recent announcement sheet is always at [http://atlantaquakers.org/announcements/Announcement\\_Sheet.pdf](http://atlantaquakers.org/announcements/Announcement_Sheet.pdf)

Meeting for Worship each First Day (Sunday) in Person & via Zoom, 10:00 am.  
Details for Sunday worship and for our Wednesday small meetings for worship, in person and zoom, are in the announcement sheet (link just above).

### QUERY FOR FEBRUARY

Do I examine myself for aspects of prejudice that may be buried, including beliefs that seem to justify biases based on race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, class, and feelings of inferiority or superiority?

### WHAT CANST THOU SAY?

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*by Bill Holland*

I believe that the fundamental Quaker question is “what canst Thou say?” It is the inward experience and the knowledge that arises from a deep place within. It is a fundamentally and profoundly different way of “knowing.” I have been reading the text of a 1949 William Penn lecture by Jean Toomer, a poet associated with the Harlem Renaissance. Toomer was an active member of the Society of Friends. Toomer presents the Quaker journey as three “progressive stages - seeking, ascending, extending. Asking, receiving, giving.” He asks, “Without receiving, what have we to give?”

To receive requires we be open, to realize our incompleteness. The challenge to each of us as we engage with Quakerism and our form of worship is to be open to transformation; Toomer calls this “a deep rise.” Each time we come to worship, we have the possibility of that “deep rise” that provides us with the fuel to extend ourselves to the world. When we simply rely upon our ideas and “airy head knowledge,” we miss the essential life. A vital living Quakerism requires us to move beyond historical interpretation and make it a living witness to Spirit’s presence and reality.

I was involved in social change activities for many years. I saw over and over the “engine” that seemed to drive many activists was anger. When we are driven by anger, it becomes easy to turn other people into the enemy. Again and again, I saw talented committed people burn-out with disappointment within a few years as their vision foundered on the tough reality of social change. One of the reasons I treasure our silent time together is that I can rely on it to be the rock to which I return, to know my condition and open myself to the great Love I believe surrounds us.

Dear SAYMA Friends,

December 29, 2023

We wish all of you a very happy New Year. This letter is to inform you of new developments, needs, and opportunities. The Ministry and Nurture Committee has sent a separate letter concerning the state of the monthly meeting reports.

SAYMA's next **Representative Meeting** will be a hybrid event: in person hosted by Atlanta Friends Meeting, with the option to join us virtually. The meeting is scheduled for **Saturday, April 6, 2024**. You will be receiving registration information from Susan Phelan as Atlanta Friends finalize the plans. Please register as early as possible if you anticipate needing overnight hospitality.

We have appointed the ad hoc Faith and Practice Revision Committee, with the following members:

- Melissa Preast (W. Knoxville Meeting, committee clerk, and member of the most recent F&P review committee)
- Wood Bouldin (Greenbriar Worship Group, member of the most recent F&P review committee)
- Star Smith (Paul Cuffee Worship Group, clerk of the most recent F&P review committee)
- Kathleen Mavournin (W. Knoxville Meeting, clerk of the previous F&P revision committee)
- Joel O'Brien (a young adult convinced Friend and member of Asheville Friends Meeting, and a graduate of Arthur Morgan School, and Scattergood Friends School.)

Chris de Beer (clerk of Southern Appalachian Young Friends Steering Committee) has agreed to serve as liaison from SAYF to this committee. Wood and Melissa also serve on both the Handbook and Ministry and Nurture Committees.

The Finance Committee has requested that we appoint an ad hoc Assessment Committee. This committee will explore and may recommend changes to annual assessments from monthly meetings. If you or someone from your meeting has experience/interest in budgets and/or finance, please email us at [clerk@sayma.org](mailto:clerk@sayma.org).

SAYMA is **seeking donations** from individuals and meetings in order that budget amounts cut from FGC, FWCC and other line items can be restored. A link for donations is available on SAYMA's website under the "contribute" tab. Friends can find the Finance Committee and the Treasurer's reports online attached to the minutes of Representative Meeting 151. A SAYMA account has now been set up with Friends Fiduciary so that SAYMA can accept donations of appreciated stock from Friends.

Susan Phelan, SAYMA's Administrative Assistant, plans on retiring this summer after our retreat and annual sessions in Berea, Ky. We deeply appreciate Susan's graceful support and service to our yearly meeting. The Personnel Committee is searching for Friends interested in filling this part time paid position. See the job description (on the SAYMA.org home page) for full details. To apply, Friends may send resumes to [personnel@sayma.org](mailto:personnel@sayma.org) by January 31, 2024. Friends applying do not necessarily need to be participants in a SAYMA meeting or worship group; the Personnel Committee is reaching beyond SAYMA's geographical borders in this search.

Kendall Ivie needs to lay down his work in SAYMA as our Treasurer. Kendall has faithfully served in this capacity several times, over many years, and at this time must lay this work down. If you know of anyone who is willing to learn "the ropes" as Assistant Treasurer, please notify the Nominating Committee as soon as possible at [nominating@sayma.org](mailto:nominating@sayma.org).

One more open position is that of clerk (or co-clerks) of Yearly Meeting Planning Committee (YMPC). Jennifer Dickie, current YMPC clerk, has been asked by the Nominating Committee to serve as yearly meeting clerk for the next two years. Daryl's and Margaret's term ends at the close of June 2024 retreat and annual sessions. Jennifer is willing to serve in this capacity, requesting a few months as Assistant Clerk of SAYMA prior to taking on the responsibilities of yearly meeting clerk. She looks forward to orienting and assisting the incoming YMPC clerk(s) from March-June as he/she/they take on this new role. The new YMPC clerk(s) will be working with a committee of well-seasoned members, most of whom were active in setting up last year's retreat and annual sessions at Berea College.

Prior to the April 6 Representative meeting, we will be meeting with Monthly Meeting clerks to listen, to learn what support is needed, and to receive requests. We will also be meeting with our Clerks' Advisory Committee, which includes SAYMA officers, and clerks of SAYMA committees. In this meeting we listen to how each committee is faring, to learn what support is needed, and to hear what business items may be brought to the representative meeting.

Holding our yearly meeting, monthly meetings, and worship groups in the Light,  
*Daryl Bergquist and Margaret Farmer*  
SAYMA co-clerks  
[clerk@sayma.org](mailto:clerk@sayma.org)

#### ABOUT SOUTHERN YEARLY MEETING AND ASSOCIATION (SAYMA)

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For more information about SAYMA, see [www.sayma.org](http://www.sayma.org). SAYMA's 2021 *Faith and Practice*, with revised queries, is also available in printed form at the meetinghouse in the literature rack by the front door. Donations of \$5 towards the cost of the book are welcome, just drop in the contribution slot. Or order online (cost of \$5.00) or download as a free pdf at [https://www.sayma.org/online\\_documents.htm](https://www.sayma.org/online_documents.htm).

#### PLEASE HOLD IN THE LIGHT:

Jeremiah Gold-Hopton  
and family

*If you wish to have requests for holding in the light included in this monthly newsletter and in the announcement sheet, please give the names to a member of Care & Counsel.*

#### Atlanta Friends Committees and Other Contacts

Clerk of the Meeting: David Small, [afmclerk1@gmail.com](mailto:afmclerk1@gmail.com)  
Office Coordinator: Nina Gooch, [atlantaquakers@gmail.com](mailto:atlantaquakers@gmail.com)  
Treasurer: Stacey Sharer, [afmtreasurer1@gmail.com](mailto:afmtreasurer1@gmail.com)  
Ministry & Worship: via Office Coordinator  
Finance: Paul Mangelsdorf, 770-677-4280  
Social Concerns: Kevin Moran, [moran.kevinmoran.kevin@gmail.com](mailto:moran.kevinmoran.kevin@gmail.com)  
Administration: Steve Collins, [shcollins75@gmail.com](mailto:shcollins75@gmail.com)  
Care & Counsel: Jennifer Crumpley, [afm.care.counsel@gmail.com](mailto:afm.care.counsel@gmail.com)  
Quakers for Racial Equality: Susan Firestone, [susanfires@gmail.com](mailto:susanfires@gmail.com)  
Committee on Undoing Racism in AFM: Lissa Place, [lissaplace@yahoo.com](mailto:lissaplace@yahoo.com)  
Religious Education: Amanda Gendreau, [AmandaGendreau5@gmail.com](mailto:AmandaGendreau5@gmail.com)  
Young Friends Program Coordinator, Asa Kramer-Dickie, [afm.young.friends@gmail.com](mailto:afm.young.friends@gmail.com)  
Library: Derek Harootune Otis, [dharootuneotis@gmail.com](mailto:dharootuneotis@gmail.com)  
Nominating: Lissa Place, [lissaplace@yahoo.com](mailto:lissaplace@yahoo.com)  
Newsletter Editor: Nina Gooch, [atlquakerltr@gmail.com](mailto:atlquakerltr@gmail.com)  
Webmaster: Aaron Ruscetta, [arxaaron@gmail.com](mailto:arxaaron@gmail.com)  
Bookkeeper: Jonah McDonald, [afmbookkeeper1@gmail.com](mailto:afmbookkeeper1@gmail.com)

**For info about these and other committees, download the AFM Handbook from <http://atlantaquakers.org/members.htm> (scroll down to the bottom to *AFM Documents to Download*) OR contact the Clerk of the committee.**

## BOOKS BY AND ABOUT PEOPLE OF COLOR -- Thursday, February 1

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The book group reading works by and about people of color meets at 1:30 p.m. on the first Thursday of the month in person in combination with Zoom. On February 1, they will discuss *Firekeeper's Daughter* by Angeline Boulley. For questions or the Zoom link, contact Susan Cole (cole2544@bellsouth.net). Future books include: March 7, *Autobiography of My Mother* by Jamaica Kincaid; April 4, *This Other Eden* by Paul Harding; and May 2, *The Fraud* by Zadie Smith.

## MACON QUAKERS IN-PERSON WORSHIP – Saturday, February 3

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On February 3, the Macon Worship Group, which is under our care, meets for worship in-person, as they do every first Saturday, at Centenary United Methodist Church, 1290 College Street, Macon, GA, at 2:00 pm.

This is in addition to the weekly Wednesday evening meeting for worship via Zoom at 7 pm <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85017745787?pwd=RUQ3OGJPenMrYktXemIxL1d2R3Q2Zz09>  
Meeting ID: 850 1774 5787  
Passcode: 22Light

## SPIRITUAL JOURNEYS, "QUAKERISM 101" & ADULT FIRST DAY SCHOOL – Sundays

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Each first Sunday of the month in Adult First Day School, we listen to how a Friend in our meeting answers questions of God's leadings as well as questions about what brings them to this meeting, what led them to become a member or not, and what they believe now. We call these stories Spiritual Journeys, stories where Friends describe their understanding of God and religion in their life. On February 4, Adam Hicks, originally scheduled for January, will share his Spiritual Journey. (To hear Paul Baker's Spiritual Journey from April 2010, which the class listened to on January 7, visit <http://tinyurl.com/mpbje255>. To listen to other past Spiritual Journeys, contact Mary Ann Downey at [madowney@mindspring.com](mailto:madowney@mindspring.com).)

We offer a standing invitation to all attenders and members – those new to meeting, transfers from other meetings, or longtime Atlanta members and attenders – to share your answers to these questions. Some Friends find it helpful to do this as an interview. For more information and to schedule a time to tell your story, contact Mary Ann Downey at [madowney@mindspring.com](mailto:madowney@mindspring.com).

Every year the Adult First Day Class begins the year with a "Quakerism 101" class. This is an opportunity for those new to Quakerism to learn more and to ask questions. It's also a great refresher class for those not so new. Our Quakerism 101 for 2024 will cover light, silence, and the SPICES (simplicity, peace, integrity, community, equality and stewardship). We will follow the book *Seeking the Light: A Quaker Journey for Quakers and Non-Quakers* by Linda Seger, ThD, but discussion will not be limited to the book. Whether you've read the book or not you will enjoy the lively discussion and learn more about our practice. Please join us at 9 AM on Sundays in the library. Quakerism 101 will be on second, third and fourth Sundays.

On fifth Sundays, Adult First Day School usually has worship sharing based on a query, either that month's query or another query.

Adult First Day School meets in person at the meetinghouse, and people can also join via Zoom. (Zoom details in the announcement sheet; see link at top of page 1.) For questions, please contact Elizabeth Lamb.

## LISTENING 4 JUSTICE – begins Saturday, February 3

Join Listening 4 Justice, founded by AFM member Folami Prescott Adams for an online 8-week experience of the power of listening to create a more just world. Weekly interactive gatherings are organized around 8 themes related to racial healing and cultural justice and include group discussions, individual reflection, and resources to support your ongoing work. Youth and adult facilitators create opportunities for people with diverse backgrounds to connect meaningfully to others with shared identities as well as across lines of difference. Listening 4 Justice will gather weekly online Saturdays, February 3 to March 23, 12:00 to 1:30 pm ET. This experience is open to anyone interested in answering the question: "What is mine to do to create more racial healing and cultural justice in the world?" Whether you are a seasoned activist or just starting to explore these issues, we welcome you to join us for this transformative journey. Register in advance at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/listening-4-justice-virtual-series-registration-723371442457>.

## PLEASE CHECK LOST & FOUND on Sunday, February 4

The Lost and Found box under the greeting table by the front door is getting full. Please check and see if anything is yours before the Office Coordinator takes things to the thrift store. On February 4, items in the Lost and Found will be spread out in the library so you can see more easily what is there. In addition to the lightweight jackets in the box, there are also several jackets and blazers that have been hanging on the coat rack across from the kitchen for a while. Leftover containers from previous potlucks can be found in the kitchen drawer labeled Plastic Containers, including some metal containers.

## POTLUCK – Sunday, February 4

Please join us for a potluck lunch following the rise of Meeting on the first Sunday of the month. Weather permitting, we have tables outside for you to enjoy.

Atlanta's FLGBTQC (Friends for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender – and genderqueer, nonbinary and genderfluid – Concerns) will gather at potluck, and Green Friends will meet during and afterwards. See announcement sheet for details.

If you can, please bring not only enough food for your family, but also extra for newcomers and guests.

## FLGBTQC GATHERING – Friday to Monday, February 16 to 18

The national Friends for LGBTQ Concerns is holding its virtual Midwinter Gathering from Friday, February 16, to Monday, February 19. AFM's local FLGBTQC chapter will be offering an in-person gathering to complement the virtual gathering, to include: meals, chances to get to know each other better, worship sharing (<http://tinyurl.com/whatisworshipsharing>), a panel discussion on the intersection of Quaker space and queer space, as well as intergenerational activities for children, teens and adults. A more detailed schedule is at <http://tinyurl.com/atlantaschedule>. Please attend as much or as little as you can. All are welcome, regardless of how you identify.

So that we can plan for food, please register at <http://tinyurl.com/midwinterregister>, being sure to fill out the questions for Atlanta including allergies and food needs. For more information, contact Nina Gooch or Derek H. Otis.

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COMMUNITY SUPPORT NEEDED: DONATE FOR SANDWICH RUN – thru Sunday, February 18

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Lifting Our Voices at Agnes Scott hosts a Sandwich Run on the 4th Saturday of every month to distribute meals and address food insecurity in the Decatur area. (On January 27, 583 meals were distributed.) Lifting Our Voices is asking for assistance in making a contribution to help those in need through donations of items such as peanut butter (regular peanut butter that does NOT need to be stirred please), jelly, loaves of bread, water bottles, feminine hygiene products, and more. Look for the donation bin by the greeting table thru February 18. A full list of requested supplies can be found at <https://online.updf.com/index/share/en-US?shareId=28c9b4c1-0a7c-4fdc-8754-0b1f23fce05f> . For more information about Lifting Our Voices check out the website at <https://liftingourvoices.org/> or contact attender Lily Moon at [lilymaymoon@gmail.com](mailto:lilymaymoon@gmail.com).

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MEETING FOR WORSHIP WITH ATTENTION TO BUSINESS – Sunday, February 18

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Stay after meeting for worship, whether in person or via Zoom. Meeting for Business will be held in a combined format about 11:45, using the Zoom coordinates for Meeting for Worship.

The minutes for last month's meeting are below.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89686276751?pwd=M29EYlIFWEhSQUtZRVVPalFFYmVDQT09>

Meeting ID: 896 8627 6751

Passcode: 789456

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QRE BOOK PRESENTATION: *BLACK ELDERS: THE MEANING OF AGE IN SLAVERY AND FREEDOM* -- Sunday, February 25

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Quakers for Racial Equality (QRE) invites you to a free online book presentation by attender Frederick (Fred) Knight, about his new book, *Black Elders: The Meaning of Age in Slavery and Freedom* on February 25, 2024 at 1:00 pm EST. Frederick Knight is a professor of history at Morehouse College who specializes in the history of the African Diaspora. Everyone is welcome.

Description of the book from University of Pennsylvania Press:

Would there have been a Frederick Douglass if it were not for Betsy Bailey, the grandmother who raised him? Would Harriet Jacobs have written her renowned autobiography, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, if her grandmother, a free black woman named Molly Horniblow, had not enabled Jacobs' escape from slavery? In *Black Elders: The Meaning of Age in American Slavery and Freedom*, Frederick C. Knight explores the pivotal role of the aged in the history of African and African American community formation through Reconstruction. Knight also examines how blacks and whites, men and women, the rich and the poor, the young and the old developed competing ideas about age and aging. *Black Elders* thus offers a unique window into the individual and collective lives of African Americans, the day-to-day struggles they waged around their experiences of aging, and how they drew upon these resources to define the meaning of family, community, and freedom.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89579697778?pwd=MHhHOGtlaVpgeHd2UURwclVoMmZSUT09>

Meeting ID: 895 7969 7778

Passcode: 440164

## AFSC EMERGING LEADERS FOR LIBERATION -- applications accepted thru Friday, March 1

American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) is now accepting applications for their hands-on learning program, Emerging Leaders for Liberation (<https://afsc.org/news/new-class-emerging-leaders-liberation>)! Applicants must be 18 to 22 years old as of April 1, 2024 and have a relationship to an AFSC program, a Quaker college/organization, or a Quaker Meeting. The cohort will begin meeting in April 2024. Submit your application by March 1 at <https://afsc.org/forms/emerging-leaders-liberation-ell-application>. If you have questions, please reach out to Julián Andaya at [jandaya@afsc.org](mailto:jandaya@afsc.org), Emerging Leaders for Liberation program director.

## FCNL'S SPRING LOBBY WEEKEND – March 16 to 19, register for in-person by March 1

Spring Lobby Weekend is Friends Committee on National Legislation's (FCNL's) four-day young adult conference that brings hundreds of people to Washington D.C. every year. Online options also available. FCNL says: "Together, we lobby for important change and speak truth to power in the halls of Congress. From March 16-19, we will urge Congress to pass legislation to establish a [Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding Schools](#) (S.1723). This legislation marks a crucial step in addressing the harms caused to generations of Native families by the forced assimilation and family separation that occurred because of these boarding schools. Our advocacy is needed to help begin this long-overdue reconciliation and healing work for Native communities." Please register at <http://tinyurl.com/4ft5s3pe>, learn more about the event, and find out how you can bring along some friends. There is also information about financial aid and housing options. Atlanta Friends Meeting also has scholarships for Young Adult Friends to attend events like this in the wider Quaker community. Contact Ministry and Worship Committee thru Mary Ann Downey for more information.

## HOSTS NEEDED FOR WELCOME DINNERS THIS WINTER AND SPRING

The Meeting hosts welcome dinners for newcomers in one of our homes (or at the meetinghouse) on the 18th of each month as a way for newcomers to get to know some of us in a smaller, less congested setting. If you would like to host a welcome dinner this winter or spring, please contact Jim Tolmach at [jimtolmach@icloud.com](mailto:jimtolmach@icloud.com) or 404-294-5194.

## TO JOIN CASA ALTERNA'S GROCERY SUPPORT TEAM

You can sign up to volunteer to purchase groceries and other needed items for Casa Alterna (<https://casaalterna.org/>) guests for a week (or more) in February or March at [https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C084FA5A72DAAFBC16-47294995-grocery#](https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C084FA5A72DAAFBC16-47294995-grocery#/). Your support of this work is making a huge impact on the lives of asylum seekers as they find their way in a new country and is greatly appreciated. For help signing up, please reach out to Joyce Lanterman, [joyeuse13@gmail.com](mailto:joyeuse13@gmail.com).

## 80 YEARS OF IMPACT: FCNL'S 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

is online at [https://www.fcnl.org/sites/default/files/2023-12/FCNL.AnnualReport.2223.20.web\\_.pdf](https://www.fcnl.org/sites/default/files/2023-12/FCNL.AnnualReport.2223.20.web_.pdf) Also see an end of year summary of Friends Committee on National Legislation's (FCNL's) advocacy work at <https://www.fcnl.org/updates/2023-12/2023-year-review-challenging-year-fcni-advocates-led-way-peace-and-justice?>

## FCNL STATEMENT ON ABORTION AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

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In early 2023, Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) invited Friends across the country and across the variety of Friends to consider our discernment on questions of Reproductive Health Care and Abortion. We were asked to focus on discernment on three queries:

Query 1: What does reproductive health care look like in the world that you and your community seek?

Query 2: How are the Quaker values and testimonies relevant to the issue of abortion?

Query 3: Should the FCNL Policy Statement be revised on the issues of abortion and reproductive health and abortion?

On March 28, 2023, twenty-four Friends gathered at Atlanta Meeting to consider the queries. (Comments from this gathering are at <http://tinyurl.com/4y7ne4xu>.) We summarized our comments and submitted them to the FCNL Policy Committee which developed a recommendation subsequently approved by the FCNL General Committee in November 2023:

Addendum to FCNL's Statement of Legislative Policy Regarding Reproductive Health Care and Abortion.

III.2.6. Health Care. Universal access to affordable, effective, comprehensive health care is a right and is necessary to allow all people to fulfill their potential. Comprehensive health care includes primary, acute, reproductive, and long-term care, including prescription drugs, as well as mental health and substance abuse treatment. To ensure access, health services should be provided where an individual's needs can best be met. Our country can only maintain and improve the physical and mental health of its population with affordable health care that covers the entire life span, from prenatal to end-of-life care. Public health services, which protect us all, require robust federal support.

III.2.7. Reproductive health and abortion. Quakers recognize that human life is sacred, and that Spirit can guide us individually and collectively. Based on these beliefs, members of the Religious Society of Friends have come to different conclusions regarding abortion. FCNL supports individual discernment in a spirit of love and truth in making reproductive healthcare decisions, as we do in other areas of conscientious moral choice. Government must ensure that people have the legal right to make these decisions. We oppose the criminalization of people seeking, undergoing, or involved in abortion services. We support equitable access to abortion services. FCNL also supports policies that reduce unwanted pregnancies by ensuring equitable access to contraception, sex education, family planning, fertility and adoption services, and support for all who decide to have children.

## LOCAL REPARATIONS OPPORTUNITY

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Atlanta Friends Meeting sponsors the Beloved Community Scholarship, a local community-funded scholarship for people of color attending HBCU or other schools. AFM community-members are invited to donate this year, especially white people seeking ways to pay reparations. Your 2024 donation is tax-deductible and will be paid out to this year's recipient over 4-years. All donations should be written to Atlanta Friends Meeting with Beloved Community Scholarship in the memo line. Checks can be placed in the slot at the Meetinghouse. If you make your donation using the AFM online donation link (<http://atlantaquakers.org/contact.htm>), please include "Beloved Community" in the special instructions line and add 3% to cover the credit card service fee. If you have any other questions about the Beloved Community Scholarship, please visit [belovedcommunityscholarship.org](http://belovedcommunityscholarship.org) or email [belovedcommunityscholarship@gmail.com](mailto:belovedcommunityscholarship@gmail.com)



MINUTES FOR FIRST MONTH MEETING FOR WORSHIP WITH ATTENTION TO BUSINESS  
JANUARY 21, 2024, held in person and via Zoom in a blended meeting  
Minutes Recorded Pending Approval

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**Attendance:** Mike Aland, Cathy Amanti, Mary Bartlett, Don Bender, Judy Bender, Candler Bolte, Steve Collins, Jennifer Crumpley, Jennifer Dickie, Mary Ann Downey, Julia Ewen, Susan Firestone, Waman French, Eric Glenn, Clive Gordon, Bill Holland, Bill Hooson, Teri Key-Hooson, Greg Johnson, Kathy Johnson, Georgia Lord, Judy Lumb, Paul Mangelsdorf, Kevin Moran, Karen terHorst Morris, Lissa Place, Megan Serfontein, Stacey Sharer, Bert Skellie, Karen Skellie, Henry Slack, Jim Tolmach, Myrna Trapp, Ian "bigSofty" Wells, Brent Wolff, Austin Wattles, David Small (Clerk), Emma Bingham (Recording Clerk)

## **Worship**

### **Query for the First Month:**

What makes it hard to ask for help, and how do we learn how to balance giving and receiving help? How do we create a community in which we all give the gifts we have, as we are able, and know that when we need help, we can ask and receive it?

## **Discernment**

### **Ministry and Worship - memorial minute —**

Mary Ann Downey read the memorial minute for Paul Baker.

Paul Baker, 68, died December 14, 2023, after a brief medical emergency in the presence of his husband, Mike Bell Baker and his brother, Philip Baker and sister, Patricia Baker Kegel in St. John's, Newfoundland.

Paul was born September 2, 1955 in Washington, D.C. to Bruce A. Baker and Dolores Manuel Aviles, the oldest of three children. His family regularly attended an Episcopalian church where he enjoyed singing in the choir. He felt a spiritual presence in church and continued attending Episcopalian churches as a college student at William and Mary.

Paul graduated from William and Mary with a degree in zoology, and worked as an environmental scientist, in real estate, and as a publisher, before assuming academic roles at George Mason University and Saint Mary's College. He joined Georgia Tech in 1999 as a visiting assistant professor, teaching Research Design for the Policy Sciences, American Government, and more. His impressive collection of degrees, five in all, ranged from zoology to theology and with his Ph.D. in public policy.

At GA Tech, Paul worked with W. Bradley Fain, Ph.D. and Helena Mitchell, Ph.D. at the Center for Advanced Communications Policy for over twenty years and played an important part in the Center's growth and operations. Dr Baker was Senior Director of Research and Strategic Innovation and Chief Operating Officer of the Center for the Development and Application of Internet of Things Technologies (CDAIT). In a tribute, Dr Fain and Dr Mitchell wrote:

*"He was active in domestic and international research covering accessible technologies, social media innovation diffusion, workforce inclusion, and applied usability research. Dr. Baker's transdisciplinary research resulted in new insights into public policy, improvements in the lives of people with disabilities, and the professional growth of all who collaborated with him. Paul served on numerous boards and academic committees. He participated in academic scholarship that resulted in widely cited research papers. Dr. Baker was also part of many collaborative policy networks.*

*He found time to mentor both students and junior researchers while simultaneously contributing to or leading numerous impactful research projects for both government and industry. We may never know the true impact Paul has had on the lives of those he touched because Paul often worked behind the scenes to help ensure others had the opportunities and recognition they deserved. He liked to joke that he was bald because of wearing so many hats. He loved every minute of it. He was an excellent researcher, a great networker, a man of passion, integrity, and knowledge.”*

While living in Washington, D.C., Paul was drawn to a Quaker meeting when he learned that they accepted and celebrated marriages of gay and lesbian Friends. He began attending Friends Meeting of Washington D.C. in 1992 becoming a member in 1996. After moving to Atlanta to teach at GA Tech, he continued exploring questions of spirituality and religion, earning a Master of Theology degree at Emory University and attending Atlanta Friends Meeting. In a moving story of seeking a spiritual home recorded at the Atlanta Meeting in 2010, he described the questions and diverse paths on his journey. He practiced meditation at the Atlanta Soto Zen Center, in Atlanta Friends Meeting. An experience of listening to a homeless woman speak in one meeting for worship led him to work with the meeting's Care and Counsel Committee. He transferred his meeting membership to Atlanta in 2013 and served in many ways. He created the meeting's first Facebook page and, as a member of the Ministry and Worship Committee, led a forum on theological diversity. Paul also attended the Peachtree Friends Meeting and served on the Board of the Friends Publishing Corporation.

Paul was predeceased by his parents, Bruce A. Baker and Dolores Manuel Baker and is survived by his husband Mike Bell Baker, sister Patricia Baker Kegel, (Mark Kegel), brother Philip Baker, (Julia) and four nieces and nephews.

A memorial meeting was held at the Atlanta Meeting January 20, 2024.

**Minute-1-21-24:01:** The Atlanta Friends Meeting approves the memorial minute for Paul Baker.

### **Ministry and Worship —**

Clive Gordon reported for Ministry and Worship.

*Recommendation to create a new standing committee on Reparations and Right Relations.*

Beginning in 2021, Ministry and Worship developed a concern to expand our meeting's understanding and action on reparations and right relations. Our goal was to increase our knowledge and create the basis for tangible actions. The interest of other groups in meeting who shared this leading led to the formation of a meeting-wide ad hoc coordinating committee under the care of Ministry and Worship. In 2021, Atlanta Meeting approved our minute on Reconciliation and Right Relations (Minute 8-15-21:03). Over the past two years this work of education and discernment has continued to have life. We now believe it is time for the Atlanta Meeting to establish this Ad hoc committee as a full standing committee of the meeting with a defined purpose and membership.

Clive read the proposed minute.

Waman French, Susan Firestone, and Bill Hooson from the ad hoc group were at MfB. Susan expressed that she was glad that this was being considered, and there was some discussion over whether the name should be changed. Waman said that the name they discussed was Reparations, Reparative Justice, and Right Relations.

A Friend described how he had a middle class upbringing but now lives in an African American ghetto, a transition that has made him more aware of issues of class. He wondered if class could be considered as part of what this committee addresses along with other societal groups. He was concerned that it often gets overlooked in these discussions.

Another Friend said the question of class resonated with her. She said she was glad that this group would be a standing committee, with members that continuously work to push and redefine the mission. She said she thinks right relations includes an aspect of resource sharing and working to make sure historically underserved groups will receive resources.

A Friend said that any time the meeting is considering establishing a committee, she always has the question: how are these concerns being addressed in our current committee structure?

She said that in any organization, 20% of the people do 80% of the work, so she is worried about people getting burned out from serving on multiple committees. She unites with the concerns of reparations and right relations as issues to be addressed in the meeting, but she wonders whether a new standing committee is the best way to address these concerns, She remembered a quote in the old meetinghouse that said "God so loved the world, she did not send a committee."

A Friend said that as an ad hoc committee under the Ministry and Worship Committee, this committee has been a welcome addition. They had the sense that the committee should be elevated to a standing committee because it addresses such an important issue in our society today.

A Friend asked if the last line could be adjusted to match the name of the committee that Waman gave. Clive said the minute does not propose a name for the committee, and the minute will involve asking people to write a description and name.

**Minute-1-21-24:02:** On the recommendation of the Ministry and Worship committee, the Atlanta Friends Meeting charges the Nominating committee in coordination with Ministry and Worship and Friends who served on the ad hoc committee for reparations and right relations, to develop a committee description for meeting approval for a new AFM reparations and right relations committee.

*Recommendation: Ask Chatham Summit Monthly Meeting to take the transfer of Peter and Jane Lang membership to their care.*

We have received a letter from Peter and Jane Lang asking that their membership be transferred to Chatham Summit Friends Meeting in New Jersey. This is the meeting where they spent much of their spiritual lives. Peter and Jane moved to Atlanta to be near family and have now returned to New Jersey. Peter was previously a member of Chatham Summit and transferred his membership to Atlanta in January of 2020, Jane joined Atlanta Meeting by application in January of 2020.

**Minute-1-21-24:03:** On the recommendation of the Ministry and Worship Committee, Atlanta Friends Meeting requests Chatham-Summit Friends Meeting to take the membership of Peter and Jane Lang into your loving care. We treasured these Friends.

*Recommendation: Lay down Glenn Plyler's membership.*

The meeting has received a request from Glenn Plyler that his membership in Atlanta Friends Meeting be laid down. Glenn has requested that those Friends who know of the circumstance that led to his decision keep the information confidential. Glenn was approved as a member of meeting by application in December 2019. He faithfully attended meeting, was part of the core group of Adult First Day class and served the meeting in many capacities including Clerk of Social Concerns.

**Minute-1-21-24:04:** With sadness and appreciation for his service to the meeting, Atlanta Friends Meeting, on the recommendation of the Ministry and Worship Committee, lays down the membership of Glenn Plyler from Atlanta Friends Meeting. We are saddened by the circumstances that led to this determination on his part. We hold the door open should he feel clear to return to meeting at some time in the future.

## **Nominating Committee —**

Lissa Place reported for Nominating Committee.

**Minute-1-21-24:05:** On the recommendation of Nominating Committee, Atlanta Friends Meeting approves Elizabeth Valera to Ministry and Worship for a term of 3 years from January of 2024-December of 2026.

**Minute-1-21-24:06:** On the recommendation of Nominating Committee, Atlanta Friends Meeting approves MaryAnn Lockard to Ministry and Worship for a term of 3 years from January of 2024-December of 2026.

**Minute-1-21-24:07:** On the recommendation of Nominating Committee, Atlanta Friends Meeting approves Jaime Lockard to Ministry and Worship for a term of 3 years from January of 2024-December of 2026.

## **Reports**

### **Nominating Committee —**

Lissa Place reported for Nominating Committee.

Nominating Committee would like to bring forward the name Clive Gordon for clerk of Ministry and Worship for a term of one year from January of 2024-December 2024.

### **Administration Committee —**

Steve Collins reported for Administration Committee.

1. A large, older tree adjacent to the parking lot was removed last week by an arborist because of the danger of falling limbs and branches. The cost was about \$5,000.
2. The malfunctioning furnace that heats the classrooms behind the kitchen was repaired on January 18 for \$578. We opted for the repair rather than replacing the system in order to save costs; however, the furnace, like our other HVAC systems, may be approaching the end of its useful life.
3. Members of Administration have decided to engage a firm to repair uneven concrete walkways around the Meetinghouse. Some uneven slabs will be ground down, and a slab outside the exit door on the parking lot side of the Meeting room will be replaced. At the rear of the Meetinghouse, some uneven slabs will be removed and replaced with fine gravel. (The reason for putting in gravel instead of concrete is that roots will just push the concrete up again if new concrete is placed there.)
4. No real progress to report on the kitchen. We are still gathering cost information for the appliances and the labor to remove the old stove and installation of the new appliances. Administration found that a GE double oven with five cooktops cost about \$4500 plus installation and other costs. They haven't found a contractor yet. There may also be other appliances that need to be replaced, such as the dishwasher.

A Friend brought up the point that the kitchen improvements are expected to be paid for from the Kenworthy bequest, but those funds are actually limited to the stove. The Friend also observed that there are tremendous costs involved in doing anything more than replacing the stove. Paul Mangelsdorf, clerk of Finance, said there were four separate minutes from the bequest. One of these minutes was about the stove, so Finance already approved the expenditure for the stove and the money is in the permanent improvement fund.

A Friend asked if a contractor has been obtained for the sidewalk work. Steve said that they had spoken with a contractor they will probably engage. The Friend said he had just used a well-known company that did not do a good job.

A Friend said he enjoys using his induction stove, though it required a learning curve. He recommended that we give up using our gas appliances to save money (over the long run) and be more climate-friendly.

The meeting currently has gas water heaters and furnaces in addition to the gas stove. Our options for replacing the furnaces are heat pumps or mini-splits. This will be discussed in the future when the time comes to replace the furnaces.

### **State of the Meeting report —**

Jennifer Dickie read the state of the meeting report.

*The larger your beloved community, the more you can accomplish in the world.*

— *Thich Nhat Hanh*

In a world that feels increasingly fraught with conflict and violence, it can be challenging to live into the promise of the beloved community, the matrix of love that grows our inward Spirit to support our outward actions. As Friends our commitment to this path is expressed in attention to the inward spiritual life of our meeting and the ways we enact the outward expression of Spirit in the world. This year, we are grateful for the deep and abiding ways members and attenders have leaned into the life of the Meeting and we hold in our tender care the challenges as we strive to live fully into the beloved community.

Atlanta Friends Meeting has enjoyed growth and a sense of prosperity in 2023. We saw continued high attendance on First Day mornings and growing numbers of young adult Friends, teens who participate in the SAYF program and young Friends in our First Day school classes. We welcomed 3 new babies into our community as well as 2 new members by application and 2 by transfer. We celebrated one marriage. We said goodbye to one member through transfer. We celebrated the lives of two long time members, Lynn Leuzler and Free Polazzo, with memorial services held in our Meetinghouse.

The spiritual health of our meeting continues to grow, evidenced in the depth of ministry and Spirit in meeting for worship, growing attendance in meetings for worship, increased participation in spiritual nurture groups, sustained mid-week worship opportunities, and the increasing numbers of families attending Meeting. We have added a second elementary class to serve the growing number of children on First Days. We have maintained a welcome table for the many new attenders and welcomed more than 105 people who volunteered outside of committees and appointments in 2023. The Nominating committee reflects on a productive year filling needed positions stating, “[AFM is] fortunate to have a large and involved body of people in Meeting, many of them new, to look at as we fill these positions.”

AFM committees and groups overwhelmingly noted the importance of building and sustaining relationships this year, something that was deeply missed in the pandemic years. Nominating reflects that the Spirit led process of working together to fill roles in the Meeting has enriched their committee through its collaborative process. Care and Counsel notes that the committee is supportive of each other and Green Friends feels the spiritual health of the group is good and can reliably expect people with a deep commitment to stewardship at every meeting. Friends for LBGTQ Concerns celebrates establishing a consistent place for queer and allied members and attenders to create community through regular informal gatherings during potluck. Groups that meet together like the Group Reading books by and about People of Color, the monthly Sewing Circle, and our young Friends built relationships through shared experiences in 2023. The Committee on Undoing Racism in AFM (CURAFM) was heartened by the enthusiasm within the Meeting to learn about restorative justice practices and to participate in growing a community of people trained in the practice. AFM continues to shepherd Macton Friends Worship Group which by the end of 2023 had decided to

reinitiate monthly in-person meetings. The act of meeting together to do the work of Friends held us in relationship with each other to build and strengthen the loving matrix of the beloved community.

The health of the physical space is not insignificant to our ability to meet and flourish. AFM's framework is supported by many people and committees. This year the administration committee worked seamlessly to upkeep the Meetinghouse. The work of Green Friends in 2022 provided us with solar panels creating sustainable energy that saved us up to \$3000 in 2023. Our library committee along with many volunteers converted our catalog from a paper to digital making our holdings more accessible to a wider community of people. Our web manager and volunteers began the work of building our new website, and a small committed group of Friends managed the technology required for our hybrid meetings for worship, forums, and other events so that we might be enriched by those who join us online. The Ferguson Cabin Stewards maintained our property on Burton Lake for the continued enjoyment of Friends, hosting groups from AFM and SAYMA in 2023. This attention to infrastructure ensured healthy, vibrant, and welcoming spaces for members, attenders, renters, and visitors to experience hospitality and dwell in the Spirit.

On this firm footing, the Atlanta Friends Meeting expanded our reach inward through a multitude of opportunities for listening, learning and teaching. Care and Counsel made conscientious and vigorous efforts in outreach to homebound, sick and grieving members and attenders. Quakers for Racial Equality [QRE] continued their long practice of providing weekly virtual resources for the Meeting to access many opportunities for learning and enriching ourselves in our quest to become a multicultural and anti-racist meeting. They also continued the practice of a Listening Ear once a month for concerns regarding racism. Ministry and Worship, Social Concerns, CURAFM, Green Friends and the ad hoc committee on Reparations and Right Relations hosted forums for Friends that explored our shared history, celebrated Quaker ancestors, deepened our understanding of our Quaker practices, and our understanding and commitment to reparations and reconciliation for indigenous Peoples and African Americans. Additional forums presented information about local, national, and international conflicts and concerns. Several forums included or were presented by Atlanta Friends reminding us of the depth of experience and knowledge among us. In 2023 Casa Altera welcomed the 500th asylum seeking guest into the Meetinghouse.

Building the beloved community extended beyond our Meeting with the FCNL Atlanta Advocacy Team lobbying members of Congress for increased funding for international peacebuilding programs and continuing to build and deepen relationships with congressional staff. They led a How to Lobby workshop for the East Metro for Social Justice group. AFM's Friends for LGBTQ Concerns helped to coordinate our participation in Atlanta's Pride Parade. Members of our community participated in multi-faith coalitions calling for a ceasefire in Gaza, the coalition of activists to Stop Cop City, the Beacon Hill Black Alliance for Human Rights, and SAYMA's Racial Conflict Transformation Program. Social Concerns Committee used its budget to support many organizations working for justice, peace, and the rights of Indigenous People and other People of Color.

Our commitment to building the beloved community through our connections with each other and Spirit, and through outreach is rewarding and in building this community we also faced struggles.

While we have been enthusiastic about the growth within our meeting we have recognized that with growth can come challenges. We saw some new Friends who sought membership in 2022 attend less in 2023. Ministry and Worship ponders ways we might continue to invest in and welcome new members beyond the act of minuting their membership. We are heartened by the number of young adult Friends in our midst and with the changing demographic we are called to be open to new perspectives and responsive to questions that may challenge our assumptions about Quaker faith and practice.

Deepening our spiritual work is also perennially challenged by a need for more volunteers, energy, and time. Religious Education was delighted by the increased number of children in the program drawn by more families who attend Meeting and was frustrated at the difficulty in providing consistent and safe programming because of too few teachers and volunteers with the First Day School program. Care and Counsel felt called to care for more aging Friends and realized that this required a larger pool of volunteers to support adequately. QRE felt the continued call to help us progress toward an anti-racist multicultural spiritual community and noted the challenge of working with a small group of volunteers to energize white Friends to break out of patterns of white supremacy culture.

Some new initiatives by Friends struggled to get off the ground. Small group gatherings envisioned by Care and Counsel have not moved forward due to scheduling conflicts. The new Young Friends Support Committee was challenged to meet regularly for the same reason. They also recognized their initial plan to host young Friends events at the Meeting house regularly needed revision to accommodate the wide range of ages and the geographic disbursement of Quaker families.

In an effort to update the AFM Handbook, Nominating requested all committees review their descriptions. Many committees were challenged by envisioning their current work while remaining true to the original call of the committee. The Nominating committee halted the update work while they sought more clarity for their role and the request to committees.

Outward challenges included the continued gridlock in congress - rendering the work of the FCNL advocacy teams less effective. The growing disparity in our country, left the Social Concerns committee feeling stretched with so many needs. The Ferguson Cabin Stewards Committee is grappling, on our behalf, with a neighbor who continues to transgress on our property.

In each of these struggles Friends continue to be reflective and even through the challenges of our growth and changes we are called to build the beloved community. As we reflect on 2023 we recognize the many blessings of our community and we strive to recognize the places we fall short. As Friends, we are called to give our time through worship and service and listen to each other within and beyond our differences to allow Spirit to work.

*Beloved community is formed not by the eradication of difference but by its affirmation, by each of us claiming the identities and cultural legacies that shape who we are and how we live in the world.*

— bell hooks

Jennifer noted that she did not include the full reports of the committees in the state of the meeting report, and encouraged committees to read their report into the MfB minutes if they wanted it recorded for posterity.

The State of the Meeting report will be brought back for approval next month.

A Friend said he found the report inspiring.

### **Finance Committee —**

Paul Mangelsdorf reported for Finance Committee.

Paul reviewed the preliminary financial statements from 2023, including the [income statement](#), [balance sheet](#), and [fund reconciliation](#).

Paul noted that we have a net surplus for 2023. There may even be a slightly higher surplus than reported because they are working on processing a final stock donation.

We spent more than budgeted in various categories for a few reasons, such as:

- A fraud in the checking account that necessitated spending money to mitigate (including to get new checks)
- Finance budgets credit card fees from donations, and the contributions were higher this year, so there were more credit card fees
- Insurance cost more
- CURAFM requested money to host a training in the middle of the year
- There were legal expenses related to the Ferguson cabins

The tree removal expense (see Administration report) came from the permanent improvement fund that we maintain for things like that. The purpose of setting aside money each year for the permanent improvement fund is to try to avoid having a capital campaign (the last one was in 2005).

Georgia Lord reported on Lynn Leuszler's testamentary gift to Atlanta Friends Meeting.

*Back in 1981, when my husband Lynn and I first started coming to meeting, we quickly saw that the meeting was a well-established community. There were interesting, compassionate people who were engaged in all kinds of endeavors. There were all kinds of groups and activities. There were elders whose rich experience and words of wisdom provided guidance. Since then, Lynn and I have received so many gifts from this meeting: friendships, spiritual enrichment, help in times of need, and so many other things. Lynn gave extensive service to the meeting and he found gifts in that service.*

*A month or two before Lynn died, he told me that he wanted to make a gift to the meeting from his estate. He had a retirement account, and he wished to donate the funds in it to the meeting. For a long time, he had been conscious of the fact that the meeting's income is uncertain from year to year. He hoped that this gift would help to put the meeting on a firmer financial foundation for the future. He wanted other newcomers who seek out the meeting in the coming decades to find the same type of community that he and I found. He hoped that this gift would help to do that.*

*The retirement account Lynn decided to give to the meeting was worth about \$60,000. I have discussed this gift with the Finance Committee and we have decided the best way to use these funds — a plan that is the most consistent with Lynn's intentions and addresses a long-term need of the meeting.*

*Lynn believed that people who follow a practice of willingly giving for the benefit of others enjoy a happier and more satisfying life, and that belief helped to guide his life. I am proud that he chose to make this gift.*

Paul explained that what Finance has in mind for Lynn's donation (based on Paul's conversations with Lynn and Bill Hooson) is to create an endowment for the meeting, because they were worried that younger people might not have as much money to sustain the meeting. Finance is working on the policies for the endowment. Paul has written endowment policies for other Quaker organizations before, including Quaker Voluntary Service. He explained that the typical use for an endowment is to invest it and spend a sustainable amount each year (e.g. 4-5%).

Paul said that we have some money invested in the PAX World Fund, which does a decent job and was one of the first funds doing this at the time the meeting chose it. But they don't line up with all of Quaker values — for example, they invest in some war industries (including government bonds) and alcohol and gambling. Finance is considering switching to Friends Fiduciary (a different investment manager).

Finance is planning to bring an endowment policy and several other documents in the next few months for review.



### **Ministry and Worship —**

Clive Gordon reported for Ministry and Worship Committee

*Recommend Shannon McNeal for membership.*

The meeting has received an application for membership from Shannon McNeal. A clearness committee has met with Shannon and recommend her application for approval. The Ministry and Worship Committee unites with this request. As is our practice, we will wait one month before asking the meeting's discernment.

Next month we will ask the meeting to approve Shannon McNeal for membership and for Leah Marie McNeal to be recorded as an associate member of meeting.

A Friend asked whether there is a conversation with Leah or whether it is fully the parent's choice to make her an associate member. Bill Holland said that Shannon invited her wife and daughter to participate in the clearness committee. Leah was asked during the clearness committee if she wanted to be an associate member. She thought seriously about it and determined she feels part of this community but is not prepared to go through the clearness process at this time.

### **Social Concerns Committee —**

Kevin Moran reported for Social Concerns Committee.

Kevin read the report that SCC provided to Jennifer Dickie for the State of the Meeting report.

Social Concerns Committee is Atlanta Friends Meeting's Witness in the World. The social concerns committee enables members to act on important issues in their community, state, nation, or world. Its focus areas include peace, social witness, racial justice, and the environment. The committee approaches its work as a spiritual labor. The Social Concerns Committee:

- Encourages members to participate in work for social change through established Quaker organizations, such as the American Friends Service Committee and the Friends Committee on National Legislation, or to pursue their own leadings to engage in social actions consistent with Friends testimonies.
- Supports members or associates in seeking to bring a particular concern to the attention of the monthly, quarterly, or yearly meeting.
- Initiates consciousness-raising and skill-building activities that reflect Quaker testimonies and help to create a culture of anti-bias, peace, and justice in new ways.
- Affirms that every life is precious, whether this human being, this father, child, mother, brother, or sister, is Israeli, Palestinian, Ukrainian, or Russian. As Quakers and members of the Social Concerns Committee, we know this to be true. Life is sacred. We also know that history proves that retaliatory violence is a failure (e.g., wars of retribution in Iraq and Afghanistan). Violence unleashes more violence. Only peace with justice will establish a lasting peace where all people can live sustainable lives, including economic, environmental, religious freedom, and human rights. We condemn the violence unleashed by Hamas, and we denounce the retribution of the Israeli Defense Force on Gaza.

As Quakers, we believe each life is sacred.

### **Quakers for Racial Equality —**

Susan Firestone reported for Quakers for Racial Equality.

Susan read the report that QRE provided to Jennifer Dickie for the State of the Meeting report.

In our journey toward the Beloved Community, Quakers for Racial Equality (QRE) has worked on building an anti-racist, multicultural Meeting where everyone's gifts are valued. QRE has focused on

communities of people in our Meeting and in the United States who have been marginalized, finding ways through resources and actions to bring all people into harmony and Beloved Community. We have made progress in education, funding to groups led by Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color, and in connections with the wider community. Some themes in our work have been reparative justice for African Americans, making amends to Indigenous peoples, and addressing racism within Atlanta Friends Meeting and SAYMA. Challenges include the small number of volunteers and the need to find ways to energize Friends and break out of patterns of white supremacy culture to be a truly anti-racist multicultural spiritual community.

### *Reparative Justice for African Americans*

Quakers for Racial Equality honored Elder Friends of Color in our Meeting with a special forum with 2 African American Friends sharing their stories. In responding to Friends Journal articles on reparations, we expressed a concern for supporting local businesses owned by Black entrepreneurs. Thanks to new volunteers with more tech skills, we updated and expanded the previous AFM Black-owned businesses list to the searchable Local Businesses Owned by Black Entrepreneurs curated for AFM based on listings on IamBlackbusiness.com and tailored to areas where AFM Friends live. We encouraged Friends to support these businesses as well as efforts for reparative justice for those harmed by slavery and its aftermath.

QRE offered a forum on “Freedom to Learn Summer 2023 Takeaways and Resources,” which drew parallels between backlash to Reconstruction and Civil Rights advances and the current era of anti-CRT and bans on teaching of Black history. QRE also coordinated with the Ad hoc Reparations and Right Relations committee to host the hybrid book talk on *The White Wall: How Big Business Bankrupts Black America*.

Through portions of the Social Concerns budget that QRE administers, we supported the 339 Manumissions and Beyond project, a Quaker project researching descendants of people formerly enslaved by Quakers. We also gave funds to the National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America (N’COBRA) and the National African American Reparations Commission (NAARC).

### *Making Amends to Indigenous people*

We have made progress in learning about making amends to Indigenous people and especially the Muscogee Creek people, since the AFM meetinghouse stands in Muscogee Creek ancestral homelands. QRE did Zoom hosting and publicity for the Ad hoc Reparations and Right Relations committee forum on “Reparative Justice & Right Relations for Indigenous peoples and African Americans” with guest speakers Craig Womack and Frank Pommersheim. Craig Womack’s topic was Creek History and Creek Responsibilities, and he advised AFM on local Muscogee Creek history and current concerns.

Locally, the QRE clerk and some members have been active with the Decolonizing Decatur committee of the Beacon Hill Black Alliance for Human Rights (Beacon Hill). QRE contributed to the “Art for the People” project of Decolonizing Decatur. In this project, two Afro-Indigenous artists, one of whom is Muscogee Creek, will collaborate on a project they call, “Let Us Meet on the Land” in Decatur. The project will honor Muscogee mound building, Muscogee Freedmen, the Beacon Hill community, and all building authentic community. QRE members also worked with the Decolonizing Decatur committee on the “People’s History of Decatur” project. In support of efforts by Beacon Hill and some faith groups in Decatur around the 200th anniversary of the City of Decatur, QRE sent a letter to the Mayor and City Commissioners urging the city to acknowledge its full history, including historical and ongoing harms to Indigenous people and people of African descent, and to work with DeKalb County to place a plaque honoring the Muscogee Creek people on the courthouse square in Decatur.

Knowing the “People’s History of Decatur” also helps AFM restore the histories of Indigenous people and people of African descent in narratives about our current use of the land. It is part of our process of making amends to Muscogee Creek people and to African Americans for Quakers’ role in colonization, boarding schools for Indigenous children, and Friends of European descent benefiting from oppression of Indigenous people and people of African descent.

As a step toward making amends, QRE has contributed to the Mvskoke Language Program of the Muscogee Nation, to the Muscogee Creek Indian Freedmen Band, and to the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition as well as other groups. QRE has shared information from Friend Tom Kunesh on the importance of Quaker Meetings returning land to a local Indigenous group and to African Americans, with the emphasis on building a relationship first. One drawback is that although AFM has made connections with guest speakers/ activists of Muscogee Creek descent who have connections in this area, AFM has not yet formed a relationship with leadership in the Muscogee Nation.

#### *QRE speakers on other topics and coordination with AFM groups*

QRE drew on its own members for speakers and also coordinated well with other groups within Meeting. QRE member Judy Lumb offered us a positive vision of “Thriving with Cultural Diversity” in her forum about Belize, in which she pointed out that all cultural groups are valued and celebrated. Bert Skellie and Erin Donahue Koehler gave an excellent presentation about Restorative Justice Advocacy and Programs in the Metro Area with information on the Georgia Justice Project, which examined restorative justice in the criminal justice system. QRE supported the Social Concerns forum on the Atlanta Public Safety Training Center and the Stop Cop City movement. In addition, QRE promoted Green Friends’ forum on Climate Change.

#### *Addressing Racism in AFM and SAYMA*

At the Monthly Meeting level, QRE actively informs AFM Friends about anti-racism issues, upcoming meetings and resources, reaching a broader audience by recording forums and encouraging participation. QRE members provide a Listening Ear for Concerns about Racism every third Sunday, either in person or virtually. They also share almost weekly Virtual Literature Table information about anti-racism resources, videos, events, and workshops. QRE worked with the Committee on Undoing Racism in Atlanta Friends Meeting (CURAFM) on determining which stage AFM is in on the Continuum on Becoming an Anti-Racist Multicultural Meeting. Several QRE members have discussed how to move the whole meeting beyond levels 3-4 of the Continuum to become an anti-racist multicultural spiritual home for all. Through having Zoom meetings and publicizing information via our email list and announcement sheets, QRE has been able to have outside guest speakers and reach more participants. One concern is that the same few people do most of the work in QRE. Although we have accomplished a lot with a small group of people, we wonder whether more in-person events would engage AFM Friends more fully in anti-racism work or result in more volunteers.

At the Yearly Meeting level, six of the regular QRE committee members, including the clerk, are active in the SAYMA Racial Conflict Transformation Program through small anti-racist worship/study affinity groups and larger workshops exploring racism, white supremacy, Quaker social change theory and anti-racist praxis. This has been a long-term commitment, continuing monthly from October of 2022 through September of 2023, and with some also participating as either facilitators or participants in the 2023-2024 program. The SAYMA Racial Conflict Transformation Program is helping us identify patterns of white supremacy culture within SAYMA and in AFM and speak up more.

