

ATLANTA FRIENDS MEETING NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2026



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

<https://atlantaquakers.org/announcement-sheet/> will always have the most recent announcement sheet

Meeting for Worship each First Day (Sunday) in Person & via Zoom, 10:00 am
(For those who prefer a more intimate worship experience, we have resumed small meetings for worship in the library at 10 am.)

Details for Sunday worship and for our Wednesday small meetings for worship as well as worship opportunities with the Macon Worship Group are in the announcement sheet (link just above). The most up-to-date information about events can also be found there.

QUERY FOR FEBRUARY

How can we respect conflicting opinions while maintaining our own personal integrity? Why is it important to be kind to others who are not kind to us?

– from Atlanta Friends School, 4th and 5th Grade Class

UNTITLED POEM

by Patrica Turner

we sing of amazing grace
the sound is sweet
it rings within our souls
through fearsome storm tossed nights
watching depraved deeds done in the clear
light of day
when might has claimed the right
to harm and hurt
call evil good
and drown our silent cries

amazing grace, let our tears land in
fertile soil to grow our courage and might, compassion
to stand, to hold, to fight, to lay down the precious gift
return it to the one we borrowed it from
well used in the service of light.

Remembering what you have said that "Whatever we do to least of our brothers and sisters that we do unto you."

POEM AND PROSE ABOUT TROY DAVIS

by attendee Roxanne Ivey, who says

"Prior to my brain tumor and neurological decline, I was a literary artist and activist. I have noticed, and greatly enjoyed, the poetry and prose in recent newsletters and would like to submit a previous piece of my own in the hope that it might resonate with the Meeting."

THE TURNING

*~ a poem both for and by Troy Davis,
composed using only the words
from his last letter to me ~*

In this world, each word is life—
The heart of tomorrow
Already touched with believing,
The hope I pray
To bless into being;

For freedom keeps the page of change
Filled with the "if" of God,
Enough that you and I express
What's fighting to be Cause;

So read this world, this poem, as life—
As Troy, as family—
And thank the better heart that wrote
Each wanted word for me.

The Miracle of Troy: A Reflection on Unanswered Prayer

by Roxanne Ivey

On September 21, 2011, I stood across the street from the Georgia Diagnostic and Classification Prison in Jackson, GA, joining hundreds of others in prayer for a miracle. It's tragic that justice should ever be considered miraculous, especially when we live in a country that claims to be the ultimate champion of human rights. But that's the paradox I stepped into, along with thousands of others around the world who were taking a stand for Troy Davis, the Georgia death row inmate whose conviction raised so much doubt that even avid death penalty proponents were calling for clemency.

Yet it wasn't merely a case of innocence that attracted international attention and inspired passion among activists; it was the way Troy and his family consistently met injustice—his twenty years of imprisonment and three prior execution dates—with faithful determination and active compassion. Although I often heard anger in the voices from both sides (especially on that final night, when we faced the most flagrant and unnecessary show of police force I've ever borne witness to), the Davis family refused to be faltered by cynicism or fear. Even in the midst of state-sponsored madness, strapped to a gurney for four straight hours while the Supreme Court justices debated his life as if it were no more than a theory, Troy chose to *bless* those responsible for his death, to show mercy towards his killers.

With unprecedented vigils around the globe and massive media coverage, Troy may well have been, paradoxically, the most powerful person in the world that night. Though he couldn't preserve his own life, he sheltered the souls of so many others by modeling forgiveness. In the shameful shadow of vengeance, he shone the light of love. For me, *that* was the miracle—not the outcome we had all so fervently worked and prayed for, but perhaps something even greater: a foundation upon which to build a movement that will not only save lives, but will sanctify life itself, releasing our collective conscience from the burden of brutality and freeing us to see, through the wide eyes of empathy, the Sun of our Oneness shining in each heart.

OPPORTUNITY TO GET TO KNOW OUR MEETING'S TEENS

We have a growing group of teens coming to meeting on Sundays. We are seeking interested adults who would like to teach that age group once a month. Please consider getting to know these Young Friends as they grow into their unique gifts. If you are interested or have questions, contact Amanda Balnave (amandagendreau5@gmail.com), Religious Education (RE) clerk, or Cathy Amanti (cbamanti@gmail.com), RE co-clerk.

SHARI FRADENBURGH IN HOSPICE IN TUCSON

Former members Shari Fradenburgh and Joe Taylor have moved to Tucson, where Shari is now in hospice at "The Inn" of the La Cholla Fountains complex. The address is 5830 N. Fountains Ave., Tucson, AZ 85704. Her room # is 315. She is not currently taking phone calls, but Joe Taylor's correct email address is joe.taylor@pmm.life.

PLEASE HOLD IN THE LIGHT:

Mark Taylor
Gwen Davies & family
Shari Fradenburgh & Joe Taylor
Cary Walker's mother Laura
Bill Hooson
Jillian Minarich & family
Georgia Lord

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: Brent Wolff, afmclerk1@gmail.com
Office Coordinator: Nina Gooch, atlantaquakers@gmail.com
Treasurer: Stacey Sharer, afmtreasurer1@gmail.com
Ministry & Worship: Folami Adams, drfolami@me.com,
Finance: Bill Hooson, 770-786-8096
Administration: Jack Honderd, jkhonderd@gmail.com
Social Concerns: Karen Morris, karenth.1415@gmail.com
Care & Counsel: Georgia Lord, afm.care.counsel@gmail.com
Quakers for Racial Equality: Susan Firestone, susanfires@gmail.com
Committee on Undoing Racism in AFM: Lissa Place, lissaplace@yahoo.com
Reparations, Reparative Justice and Right Relations:
Herb Edwards, herbmedwards@gmail.com
Religious Education: Amanda Balnave, AmandaGendreau5@gmail.com
Young Friends Program Coordinator:
Asa Kramer-Dickie, afm.young.friends@gmail.com
Library: Derek Harootune Otis, dharootuneotis@gmail.com
Nominating: Elizabeth Lamb, gelds@comcast.net
Newsletter Editor: Nina Gooch, atlquakerltr@gmail.com
Webmaster: Emma Bingham, afm.web.wizard@gmail.com
Bookkeeper: Jonah McDonald, afmbookkeeper1@gmail.com

For info about these and other committees, visit or download the AFM Handbook from <https://atlantaquakers.org/handbook/> OR contact the Clerk of the committee you're interested in.

HOW WE BUILD OUR BELOVED COMMUNITY IN MEETING FOR WORSHIP WITH ATTENTION TO BUSINESS

by Mary Ann Downey, originally published in the January 2017 newsletter

In the book, *Quaker Faith and Practice* for Friends in Britain, this query and advice is offered for conducting business meetings: "Are your meetings for church affairs held in a spirit of worship and in dependence on the guidance of God? Remember that we do not seek a majority decision nor even consensus. As we wait patiently for divine guidance our experience is that the right way will open and we shall be led into unity."

Early Quaker communities in England were dedicated to living in community, and making decisions together that translated their beliefs into practice. They wanted to be led by God not only to find God's will for any decision the meeting made, but also to practice the right process of being led into spiritual unity, making decisions that were not bound by majority rule or consensus. From the beginning, many practical issues on a range of concerns challenged them, including where and how to build a meeting house, how to care for friends in prison, where to bury Friends who died, how to hold marriages, and decide membership, and how to recognize and support Friends in ministry. Some Friends traveled in the ministry with the support of their local meeting to help establish other meetings, while others, visiting Friends in prison, became active in working for prison reform, getting the mentally ill out of prison, establishing treatment facilities, abolishing slavery and other concerns. These decisions were made in meetings for church affairs when the community discerned that this path was God's will. William Penn was one of many who led efforts to carry Quaker faith and practice into the larger society of England, and later in the what is now called Pennsylvania. He wrote, "True godliness does not turn men out of the world, but enables them to live better in it and excites their endeavors to mend it; not to hide their candle under a bushel but to set it upon a table in a candlestick."

Beyond these practical issues, early Friends wanted to keep their focus on the spiritual health of their community and developed queries like the one above that are used to open the 'meeting for church affairs', also known as 'meeting for worship with attention to business'. By 1682 local meetings were organized into larger groups called Yearly Meetings. Each meeting met monthly for business, and reported annually to the larger Society of Friends on these queries. One of the earliest queries asked by the Yearly Meeting in Britain was, How does the Truth prosper among you . . . and are Friends in peace and unity?

The process depends on the difference between consensus and sense of the meeting. Consensus is a process in which we struggle with differences to find the most reasonable solution. It is an intellectual agreement representing our best thinking. Sense of the meeting is based on our belief in continuing revelation and a willingness to seek and be divinely guided to right action even when it may not be the most logical solution. A story about a decision made by Friends on the Board of the American Friends Service Committee illustrates the difference. After Hitler came to power there was a period of time in which Jewish children were allowed to leave and the Jewish Defense League of the US asked the AFSC for help transport children from Germany to the US. After a long meeting in which the Board struggled with this request, it was clear to all that that the organization did not have the experience or the capacity to undertake such an operation. The clerk asked Friends to settle back into silent worship. Out of the silence one Friend asked, "How can we not?" In this gathered worship, everyone present felt led to proceed on faith that this was God's will and way would open. As a result, AFSC brought 1200 children here on three ships.

Today in the US, meeting for worship with attention to business is held by meetings monthly and opens with a time of worship to reflect on a query like the one above. There may be a time of sharing and recording responses to the query before considering other business. It is easy for meetings to make decisions by settling for consensus, and harder to have the patience for the right way to be clear, to discern God's will.

The issues that are considered for decision are often like those that early Friends addressed, especially marriage, membership, and property within the meeting. In state and federal government, our work continues for prison reform, abolition of the death penalty, equality of opportunity, education, and alternatives to war. Recently, Friends have become active in addressing concerns for the environment. In 1987, members of London Yearly Meeting wrote, "We are trustees of a long tradition which has sought to bring our religious convictions into the world . . . We are trying to live in the virtue of that life and power that takes away the occasion of all wars." This journey continues.

UPDATE FROM RRJRR ABOUT REPARATIONS IN FULTON COUNTY

At the AFM October 26, 2025 forum led by the Reparations, Reparative Justice, and Right Relations committee (RRJRR), we listed an action step for Atlanta Friends Meeting of finding out more about what Fulton County is doing in its reparations efforts. Here is important information from the Fulton County citizen reparations task force harm report.

Study: Fulton's past racial harm may add up to billions: A citizen reparations task force researched the cost of slavery and discrimination over the years. By Alia Pharr, Atlanta Journal Constitution, ajc.com, January 11, 2026 (pdf for sharing - pictures come first.)
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1qDNJA0xVArla7dPRJHLZ7mkmDFQCOIFT/view?usp=sharing>

FRIENDS COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL LEGISLATION (FCNL) URGES ACTION ON ICE

FCNL says: "One year ago marked an avalanche of attacks on immigrants under Trump 2.0. With mere strokes of a pen, the constitutionally-guaranteed right of birthright citizenship was threatened. Refugees who had undergone years of vetting were stranded overseas. A centuries-old wartime authority was abused to deport hundreds of men, many of whom with no violent criminal record, to a torture prison with no fair day in court. The promise that Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) would stay out of our houses of worship, schools, hospitals, and courthouses ended. And an unchecked cycle of apprehension, detention, and deportation without due process began. Masked agents in unmarked vehicles funded with more money than the military budget of most nations were unleashed on us."

Use FCNL's call action tool at <https://fcnl.quorum.us/campaign/147300/%20/> to tell your members of Congress that hands off our communities starts with protecting our first line of defense: places of worship, schools and childcare centers, healthcare facilities, libraries, and courthouses. For more information about FCNL, visit their website at www.FCNL.org.

LOBBYING LIKE A QUAKER WORKSHOP RESCHEDULED

The Lobbying Like a Quaker workshop, organized by Atlanta Friends Meeting's FCNL Action Team, originally scheduled for January 25, is being rescheduled due to weather. Watch the announcement sheet for the new date.

FLGBTQC OPPORTUNITIES FOR COMMUNITY – February 1, 7

On the first Sunday, February 1, Friends for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Concerns (FLGBTQC) will eat together at potluck (look for the queer flag).

On the first Saturday of the month, AFM's FLGBTQC monthly game night begins at 6:30 pm at the meeting house. Conversation, games and potluck-style food. Allies welcome! Bring any board game or other tabletop game you'd like to share with the group. Just be willing to explain the game to new players, or (if it's your first time playing it) be willing to learn it along with the rest of us. For more information, contact Nina Gooch or Derek Harootune Otis.

For more information about these events or about FLGBTQC in general or about lgbtq+ issues, contact Nina Gooch or Derek Harootune Otis or Jeremiah Gold-Hopton.

To join the group email list and receive updates, contact Nina in the office.

SPIRITUAL JOURNEYS & QUAKERISM 101 IN ADULT FIRST DAY SCHOOL Sundays, January February 1, 8, 15, 22

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 lives. On February 1, Jeremiah Gold-Hopton will share his Spiritual Journey. To hear Dean Leeper's Spiritual Journey, shared January 4, visit <https://tinyurl.com/2u685v2n>. If you'd like to listen to other past Spiritual Journeys, contact Mary Ann Downey at 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.

Adult First Day School starts each year with an introduction to Quakerism. Ending March 22, they'll read and discuss *The Spirit of the Quakers* by Geoffrey Durham. All are welcome whether you have read the book or not.

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 more details or questions, please contact Elizabeth Lamb.

BOOKS BY AND ABOUT PEOPLE OF COLOR -- Thursday, February 5

The book group reading works by and about people of color meets at 1:30 pm, usually on the first Thursday of the month in person in combination with Zoom. On February 5, the group will be reading and discussing *A Guardian And A Thief* by Megha Majumdar. All are welcome, and the group encourages anyone interested in a particular book to drop in. Future books include:

March 5 – *This Is How You Lose Her* by Junot Diaz

April 2 -- *Thank You, Mr. Nixon* by Gish Jen

May 7 -- *We The Animals* by Justin Torres

June 4 -- *The Wilderness: a Novel* by Angela Flournoy.

For questions or the Zoom link, contact Susan Cole (cole2544@bellsouth.net).

GATHERINGS FOR FEBRUARY REFLECTIONS WITH MARY ANN DOWNEY
Saturdays, February 7, 14, 21, 28

Member Mary Ann Downey says: I've written a collection of articles about my faith and want to share some of them that will be in a soon to be published book, *Walking with Faith: Southern Baptist to Quaker*. On four Saturdays in February from 10:00-11:30, I'll facilitate a time for worship sharing around the theme of one of the articles. You're invited to gather online for reflection on four themes:

February 7: What are your ideas, or images of God?

February 14: How do you pray?

February 21: How do you help build community?

February 28: How do you have faith?

Sign up at madowney@mindspring.com and Mary Ann will send a link in advance for each one. Attend any one or all.

VIRTUAL & IN-PERSON DOCUMENTARY NIGHTS – February 8, 13, 22

For virtual documentary nights, participants watch the film online in advance, then meet online to discuss the film. For in-person documentary nights, participants watch the film together in person and then discuss it. Reservations are required for both. For reservations and links to watch the films for virtual documentary nights, check the announcement sheet or visit <https://documentarynight.wordpress.com/events/>.

Virtual: Sunday, February 8 from 7 to 9 pm, in honor of Black History Month. *The Five Demands*. In April 1969, a small group of Black and Puerto Rican students shut down the City College of New York, an elite public university located in the heart of Harlem. Fueled by revolutionary fervor, the strike turned into an uprising, leading to the extended occupation of the campus, classes being canceled, students being arrested, and the resignation of the college president.

In-Person: Friday, February 13 from 6:45 to 10 pm in honor of Black History Month. *The Black Press*. The first film to chronicle the history of the Black press, including its central role in the construction of modern African American identity. It recounts the largely forgotten stories of generations of Black journalists who risked life and livelihood so African Americans could represent themselves in their own words and images.

Virtual: Sunday, February 22 from 7 to 9 pm. *Dying Laughing*. Jerry Seinfeld, Kevin Hart, Amy Schumer, Chris Rock, Sarah Silverman, Jerry Lewis, Jamie Foxx, Garry Shandling and others discuss the craft, creative process and psychology of performing stand-up comedy before a live audience.

MEETING FOR WORSHIP WITH ATTENTION TO BUSINESS – Sunday, February 15

Stay after meeting for worship, whether in person or via Zoom. Minutes from last month are below. Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business will be held in a combined format about 11:45, using the Zoom coordinates for Meeting for Worship. See article above for more about Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business. The minutes from January are below, and Atlanta Friends Meeting guidelines for meeting for Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business are at https://atlantaquakers.org/wp-content/uploads/Guidelines_for_Meeting_for_Business.pdf.

Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89686276751?pwd=M29EYlFWEhSQUtZRVVPaIFFYmVDQT09>

Meeting ID: 896 8627 6751

Passcode: 789456

NEWCOMER WELCOME DINNER -- Wednesday, February 18

On the 18th of each month, Atlanta Friends Meeting hosts a home-based meal for newcomers! This is an opportunity for those new to Meeting to ask questions and get to know a few Meeting folk. February's Welcome Dinner will be hosted by Georgia Lord. For more details, see later announcement sheets.

WEEKEND OF MUSIC WITH CONGREGATION BET HAVERIM – Friday to Sunday, Feb 20 to 22

Congregation Bet Haverim, an LGBTQ-friendly Jewish congregation that once met at the AFM meetinghouse, invites us to join them for a weekend of music, connection and shared spirit on February 20 to 22. They say: “Batya Levine, one of the most beloved Jewish song leaders in the country, is coming to Atlanta for the first time. If you haven't experienced Batya's music, imagine prayer that opens you up, melodies that stay with you for days, and the kind of singing together that reminds you why community matters.” The events below are for everyone. Come to one or come to everything.

- Friday 2/20, 7:30pm – Shabbat with Batya
- Saturday 2/21, 7:30pm – Participatory Concert with Batya and friends
- Sunday 2/22, 1:30pm – Singing Workshop

For more information and to register: <https://www.congregationbethaverim.org/BatyaLevine>

GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION FORUM -- Sunday, February 22

The Presbyterian Peace Fellowship and the Atlanta Friends Meeting will co-host a hybrid Gun Violence Prevention Forum on February 22, 2026 from 12:30 to 3:00 pm ET. A light lunch will be provided at 12:15 pm. You can attend in person at Atlanta Friends Meeting or by Zoom with the Atlanta Friends Meeting link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89686276751?pwd=M29EYlFWEhSQUtZRVVPaIFFYmVDQT09>

Participants from Atlanta Friends Meeting, Columbia Presbyterian Church, Oakhurst Presbyterian Church, Claremont Presbyterian Church, Pleasant Hill Presbyterian Church, Decatur Presbyterian Church, North Decatur Presbyterian Church, Oakhurst Baptist Church, the Beacon Hill Black Alliance for Human Rights, Agnes Scott students and guests are invited. All are welcome!

Program includes: speakers, break out groups, large group Q & A/ follow up

Speakers include:

- Dr. Brenda J. Smith-Chair, Atlanta Presbytery Peace and Global Witness, Presbytery Peace Fellowship-Decade to End Gun Violence Initiative. Pastor: Public Theology Institute. Topic: Gun Violence-A Public Health Issue.
- Pat Mueller -prominent gun violence prevention advocate and a leader with the Georgia Majority for Gun Safety.
- Sue May can share her personal concern about gun violence, and is on the advocacy team for Friends Committee on National Legislation efforts to reduce militarism and to invest in Community Violence Intervention (CVI) programs.
- Other speakers and/or break-out group leaders may be announced.

RSVPs by 2/20/26 appreciated if you will attend in person, but not required.

Contacts for this event:

Atlanta Friends Meeting: Susan Firestone, susanfires@gmail.com and

Presbyterian Peace Fellowship: Brenda J. Smith grandmothersuzanne310@gmail.com

REPARATION, REPARTIVE JUSTICE AND RIGHT RELATIONS COMMITTEE (RRJRR)
STRATEGIC PLANNING SESSION -- Saturday, February 28

Want to learn more about reparations and reparative justice for BIPOC people in our Meeting, our country and the world? You are invited to AFM's first Reparation, Reparative Justice and Right Relations Committee (RRJRR) Strategic Planning Session, to be held on Saturday, February 28, from 10:00AM to 2:00PM. Come join the RRJRR Committee for this time of discernment on future goals and actions the committee will focus upon in the coming year and beyond. Come for all or part of the event. All are welcome, with a special welcome to newcomers and Young Adult Friends! The four hour session will include a morning review of the Purpose Statement of the RRJRR Committee and its goals. We are planning for a pot luck lunch so feel free to bring food to share. The afternoon session will focus upon specific concerns and actions that the committee can work toward in the coming year(s). RSVP's are most welcome (but not necessary), especially if you plan to join in person. Please RSVP, send questions or input on agenda development to Waman French at wamanf@gmail.com or (404)786-4141.

Location: 2417 Woodacres Road, Chamblee, GA 30345 or via Zoom:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/5171998073?pwd=b1YUHVPczRVM0s5VmVoMmhwekE1dz09&omn=82897263882>

Meeting ID: 517 199 8073

Passcode: CronesMeet

SAYMA CLERKING WORKSHOP -- Saturday & Sunday, March 28 to 29

Our yearly meeting, Southern Appalachian Yearly Meeting and Association (SAYMA) is hosting a workshop on Finding Spirit-Led Unity: The Clerk's Role. Held at the AFM meetinghouse, Saturday, March 28, 9:30 am to 3:30 pm ET and Sunday, March 29, 1 to 3 pm ET, it will be facilitated by Mary Ann Downey and Bill Holland.

Our Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business relies on our faith in continuing revelation, the belief that the Light within can lead us to corporate as well as individual decisions. How do we do this, what is the role of the clerk in the search for Spirit-led unity and how can we all support the clerk and the process? In this workshop, we will address the clerk's role to:

- prepare the agenda
- attend to the meeting process and worship
- clarify the issues considered
- address conflict
- listen
- integrate differences
- test for and state the sense of the meeting
- lead the clearness process
- lead a threshing meeting

Participants will be able to practice the clearness process as well as leading a threshing meeting. Find more information and register at <https://tinyurl.com/clerkingworkshop>

Discernment

Nominating — Elizabeth Lamb reported for Nominating Committee.

Minute-01-18-26:01: On the recommendation of the Nominating Committee, Herb Edwards is approved for an additional 3-year term on Ministry and Worship, from January 2026 through December 2028.

Minute-01-18-26:02: On the recommendation of the Nominating Committee, Devin Lenz is approved to serve on the Young Friends Support Committee, for a 2-year term, January 2026 through December 2027.

Minute-01-18-26:03: On the recommendation of the Nominating Committee, Mike Aland is approved for an additional 3-year term as a Ferguson Cabins Steward, January 2026 through December 2028.

These people are already serving but have not been brought to Meeting for Business for approval.

Minute-01-18-26:04: On the recommendation of the Nominating Committee, Atlanta Friends Meeting approves Mark Bryans to continue serving as clerk of the Ferguson Cabin Stewards Committee through December 2027.

Minute-01-18-26:05: On the recommendation of the Nominating Committee, Atlanta Friends Meeting approves Lisa Kruse to serve a 2-year term as clerk of Young Friends Support Committee from January 2026 through December 2027.

Finance — Bill Hooson reported for Finance Committee.

Our balance sheet is very solid; however, we have been running surpluses over the last several years. Going into the future, we would like to have at most one year of expenses in our coffers but no more, which would mean we would want to spend what we bring in in any year..

As we prepared the budget for this year, we discovered a few issues. We found a few formulaic issues in our annual budget sheet that we are addressing (namely, that the formulas in our spreadsheet had several inputs where there was room for error, and we had double entered our rental income line item), and we have had difficulty getting updated financial statements from Friends Fiduciary which we are working to resolve.

The Finance Committee approved our budget for the year on January 16, 2026 and brings that budget forward today. We have approved a negative budget of \$10,689 for 2026, which is the first time in more than ten years that we have operated on a negative budget. This shortfall will be paid by the surplus from 2025.

We brought in \$192,000 in contributions for 2025. We know there is a \$10,000 contribution made in 2025 that will not be repeated in 2026.

Additionally, under programs, in 2024, our payment to SAYMA was \$14,000. It is now allocated at \$22,000. This is based on a new formula for suggested contributions to SAYMA. Atlanta was one of only four monthly meetings that SAYMA expected an increase from. We have two meetings that have disaffiliated from SAYMA in that time. A Friend asked whether this was a commitment or a suggested pledge. Karen Morris shared that Atlanta Friends Meeting's finance committee made this pledge to SAYMA's treasurer in the Fall 2024. Jeremiah Gold-Hopton shared information about SAYMA to the business meeting, including that AFM has been a member of SAYMA for roughly 50 years. He said it is Quaker practice that SAYMA meetings are funded by assessments of how many attenders come to monthly meetings. Jeremiah said we end up giving more money to SAYMA than other meetings as a result of the size of our meeting, but he explained that assessments are determined at the SAYMA level instead of the meeting level.

Bill explained there are two different options for what that assessment would be. We are adhering to the larger of the two formulas this year due to a commitment we made in 2024.

Under Administration, we are going to work on standardizing rental fees and breaking out our administrative fees. Additionally, we noted that our staff has not received a merit increase in at least six years which we are adjusting in this budget that is greater than CPI. We will be looking at the staffing relationship with the meeting. Each committee with an employee needs to be supervising that employee and giving them an evaluation on an annual basis. This has not been done in many years.

A Friend asked whether the raises for staffing needed to be approved by the meeting as a whole or just the Finance Committee. Bill said just the Finance Committee needed to approve this. Alison Mawle shared that the Admin Committee is working on an ad hoc committee on Admin to work through the compensation but clarified that Admin is responsible for setting staff compensation.

We are keeping programing as requested, but we are requesting a standardized honorarium for outside speakers. We also should have a discussion about when members or attenders provide their talents to the meeting, should we pay them or not?

A Friend asked whether we can gauge our increases on something other than CPI given the present political administration. Bill said the vast majority of groups use CPI and the budget is a plan. If we realize CPI is going up greater, then we will make some adjustments. However, CPI is the accounting standard which is approved by accounting standards.

Minute-01-18-26:06: The Atlanta Friends Meeting approves the 2026 budget as presented.

Reports

Religious Education — Amanda Gendreau reported for the Religious Education committee.

First Day School classes are growing at all age levels. We are excited about this and welcome this growth! One of the biggest challenges the Religious Education Committee and First Day School classes face is a need for teachers for our older children this semester. We have the teachers to teach the children most Sundays at the nursery and lower elementary classes. But more teachers are needed now for upper elementary and high school classes. We have asked Nominating Committee to assist us in finding several more teachers for these classes. As part of this search, we are giving specific thought as to how to make sure our teens feel welcome in Meeting. The second biggest challenge for the RE Committee is a lack of succession plan for RE leadership roles - Clerking and Co-Clerking.

Because of the growing numbers of children in First Day School, we have examined our use of space. Due to large class sizes, we can no longer have both the lower and upper elementary classes share the Classroom A/B space. Our upper elementary class has moved to Classroom C for the remainder of this school year. We will be using Classroom C for the foreseeable future.

Our budget in 2025 has been spent on curriculum books for our classes, our Celebration of Youth books, as well as background checks for religious education teachers and volunteers. We have approved and submitted a budget request for 2026 to the Finance Committee, which prepares for current and future growth of our RE classes, including tables and chairs for Classroom C, consistent safety training for teachers, and more background checks for religious education volunteers.

This year we have added the position of co-clerk to our committee. Whether we continue to have a co-clerk going forward remains to be seen. However, because there were many additional and

pressing tasks we faced this year in addition to ensuring that all First Day classes are staffed each Sunday, having a co-clerk has been beneficial. One task we completed this year was updating the description of the Religious Education Committee for the AFM handbook. Also, during our annual child safety training, we realized that our Guidelines for Child Safety were out-of-date and therefore important information was incorrect. As a committee, we updated these guidelines for clarification and accuracy. During this discussion, ideas for keeping children safe during religious education activities were generated. We are moving forward with our plan to have as many Religious Education volunteers (i.e., doorkeepers, nursery and teen volunteers, etc.) background checked as possible, which aligns with the Guidelines for Child Safety and is reflected in our budget proposal. An additional task we plan to take on next year is to conduct a review and possible revision of the First Day School Curriculum.

Following a three-year curriculum cycle, this year our curriculum focuses on the Old Testament. We have spent time worship sharing around how to approach the Old Testament from a Quaker perspective. We have realized that we have different understandings regarding the importance of teaching the Old Testament. While some teachers are not comfortable with teaching the Old Testament at all, others are seeking ways to connect the Old Testament to Quaker faith and practice, and to our own values and beliefs. It is partly due to our worship sharing that we have realized it would be beneficial to do a thorough review of the First Day School Curriculum. We hope to involve others in meeting in this process.

In January 2026, we had our second doorkeeper training this school year. In the future, we would like to have more trainings for teachers and doorkeepers. It is important that doorkeepers keep their commitments to volunteer or contact the Meeting using the contact information on the volunteer sheet. We appreciate the time our doorkeepers and nursery volunteers give in supporting our children and teachers. We would appreciate more doorkeepers from the Meeting at large.

Although not a direct activity of the Religious Education Committee, we want to highlight and thank Laura MacNorlin for bringing this year's annual Quaker Religious Education Collaborative conference to AFM. Laura received a grant to help cover the costs of the conference, which was held April 11-13, 2025. She is a member of the QREC Steering Circle and draws on her QREC experience to enrich our Religious Education program.

There is a need for more volunteers with our Religious Education because we have a consistently growing group of young people as Amanda reported in the fall. A Friend asked what the financial implications were of this influx, and Amanda said that this increase was reflected in the 2026 budget.

Nominating — Elizabeth Lamb reported for Nominating Committee.

The Nominating Committee recommends Charles Hicks to serve as clerk of the Gathered Meeting Retreat Committee from January 2026 through December 2027.

Quakers for Racial Equality — Susan Firestone reported for Quakers for Racial Equality.

Quakers for Racial Equality (QRE) strives to increase equity and racial justice at the individual, institutional, and societal levels, both within the Meeting and in the wider community. It engages in activities focused on anti-racism education, redistribution of material resources to support Black, Indigenous, and other communities of color, and self-accountability. This year QRE has hosted or co-hosted forums addressing concerns such as racism in health, immigration, homelessness, and redress for historical and ongoing harm to people of African descent. Within the Atlanta Friends Meeting, Quakers for Racial Equality does nearly weekly ongoing work toward building an anti-racist multiracial community. We invite you to read the following description of QRE activities this year and consider joining us.

“Race, Health, and Food” forum: Quakers for Racial Equality, in coordination with Friends of Color and Green Friends, hosted this well-attended hybrid forum on “Race, Health, and Food.” We explored how systemic racism around food negatively impacts the health of African Americans. We heard how Black people are countering this through education and offering healthier food that celebrates the traditions and contributions of African Americans to cuisine in the U.S. Guest speakers were Black business owners and advocates including AFM participant Adam Hicks (founder of Community Documentary Night), Stephanie Simmons of Polyculture Production (local farmer), and Issa Prescott (owner of the vegan restaurant, Life Bistro). Participants enjoyed delicious vegan food from Life Bistro.

“Racism and Women’s Health” forum: On March 23, 2025, the Quakers for Racial Equality group of Atlanta Friends Meeting hosted a hybrid forum on “Racism and Women’s Health” with Diane Rowley, Emeritus Professor of the Practice of Public Health Gillings School of Global Public Health, UNC as guest speaker. Her presentation included the work of Black women scholars, organizers, and activists in analyzing systemic racism and promoting Black women’s health. At Diane Rowley’s suggestion, QRE donated to Black Mommas Matter Alliance, Inc. for its continued efforts for Black Maternal health and racial equity in health outcomes. As an action step, forum participants wrote a letter to the Ratcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, asking them to update their archives to recognize Diane Rowley’s mother, historian Margaret Virginia Nelson Rowley, PhD and identify the other Black women historians in a photograph of those who were on the advisory board for the groundbreaking Black Women Oral History Project.

In conjunction with Social Concerns and Casa Alterna, QRE members participated in the new working group on Sanctuary to address how AFM’s previous declaration of sanctuary can be put into action to support immigrants and asylum seekers today. QRE co-sponsored the “Know Your Rights Training: Protecting Immigrants in Our Community” in March, and participated in the “Training: Responding to Law Enforcement or ICE at AFM” with an immigration attorney and Casa Alterna in May. QRE also coordinated with the library committee for a special display of books featuring the voices and stories of undocumented immigrants near the end of the year. The display features Friend-in-Residence Anton Flores-Maisonet’s book on welcoming and accompanying immigrants, including at the meetinghouse. The display also includes several books written by undocumented immigrants as well as two children’s books about immigration and two books written by an anthropologist who has spent time on the migrant trail from Central America through Mexico.

QRE co-sponsored two other forums with Social Concerns. The first was *There’s no place for Us: Working and Homeless in America*, a moving book presentation by author and AFM attendee Brian Goldstone about five families struggling to stay housed in Atlanta. The second was a forum on the Georgia Legislative Session with State Senator Elena Parent.

QRE has an active role in administering part of the Social Concerns budget designated for Justice for Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color. In the category of reparative justice for African Americans, we made a substantial commitment to reparations in relation to Atlanta Friends Meeting sending representatives to the Pendle Hill “Faith-Based Reparative Justice: A Tool for Racial Healing Conference,” by donating to a Philadelphia Black grassroots organization connected with conference co-sponsor, reparation works.

After Friends returned from the Pendle Hill Faith-Based Reparative Justice conference, QRE worked closely with the Reparations, Reparative Justice, and Right Relations (RRJRR) committee to co-sponsor a forum on “Reflection on Faith-Based Reparative Justice from Pendle Hill.” In addition to hearing responses from those who attended the conference, the forum participants compiled a list of action steps for Atlanta Friends Meeting to take for reparative justice.

AFM Friend Folami Prescott-Adams is following her leading to participate in another Pendle Hill program, “Journey Toward Wholeness” through financial assistance from Quakers for Racial Equality as well as other committees.

Another goal of Quakers for Racial Equality is making amends to Indigenous Peoples. Atlanta Friends Meeting is in the homelands of the Muscogee Nation, and Muscogee Creek leaders have told us that helping preserve the language and culture is extremely valuable. QRE contributed to the Language Program of the College of the Muscogee Nation. QRE has also supported efforts through the AFM Reparations, Reparative Justice, and Right Relations committee to offer hospitality and build relationships with faculty and students of the College of Muscogee Nation. Because Quakers harmed Indigenous children, families, and cultures through Quaker boarding schools for Indigenous children, QRE also contributed to the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition.

Locally, the QRE clerk has been a representative from AFM on the Decolonizing Decatur committee of the Beacon Hill Black Alliance for Human Rights (Beacon Hill). Two projects - a plaque honoring the Muscogee Creek people at the DeKalb County Courthouse, and an “Art for the people” art installation dedicated to the Muscogee Nation, Muscogee Creek Black Freedmen, displaced Beacon Hill Black residents, and the broader community - should be coming to fruition in the near future.

The QRE November forum featured Folami Prescott-Adams, Karen Morris, and Amara Lynch sharing their experiences from the “Conference on Building Anti-Racist Multiracial Community: Now More Than Ever” offered by the Center for the Study of White American Culture (CSWAC), an anti-racist multiracial organization founded by Quakers Charley Flint and Jeff Hitchcock. The Center offers many free workshops as well as inexpensive membership in the Anti-Racist Community Network with access to numerous programs.

Regarding work within the Atlanta Friends Meeting, Quakers for Racial Equality works toward helping our Meeting become an anti-racist multiracial community. For World Quaker Day, we developed fliers with information about the diversity of Friends around the world and the significance of Friends in Africa, especially Kenya and Burundi. QRE shared informative handouts and invited conversation at the AFM Committee Fair. Throughout the year, QRE actively informed AFM Friends about anti-racism issues, upcoming meetings and resources, and listened to Friends’ concerns about racism. The almost weekly Virtual Literature Table allowed QRE to reach a broader audience for articles, videos, events, and recordings of workshops. QRE members also provided a Listening Ear for Concerns about Racism every third Sunday, either in person or virtually.

We are encouraged to see that addressing racism is now more thoroughly entwined in the life of the Meeting through various committees and informal groups such as the “Book Group Reading Books By and About People of Color.” The book group was originally a subgroup of QRE. You can see a summary of the 2025 selections by convener Susan Cole [here](https://tinyurl.com/ybj2pkfd). [\[https://tinyurl.com/ybj2pkfd\]](https://tinyurl.com/ybj2pkfd) Anyone wishing to inquire about the group or to become part of it may send an email to Susan Cole at cole2544@bellsouth.net.

As we look ahead to 2026, we hope to engage more Friends through a variety of communication styles and reaching out to young adult and teen Friends. We would like to combine the types of anti-racist education we’ve done with more outward facing projects to meet the challenges of the times. We welcome you to join us and share your ideas and energy!

