

Southeastern Yearly Meeting

of the Religious Society of Friends

Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business

Executive Committee Meeting (Online only)
22nd Third Month 2024, 7:00 p.m.

MINUTES

Friends gathered in worship at the appointed hour. Clerk Bill Carlie read from Marcelle Martin.

Many Friends have experienced an occasion when their community reached a sense of the meeting about God's leading for them. A shift takes place after members of the group let go of their individual ideas and preferences and sense themselves being gathered into unity about a decision. There is often a collective experience of hearts opening or becoming lighter, freer, or "easy." A sense of peace permeates the group, accompanied by profound silence, or awe, or quiet joy... Making faithfulness an important part of our community life will help us grow in our ability to discern and respond to the leadings of the Spirit.

"A Community Formed for Faithfulness"
Marcelle Martin, *Friends Journal*, Sept. 1, 2017

Friends reviewed the agenda. The clerk reminded Friends that we are just reviewing items for yearly meeting action next week.

Nominating Committee Report

Ed Lesnick reported for the Nominating Committee. The report is attached. Ed highlighted the new appointments and stressed the need for Friends to serve on the Finance Committee. Brian Olsen will become clerk of Nominating at the rise of Yearly Meeting.

Friends accepted the report.

Gathering Report

Vicki Carlie reported for the Gathering Committee (attached). The Gathering Committee would like to use the morning at summer EC to discuss how to best schedule and use Yearly Meeting Gathering. The committee would also like to hire a coordinator for the Gathering, with a stipend of \$1500-2000.

Friends accepted the report.

24YEC01

Executive Committee agrees to use the morning session at Summer EC meeting for a workshop and threshing session on the purpose of the yearly meeting gathering and possible changes, including the date, going forward.

APPROVED

Ad hoc Committee for Youth Coordinator

Vicki Carlie reported for the ad hoc Committee For Youth Coordinator. She summarized the report (attached.) Trustees have agreed to fund the position for up to \$20,000 per year for the three years of the

proposal. Friends had several questions, many related to general personnel policies. Phoebe Andersen reported that there was a draft personnel policy on the web, but it has never been approved by Executive Committee. Friends asked if Orlando Meeting is prepared to offer Webster Cottage for occupancy by a Youth Coordinator, and the clerk will communicate with Orlando.

24YEC02 Executive Committee recommends that SEYM approve the report of the ad hoc Committee for Youth Coordinator and appoint a search committee.
APPROVED

24YEC03 Executive Committee appoints Brad Stocker, Phoebe Andersen, Neil Andersen, and Bill Carlie as an *ad hoc* Committee to Review the Draft Personnel Policy and bring a final policy to June Executive Committee.
APPROVED

Friends accepted the report.

Membership Recorder Report

Ed Lesnick reported as membership recorder. He has received information from all the meetings except Managua. Membership is down 5%.

Friends accepted the report.

CAPP Coordinator Request

Cheryl Demers-Holton requested that her contact information as CAPP Coordinator be more easily found in the YM Directory. After much discussion, Friends agreed to some ways to accomplish this.

Friends accepted the report

Quaker Call and Organization Documents Review Committees Request

Dan Vaughn requested that there be time on the YM agenda for both the Quaker Call Committee and the ad hoc Organizational Documents Review Committee. That will be in Plenary 3.

Friends accepted the report

Peace & Social Concerns Committee Report

Warren Hoskins reported for Peace and Social Concerns. He informed the clerk that Peace and Social Concerns Committee will be bringing St. Petersburg's minute on the conflict in Israel and Palestine to Yearly Meeting (attached). They will also consider bringing a minute on reproductive rights (attached).

Friends accepted the report.

Field Secretary for Earthcare Report

Brad Stocker highlighted a portion of Beverly Ward's Field Secretary for Earthcare report (attached), that in the coming year she will be planning for retirement and working with the yearly meeting on succession.

Liz Dykes read back the numbered, approved minutes.

The meeting concluded with worship.

Respectfully submitted,
Liz Dykes, Recording Clerk

Present:

Deland Worship Group

Cheryl Demers-Holton (Gainesville MM)
Dan Vaughen (Orlando MM)
Beverly Ward (Tampa MM)

Gainesville Monthly Meeting

Liz Dykes

Miami Monthly Meeting

Brian Olson

Orlando Monthly Meeting

Ed Lesnick

Other Friends

Katherine Louise

Palm Beach Monthly Meeting

John Palozzi

St. Petersburg Monthly Meeting

Bill Carlie
Vicki Carlie
Dianna Langan
Susan Wade

Tallahassee Monthly Meeting

Neil Andersen
Phoebe Andersen
Andrea Hoskins
Warren Hoskins

Tampa Monthly Meeting

Vincent Cobb
Jan Dham
Lisa Erasmus

Treasure Coast Worship Group

Joel Cook (Palm Beach MM)
Amy Richards

Winter Park Monthly Meeting

Mary Ballou

GIFTS

Each of us has unique and creative contributions to make as we allow the Light to shine through us. A meeting community needs the God-given leadings and spiritual gifts of each of its members.

SEYM Faith and Practice, p. 77

The Blessed Community does not have a hierarchy of leadership. Our monthly meetings and worship groups depend upon the members and attenders to serve the body and share their witness.

SEYM encourages you and Friends at your monthly meeting/worship group to become spiritually enriched by serving in the Southeastern Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends.

Friends who see gifts - talents, skills, and qualities - in others, please recommend them to the SEYM Nominating Committee.

You, too, may feel "a moving of the Spirit," leading you to become more involved in the wider Quaker community. Committee membership is open to all members and regular attenders. SEYM provides an opportunity to serve in different ways. Currently, there are eleven (11) standing committees. Your interest and skills will be recognized and appreciated.

SEYM has the following immediate need:

Friends are needed to serve on the SEYM Finance Committee. The committee prepares the annual budget and assesses the financial health of the yearly meeting and its ability to meet its goals. The committee works with SEYM officers who are ex-officio members of the committee. The committee meets at the interim and yearly business meetings. Remote meetings are possible, including ZOOM or another platform. A background in developing budgets helps.

If you are newly led to serve, we await you. Contact a Nominating Committee member to explore your interest or recommend a Friend you believe can serve the Yearly Meeting.

SEYM Nominating Committee members: [Brian Olson](#), *Incoming Clerk*, [Beverly Ward](#), [Ed Lesnick](#), and [Shawna Doran](#).

edlesnick

Ed Lesnick, On behalf of the SEYM Nominating Committee

SEYM Officers, Committees, Representatives, & Appointees Yearly Meeting 2024

OFFICERS

Yearly Meeting Clerk.....	Bill Carlie	St. Petersburg	2026
Interim Business Meeting (IBM) and Executive Committee (EC) Clerk	Bill Carlie	St. Petersburg	2026
Assistant Clerk	Ed Lesnick	Orlando	2027
Recording Clerk, YM.....	Dan Vaughen.....	Orlando/DeLand	2025
Recording Clerk, IBM/EC	Liz Dykes	Gainesville.....	2025
Assistant Recording Clerks IBM and EC.....	Dan Vaughen.....	Orlando/DeLand	2026
YM	Liz Dykes	Gainesville.....	2026
Treasurer	Joel Cook.....	Palm Beach/Treasure Coast.....	2026
Membership Recorder	Ed Lesnick	Orlando	2027

TRUSTEES

Neil Andersen, <i>Clerk</i>	Tallahassee.....	2026
Chris Laning	Orlando.....	2025
Jack Bradin.....	Palm Beach/Treasure Coast	2026
Liz Dykes	Gainesville.....	2026
Mike Flanery.....	Clearwater.....	2026

COMMITTEES

Archives	Bill Rapp, <i>Clerk</i>	Lake Wales WG.....	2027
	Neil Andersen.....	Tallahassee	2026
	Phoebe Andersen.....	Tallahassee	2026
Earthcare	Brian Humphrey, <i>Clerk</i>	Ft Lauderdale	2026
	Brad Stocker.....	Miami	2025
	Beverly Ward	Tampa	2025
	Jack Bradin.....	Palm Beach/Treasure Coast.....	2026
	Mike Flanery.....	Clearwater	2026
	Hollyn Green	Savannah.....	2026
Faith & Practice (Committee on sabbatical)	Phoebe Andersen, <i>Clerk</i>	Tallahassee	2027
Facebook Page	Mike Flanery.....	Clearwater	2027
Finance	Peter Schmidt, <i>Clerk</i>		2024
	Open.....		
	Open.....		
	Open.....		
	Shawna Doran.....	Gainesville.....	2027
	Assistant YM Clerk (ex officio)		
	SEYM Treasurer (ex officio)		
	Clerk of Trustees (ex officio)		
	SEYM Business Secretary (ex officio)		
Half-Yearly Meeting	Brian Olson, <i>Clerk</i>	Miami	2025
	Rosiland Kirupavathy, <i>Registrar</i>	Orlando	2025
	Kathy Hersh, <i>Co-Food Coordinator</i>	Miami/DeLand.....	2025
	Beverly Ward, <i>Co-Food Coordinator</i>	Tampa.....	2025
	Asma Roshi	Orlando	2025

Ministry on Racism	Kathy Hersh, <i>Clerk</i>	Miami/DeLand.....	2027
	Wendy Clarissa Geiger		2026
	Katie Green.....	Clearwater	2026
	Asma Roshi	Orlando	2026
	Minerva Glidden	Orlando	2027
	Brad Stocker.....	Miami	2027
	Susan Taylor.....	Tallahassee	2027
	Beverly Ward	Tampa	2027
	Cindy Kwalwasser.....	Orlando/DeLand	2027
	Jean Larson.....	Gainesville.....	2027
Peace & Social Concerns	Warren Hoskins, <i>Co-Clerk</i>	Tallahassee	2027
	Kasper Ronning, <i>Co-Clerk</i>	Orlando	2027
	John Heimburg	Orlando	2025
	Mercedes Soca.....	Havana WG.....	2025
	Cece Yocum.....	Tampa	2025
	Phil Stone	Clearwater	2026
	Peter Harrell.....	Gainesville.....	2027
	Shawna Doran.....	Gainesville.....	2027
Publications	Phoebe Andersen, <i>Clerk</i>	Tallahassee	2027
	Steven Riddle	Orlando	2025
	John Palozzi	Palm Beach.....	2027
	Vicki Carlie (ex officio)	St Petersburg	
Worship & Ministry	Richelle Ogle, <i>Co-Clerk</i>	Orlando/St Augustine	2025
	Jan Dahm, <i>Co-Clerk</i>	Tampa	2026
	Lisa Erazmus, <i>Co-Clerk</i>	Tampa	2026
	Bill Carlie	St Petersburg	2025
	Cheryl Demers-Holton.....	Gainesville/DeLand	2025
	Nancyrose Logan.....	Sarasota.....	2025
	Clara Diaz	Orlando/St Augustine	2026
	Eduardo Diaz	Orlando/St Augustine	2026
	Joel Cook.....	Palm Beach/Treasure Coast	2026
	Ann Jerome.....	Orlando	2026
YM Gathering	Vicki Carlie, <i>Co-Gathering Clerk</i>	St Petersburg	2024
	Liz Dykes, <i>Co-Gathering Clerk</i>	Gainesville.....	2024
	Andrea Hoskins, <i>Registrar</i>	Tallahassee	2025
	John Heimberg, <i>Bookstore</i>	Orlando	2026
	Brian Olson, <i>Program Coordinator</i>	Miami	2026
	Kasper Ronning.....	Orlando	2025
	SEYM Administrative Secretary, ex-officio.....		
Youth Committee	Jennifer Mendoza	Orlando	2024
	Kathy Hersh.....	Miami	2025
	Mariah Doran, <i>Gathering Activities</i>	Gainesville.....	2026
	Lewis Kirvan, <i>Gathering Activities</i>	Gainesville.....	2026
	Cecelia Yocum, <i>Gathering Activities</i>	Tampa	2026
	Asma Roshi	Orlando	2026
	Evelyn Schwalb.....	Orlando	2026
	Susan Ascher	Melbourne	2027
	Amanda Farrar	St Augustine	2027

REPRESENTATIVES TO ORGANIZATIONS

American Friends Service Committee Corporation, - AFSC/Philadelphia

Bill Carlie St Petersburg 2025
Beverly Ward Tampa 2025
Lis-Marie Alvarado Miami 2027

Friends Committee on National Legislation - FCNL

Dianne Langan St Pete/St Augustine 2026
Ian McDonald Tallahassee 2026
Eileen Zingaro Clearwater 2027

Friends General Conference - FGC Central Committee

Dan Vaughn Orlando/DeLand 2025
Susan Wade St Petersburg 2025

Friends World Committee for Consultation - FWCC

Joel Cook Palm Beach/Treasure Coast 2026
Clara Diaz Orlando/St Augustine 2027
Eduardo Diaz Orlando/St Augustine 2027

Friends Peace Teams

Cecilia Yocum Tampa 2025
Shawna Doran Gainesville 2025

Florida Council of Churches

Beverly Ward Tampa 2027

Friends for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender & Queer Concerns - FLGBTQ

Under Discernment

Palmetto Friends Gathering

Phoebe Andersen Tallahassee 2026
Neil Andersen Tallahassee 2026

Quaker Earthcare Witness

Beverly Ward Tampa 2026
Open

Quaker House (Fayetteville)

Seth Moody St Augustine WG 2026

Quaker United Nations Office - QUNO

Liz Jenkins Orlando 2025

APPOINTED OBSERVERS TO ORGANIZATIONS

FUM General Board Observer Eduardo Diaz Orlando/St Augustine 2026

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Brian Olson, Clerk Miami 2025
Beverly Ward Tampa 2025
Shawna Doran Gainesville 2026
Ed Lesnick Orlando 2027

Gathering Committee Report

SEYM Yearly Business Meeting

27 – 31st Third Month 2024

The Gathering Committee would like to bring two concerns to the Executive Committee for discernment.

The Gathering Committee needs more people to make organizing the Gathering do-able.

- We need a new Registrar, hopefully someone who can work with excel spreadsheets.
- We need a new member to serve as a co-clerk in training. We are looking for someone with organizational, communication, and people skills.
- In addition, the Committee agreed to hire a Gathering coordinator, for an honorarium of \$1500 - \$2000, to handle a lot of the details that go into making this event work, such as site logistics, finding rides for visitors, and coordinating volunteers.

Also, hiring a new Youth & Young Adult Coordinator will be essential to having a Gathering next year.

We welcome any inquiries, especially from younger Friends.

At our last committee meeting concerns were raised about the Gathering that we ask Executive Committee (EC) to take up.

We ask the EC to reserve the morning of June EC meeting for a workshop to thresh and discern thoughts and leadings on how the Gathering can better serve the purposes of Yearly Meeting.

Related to how the Gathering can better serve the Yearly Meeting is the question of whether a fixed date, later in the year, would increase attendance and provide more time to prepare our business. Our committee is not in unity on this question, and we ask EC to address this.

Ad hoc Committee for Youth Coordinator Proposal

Southeastern Yearly Business Meeting

27 – 31 Third Month 2024

Proposal for an SEYM Youth & Young Adult Coordinator position

SEYM will hire a Youth and Young Adult Coordinator (YYAC) to:

- Work with the Youth Committee to organize and coordinate events for youth, families, and young adults within SEYM, with a focus on building community, modeling and teaching our Quaker faith and values, and deepening the spiritual life of young adults and youth and their families.
- Reach out to families and young adults in SEYM Meetings and Worship Groups.
- Provide religious education resources and support to monthly meetings
- Help meetings conduct more inclusive and effective outreach to youth, young adults, and families

The Position

The YYAC position could be a 1/4- or 1/3-time job, depending on the responsibilities to be included. A 1/4-time job would cover the essential work of general organization and coordinating and being present at events. A 1/3 time job would include the events, plus being a resource person, with some limited time spent on pastoral care where needed. See Job Description (attached).

The YYAC position would offer an annual salary of between \$10,000 - \$16,000, depending on whether it is to be a 1/4-time or 1/3-time job; and based on the experience and skills the applicant brings to the job. As with other SEYM staff, there should be annual reviews, with merit and COLA pay increases.

The position is offered for a 3-year term, with continuation as approved by the Yearly Meeting.

There would be additional expenses besides salary to fully fund the position, such as for travel and expenses associated with in-person events.

A key element to the success of the YYAC would be having a support system within SEYM.

1. The position would be under the care of the Youth Committee and the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee would need to appoint a support committee for the YYAC for mutual accountability, communication, discernment, and encouragement. Committee members might be drawn from:
 - Youth Committee.: two members
 - Executive Committee: two members
 - CAPP Coordinator
2. Volunteers: an enthusiastic Youth Committee to work with, engaged young adults, parents, etc.

Additionally, the YYAC might have their own Anchor Committee related to their personal ministry and discernment.

Qualifications

- A ministry or calling to work with youth and young adults.
- Background and experience in working with youth.
- Grounding in Quaker faith and practice and in the Quaker community.
- Passing background and reference checks.
- Good communication and organizing skills

While SEYM would prefer that the YYAC live within the SEYM region, it is a possibility that they could live beyond SEYM; but in either case, they must be present at our Yearly Meeting Gathering, Half Yearly Meeting, and for two 3-day weekends during the summer for Family and Young Adult Retreats.

Funding the position

The SEYM Trustees have agreed to the following arrangement for support of the YYAC position based on the premise that the future of SEYM does indeed lie with its youth:

1. Trustees will contribute to support of the YYAC position for at least three fiscal years and agrees with including that support and the position's costs into future budgets as an SEYM staff position.
2. Trustees will transfer not more than \$20,000 in each of the relevant fiscal years from the Unrestricted Fund investments under its care to the SEYM General Fund Budget to support the YYAC position, starting with the first year of employment.

Additionally, Trustees request that the Yearly Meeting designate as a priority of its financial program the replenishment of the Unrestricted Fund after the time period of Trustees support of the YYAC position.

Job Description

See attached.

YOUTH & YOUNG ADULT COORDINATOR DRAFT JOB DESCRIPTION

The SEYM Youth and Young Adult Coordinator (YYAC)

- Works with volunteers to organize and coordinate events for youth, families, and young adults within SEYM, with a focus on building community, modeling and teaching our Quaker faith and values, and deepening the spiritual life of young adults and youth and their families.
- Reaches out to families in SEYM Meetings and Worship Groups.
- Offers resources and support to SEYM Meetings and Worship Groups in welcoming families and building intergenerational community.

The YYAC works with the Youth Committee, SEYM staff, and volunteers.

This work could be a 1/4- or 1/3-time job, depending on the responsibilities included as agreed upon (see responsibilities, below). A 1/4-time job would cover the essential work of general organization and coordinating and being present at events. A 1/3-time job would include the events, plus being a resource person, with some limited time spent on pastoral care where needed.

The YYAC would be offered an annual salary of between \$10,000 - \$16,000, depending on whether it is to be a 1/4-time or 1/3-time job and based on the experience and skills the person brings to the job.

There are to be annual reviews, with merit and COLA increases in pay.

The position is under the care of the Youth Committee and the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee shall appoint a support committee for the YYAC for mutual accountability, communication, discernment, and encouragement. Committee members might be drawn from:

- Youth Committee: at least two members
- Executive Committee: at least two members, including a YM or IBM Clerk
- CAPP Coordinator

An Anchor Committee: the YYAC might have their own Anchor Committee related to their personal ministry and discernment.

General Organization & Communication

Connecting people: “Youth, parents/caregivers, and young adults in SEYM have a deep hunger to connect with their peers in community.”

Build lists of contacts for communications:

- Meeting and Worship Group contacts
- Families
- YAQs

Submit news, upcoming events, and resources to the SEYM Secretary and web clerk for inclusion and promotion on the website and in the SEYM eNews.

Events

YM Gathering Youth Program

- Organize: Youth Committee meetings, planning
- Reaching out to families to encourage their participation, discern needs.
- Be present during the program as an anchor person and leader
- Plan and lead some activities
- See that Youth Program follows CAPP guidelines

Half Yearly Meeting

- Support for Youth & YAQ activities

Family Retreat (in the summer)

- Organize: find & reserve camp; create registration form, plan meals, activities, & coordinate with parents. Promote the event.

YAQ Retreat – Summer

- Coordinate with YAQs about best date & location
- Organize: find a host meeting, plan meals, collect registrations.
- Promote the event on the website and in the eNews

YAQ Zoom events: workshops

- Lead or find leaders.
- Registration
- Zoom hosting tech support

Another opportunity, but not a requirement: WIBM/Michener Lecture weekend

Opportunity for families to attend, and for youth to connect. Lead some activities and encourage participation.

Be a resource person

- Find resources for Meetings, families, and YAQs that may be shared via email, a dedicated webpage, and the SEYM eNews.
- Facilitate workshops with Meetings via Zoom or in person
- Present workshops via Zoom as SEYM events

Pastoral Care

This might include:

- More in person work with Meetings
- Being a listening ear for people
- Doing more outreach

Field Secretary for Earthcare Report

SEYM Yearly Business Meeting

27 – 31st Third Month 2024

Overview

Provide focus and coordinate efforts on environmental work in the Southeastern Yearly Meeting (SEYM) region.

In this report, I summarize activities undertaken during the year since the 2023 Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business. This report also includes plans for the upcoming year and some discussion on retirement and succession planning. It continues to be a joy and blessing to serve as field secretary; retirement from the position does not include an end of environmental work for me.

Communication with the Anchoring Committee

I continue to communicate with the FSE Anchoring Committee members through email, telephone, or other remote means, and, at times, in person. As more in-person meetings took place during the past year, there have been more formal and informal opportunities to work with committee members..

Meeting with Monthly Meetings (MMs), Worship Groups (WGs), and Others

Perform visits to Monthly Meetings and Worship Groups within SEYM to help them discern their leadings in care of the Earth, and to provide information and coordination among Meetings.

As a reminder, “Meetings can issue invitations to the [SEYM] administrative secretary, FSE, or the Anchor Committee [for FSE visits]. We will all conference over the invitation and subsequent planning” (Phoebe Andersen, 3 Tenth Month 2016). I continue to create opportunities to work with monthly meetings and others through online and in-person visits.

Contact Information

- Email: fsEarthcare@seymquakers.org.
- Facebook: @fsearthcare
- Twitter: @fsearthcare
- Instagram: @fsearthcare
- Telephone number: 813.928.8823.
- Snailmail: P.O. Box 1614, Umatilla, FL 32784.

A Google calendar showing requests for visitation and FSE has been created and shared with the Anchoring Committee.

SPECIAL REQUEST!

I am moving forward with the plan to develop some suggestions for Meetings, Worship Groups, and other communities on responding to various needs that may come about to due extreme events, economic hardships, and so on. Beginning 18 Fourth Month (April) 2024, I will facilitate an online meeting to begin the process. To be as inclusive as possible, you can drop in as available or participate via email, snail mail, or one-to-one with me. Volunteers are sought from as many Meetings and Worship Groups as interested; however, it will be helpful to have input from persons with social media skills, youths, and

anyone! Meeting information is provided below and will be shared with Meetings, Worship Groups, clerks, and the SEYM newsletter.

SEYM Community Preparedness

Purpose: To develop suggestions for Meetings, Worship Groups, and other communities on responding to various needs that may come about to due extreme events, economic hardships, etc.

Date: 18 Fourth Month (April) 2024

Time: 7:00 P.M. (EDT)

Zoom: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83059327001?pwd=tVb4sbD5wDUtoZJB49maj5AY-otPAJl.1>

Meeting ID: 830 5932 7001

Passcode: 503729

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Suggested Workshop/Event Topics

- Angelic Troublemaking: Beyond Bystander Training - explores anti-racism/decolonization work with emphasis on local concerns and means of accompaniment;
- Climate Equity/Climate Justice in Our Community: identifies specific local social justice and equity concerns. Participants identify actions to address concerns;
- Decolonizing Earthcare: explores the intersectionality of gender, race, extraction, and harmful economic systems and the adverse impacts to the Earth.
- Discerning Earthcare Leadings: listening and sharing experiences to reach individual and group decisions on Earthcare actions;
- Earthcare audits: baseline assessment of individual or community activities and discernment;
- Equality or Equity? What is Our Testimony?: examines Friends' equality testimony, the concepts of equity and justice, and the relationship of these to Earthcare;
- Permaculture is Not Just Agriculture: introduces permaculture design and domains and ways to bring these practices into Earthcare;
- Project Drawdown, Introduction and more: presents information on actions that "drawdown" carbon emissions and ways to promote drawdown choices as individuals and communities;
- Quakers and Climate Collapse: shares and builds on a Woodbrooke course led by Jackie Carpenter from 2021 Fifth Month (May), including review of the latest science, worship sharing, and discernment.
 - o I also can build on my Pendle Hill presentation to help with local concerns;

- Racial Wealth Gap Simulation: an exercise that helps “...people understand the connections among racial equity, hunger, poverty, and wealth”;
- Transportation, migration, and climate: explores access and mobility issues from the local to global perspective and the impacts of climate change;
- Underwater Homeowners Association: shares local actions that can be undertaken by communities experiencing sea level rise;
- Water: Sea Level Rise, Flooding, and Water Quality explores local, national, and global water issues;
- Waterline Communities: Displacement and Gentrification and Why Quakers Should Care drills down to the county or community level on the impacts of displacement; and
- **What the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs AND Inflation Reduction Acts Mean to Me and My Community?** This workshop looks at how funds from the two acts are being dispersed at the local level and provides suggestions on how to get involved in the decisionmaking process. Special emphasis is given to working with local implementing agencies and collaborating with advocacy groups to address adverse climate and environmental impacts.

Workshops or other Activities since 2023 Yearly Meeting with a Concern for Business

Deland Worship Group and Black Heritage Trail Event, 16 Fourth Month (April) 2023

Earthday Drop In Support, Orlando Monthly Meeting and Tallahassee Monthly Meeting, 22 Fourth Month 2023

Deland Worship Group Events

Caste, Ethnicity, Race, and Civil Reform: A Call for Repair, 18 Seventh Month (July) 2023

Juneteenth 2023, 29 Seventh Month (July) 2023

Climate Action Climate Justice, 1 and 8 Eighth Month (August) 2023

Bystander Training: 101, Quakers of Orlando, 5 Eleventh Month (November) 2023

Various in-person and online visits throughout the year

Interactions or Collaborations between and among other SEYM committees

These interactions between and among SEYM committees help to facilitate communication and collaboration of our regional concerns with national organizations and to be a Quaker Presence at specific events.

- The Committee for Ministry on Racism (CMOR): In addition to supporting the work of CMOR for annual gatherings, I act as a liaison to committee and the wider Quaker World and other organizations promoting equity. This includes work with, but not limited to, Decolonizing Quakers; Quaker Earthcare Witness; Quakers Up-rooting Racism; and Toward Right Relationship with Native Peoples.
- Earthcare Committee: In addition to facilitating a workshop during the 2024 SEYM Annual Gathering, “A Friendly Guide to Perma[nent] Culture”, special efforts are

underway to engage members of the SEYM Earthcare Committee and others to help with the SEYM Community Preparedness planning.

- Florida Council of Churches (FCC): John Heimburg and I participated in the Florida Council of Churches 2024 Advocacy Days during the Florida legislative session. This included training on issues and legislative meetings on 29 First Month (January) at the Florida People's Advocacy Center and an Interfaith Service for Harmony and Healing at First Presbyterian Church later that evening. On 30 First Month, we committee appearances and visited legislative offices. We shared SEYM's 22YBM05 Minute on the Anti-Gay and Anti-Woke Legislation with a number of elected officials and their staff. Below is a photograph of some of the FCC delegation.



Members of the Florida Council of Churches Legislative Delegation

Please continue to hold the Council in your hearts due to the challenges mentioned in the Fall Interim Business meeting report, I am serving as interim secretary to FCC through Fifth Month;

- Half Yearly Meeting (HYM) Committee: As an ex-officio member of the HYM committee, I continue to participate in planning activities. Kathy Hersh and I will work the administrative secretary and the website clerk to make the HYM guide available online. I also consult with the Youth Committee on other events, e.g., annual gathering.
- Peace and Social Concerns (P&SC) Committees: I continue to meet with or otherwise support the Yearly and Monthly Meeting PSC committees. Most recently, I have agreed to provide support to the Yearly Meeting P&SC Committee incoming co-clerks. This will include, but is not limited to, information on the environmental

impacts of militarization and wars and the adverse impacts of rapidly rising ocean temperatures;

- Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO), AFSC: Bill Carlie and I now share SEYM appointments to AFSC. I am an AFSC representative on the Quaker United Nations Committee (QUNC). I will participate virtually in the upcoming Fourth Month meeting of QUNC;
- Right Sharing of World Resources: I continue to share information through the-QEW United Nations Working Group, AFSC, and Quaker United Nations Committee.
- Youth Committee: I continue to work with the Youth Committee. Special efforts will be made to include youth in the development of the preparedness guidance.

The Wider Quaker World, Interfaith Groups, Other Environmental Organizations

To communicate and collaborate our regional concerns with national organizations including Quaker Earthcare Witness (QEW), Earth Quaker Action Team (EQAT), Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL), and Friends General Conference (FGC). To be a Quaker Presence at specific events, including those arranged by others.

I continue to work with the wider Quaker World, interfaith groups, and environmental organizations. These interactions have been virtual and in person during this period.

- Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP): I am working with Kathy Hersh to plan AVP workshops with Volusia County youths who are on parole in the judicial system. Members of Quakers of Orlando also have expressed interest in AVP workshops. The planning is underway.
- American Friends Service Committee (AFSC): I continue to serve as a corporate member of AFSC, QUNC and AFSC's Third World Coalition.
- Decolonizing Quakers, <https://www.decolonizingquakers.org/>: The Indigenous and Friends of African descent affinity groups continue discernment on the meaning of "decolonizing". Representation of Friends of African descent is increasing;
- Earth Ethics Institute (EEI), <http://earthethicsinstitute.org/>, Miami Dade College: In addition to the presentation, "Climate Change and Earth Literacy" during the 2023-24 Campus Learning Community Earth Literacy & Changemaking Symposium, the EEI advisory board is planning a meeting in Miami. I am looking forward to "feeding at least two birds with one scone" as Brad Stoker would say by participating in the advisory group meeting and visiting Miami Meeting!;
- Fellowship of Friends of African Descent (FOFAD): the work of Decolonizing Quakers overlaps with the FOFAD activities, the Black Quaker Project, <https://www.theblackquakerproject.org/>, and Quaker Earthcare Witness (QEW);
- Florida Interfaith Climate Actions Network (FL-iCAN): Jan Booher continues to work with the Florida Disaster Resilience Initiative, (<https://resiliencesystem.org/dashboards/florida-disaster-resilience-initiative/>) and share health and environmental information, including COVID-19. The Florida Council of Churches is planning to resume convening FL-iCAN assemblies;
- Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL): Brad Stocker and I continue to share a slot as representatives to FCNL for QEW. Through the QEW, I have partici-

pated in discernment of a number of legislative issues, e.g., reproductive rights, armed conflict, etc..

- Friends General Conference (FGC): I continue to work with FGC, particularly with the Fellowship of Friends of Color, FOFAD, and Quakers Uprooting Racism. The proposal that John Heimburg and I submitted for the 2024 Gathering workshop, “Bring Your WholeSelf” has been accepted. We are busy developing course material, promoting, and otherwise preparing for the workshop. Hold us in your hearts!
- Friends Peace Teams (FPT): I continue to work with members of FPT and link FPT to QEW UN Working Group and Towards Right Relationship/Decolonizing Quakers. With the new FPT North America Regional Team, we are in discernment on livable wages and equity;
- Friends United Meeting (FUM): I continue to work with Jim Kessler, Grinnell Friends Church, through Quaker Earthcare Witness;
- Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC): I continue to work to strengthen links to FWCC through QEW, FGC, and AFSC;
- National Academies of Sciences, Transportation Research Board (TRB), Equity in Transportation and the Women’s Issues in Transportation Committees. I continue to work with these committees and to serve on the planning committee for the 2024 Conference on Advancing Transportation Equity which will be convened 15-18 Seventh Month (July) 2024 in Baltimore, MD.
- Nurturing Faithfulness (NF) program, I was invited by Marcelle Martin and Jennifer Hogue to be interviewed about Earthcare work, climate justice, environmental witness, and other ways of helping communities to prepare for the changing times to come. (NF is a collaboration between New England Yearly Meeting, Woolman Hill, Hilary Burgin and Marcelle Martin.) The recording is being prepared for distribution and will be shared with SEYM. Stay tuned!
- QEW:
 - Beginning at the rise of Meeting in Tenth Month 2023, I rotated to co-clerk with Elaine Emmie and Suellen Lowry. At the rise of Meeting, Tenth Month 2024, I will become a mentoring clerk.
 - As part of the speakers bureau, QEW Presents!, I visited with Sandy Spring Friends Meeting (MD), 27-29 Tenth Month 2023.
- Quaker House at Chautauqua (NY), Friend of the Week (Chaplain): I am preparing for the chaplain week 10 through 17 Eighth Month. The themes are “Water: Crisis, Beauty and Necessity – A Week in Partnership with National Geographic” and Interfaith Lecture Theme – A Metaphor for Life. Please continue to hold this work, which is dear to the SEYM P&SC committee, close to your hearts.
- Tri-City NAACP Branch: I continue with the Environmental and Climate Justice Committee. Due to ill health, I was unable to participate in Lake County EcoExpo this year. I will record and make available my planned presentation on the local impacts of climate collapse online.;
- University of South Florida: I continue to work with various colleagues at the University.

Social Media

I share short pieces on activities, with SEYM Monthly Meetings, Working Groups, the wider Quaker world and others. Please send suggestions for topics, research, etc.

In closing, I share this from the FCC Interfaith Service for Harmony and Healing this First Month

A Reading from the United Nations Resolution for World Interfaith Harmony Week, 23 Eleventh Month (November) 2010

Recognizing that the moral imperatives of all religions, convictions and beliefs call for peace, tolerance and mutual understanding,

1. Reaffirms that mutual understanding and inter religious dialogue constitute important dimensions of a culture of peace;
2. Proclaims the first week of February every year the World Interfaith Harmony Week between all religions, faiths and beliefs:
3. Encourages all States to support, on a voluntary basis, the spread of the message of interfaith harmony and goodwill in the world's churches, mosques, synagogues, temples and other places of worship during that week, based on love of God and love of one's neighbour or on love of the good and love one's neighbour, each according to their own religious traditions or convictions.

This is followed by prayers for peace from the Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, Native American, and Sikh faith groups.

Love and Peace,
Beverly G. Ward

Worship and Ministry Committee Report

Southeastern Yearly Business Meeting

27 – 31 Third Month 2024

Greetings Friends,

We are holding the Gathering Committee and the Administrative Secretary in the Light as our Yearly Meeting Gathering nears so quickly following Winter Interim Business Meeting and the Michener Lecture. The work involved is big, and requires time that is never sufficient, but the efforts provide all of us with the gift of space and time for business, worship, and community. We recognize this as a service to SEYM that is a blessing. We are grateful for all the heavy lifting done behind the scenes in preparation and for the constant care throughout our Annual Sessions.

We hope all Friends can find peace within exhaustion, and reach for the still, small voice when that last straw is hovering. Quakers are a people who seek and listen, answering that of God in others. We know how to do the hard things and how to find strength.

We are having a series of meetings of worship and planning, listening to Spirit as Anne Pomeroy, New York Yearly Meeting, discerns way forward in creating spiritually grounded programs for SEYM. She asks deep questions and listens beyond words, and the programs will reflect this level of spiritual care and nurture.

Our work continues to be reliant on Spirit, and we seek to be faithful in our ministry of listening and providing opportunities for Friends to find depth and peace in various encounters, such as the following:

- Extended Meeting for Worship opportunities, once per quarter (next one at Yearly Meeting Gathering)
- Weekly Queries for the Journey; used by individuals and Monthly Meeting and Worship Groups
- Bi-weekly Seekers Book Club (next book-- *Listening to the Light: How to Bring Quaker Simplicity and Integrity into Our Lives*, by Jim Pym)
- Online Programs:
 - Emily Provance, New York Yearly Meeting, is scheduled for 26 Second Month, 2024;
 - Tim Gee, General Secretary of Friends World Committee for Consultation, will be scheduled later in 2024;
 - Anne Pomeroy, spiritual director, coordinator of Spiritual Nurture programs for NYYM, will share a few programs in 2024;
 - more to come
- Online discussions of basic Quaker concepts are being discerned.
- Pastoral Care—prayer and care for individual Friends as well as holding a concern for Meetings that are dwindling in numbers and energy. A request was made for Friends to join Palm Beach Meeting for Worship, whether in person or via zoom (see link on their website). Zoom is a good way to gather with other Friends in worship, especially if distance is a hardship.

- Michener Lecture 2024 took place 21 First Month 2024 at Orlando Meetinghouse, and was well attended in-person and online, with Friends joining from all over the country as well as internationally. Ann Jerome (Orlando MM, Deland WG, Pendle Hill Friend in Residence) shared her deeply led thoughts with us in her talk entitled, “Let it Burn: A Call for Attention to the Fires of Our Faith”. She was faithful in her ministry and Friends were well fed.

We again ask Executive Committee, as a matter of integrity, to continue to follow through on recommendations made by the Listening Project that were provided at Summer EC 2023. These requests were made by Monthly Meetings and Worship Groups and reflect a need for connection and transparency. Aspects of these needs continue to rise up and were apparent in discussions at Winter Interim Business Meeting. We are hopeful EC will respond.

We hold all of SEYM in the Light and look forward to sharing that of God with Friends in our next opportunity.

In peace, gratitude, and joy,
Jan Dahm, Lisa Erazmus, and Richelle Ogle
Worship and Ministry Committee Co-Clerks

Quaker Earthcare Witness Report

Southeastern Yearly Business Meeting

27 – 31 Third Month 2024

To begin, let me remind SEYM and the Nominating Committee that my term as representative from SEYM to Quaker Earthcare Witness ends this year. I am urging the Nominating Committee to find a willing and suitable replacement as a representative. If I am to continue work with Quaker Earthcare Witness, it might be as a member-at-large; however, currently I am planning to step back to allow younger Friends to step in as this also expands the foundation of the organization. I have two suggestions for my replacement. Scott Virgin and Brian Olson from Miami Friends Monthly Meeting.

Quaker Earthcare Witness has undergone significant organizational changes this year. At the beginning of last year there were three part-time staff and one was cut part way into the year. Both the general secretary and the communications coordinator left and were replaced. This has not been as stressful as it might sound. Both of the new Friends are extremely capable and have visions for the organization that are fresh and exciting.

The budget remains an issue and the organization continues to be very underfunded. Quaker Earthcare Witness would like to improve the income and benefits of the new staff and add another. The budget has huge impact on the amount of work the organization can accomplish.

The treasurer is a new person and is considering new ways to improve the funding. Of course, all Friends' meetings are asked to consider how to increase their donations to the Friends organization for care of Earth. Quaker Earthcare Witness is running on less than \$200,000 a year and compared to many other Friends groups, AFSC, FCNL, QUNO for examples, it is operating on very, very little money. Also, consider that an "equal" donation amount to all the organizations, which is what many of us do, is not equitable. Remember that contributing to Quaker Earthcare Witness is an action based on values and reflects our care and concerns. Please help show ours.

I believe that the [staff report](#) is a good way to share much of what is happening with Quaker Earthcare Witness. I encourage you to view it, watch the embedded video and share this with your respective groups.

Quaker Earthcare Witness hopes that all Friends will sign up for the newsletter, [Befriending Creation](#), which is free both as a hard copy mailed through traditional mail and is also available as an electronic publication which is emailed or downloaded from the website.

Speaking of the website, (<https://quakerearthcare.org/>) please take a long, deep look at it even if you have before, as it has been updated again and is full of resources, articles, ideas, and energy.
The end for now.

Brad Stocker, clerk
6 Second Month 2024

Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) Report

Southeastern Yearly Business Meeting

27 – 31 Third Month 2024

Staff at the Quaker United Nations Offices in both New York and Geneva continue to work with people in the UN, multilateral organizations, government delegations, and non-governmental organizations, to achieve changes in international standards and practice that bring us closer to the Quaker vision of a world in which peace and justice prevail. QUNO staff work closely with staff from American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) and Friends World Committee on Consultation (FWCC).

QUNO also maintains Quaker House in Geneva and Quaker House in New York. These houses serve as QUNO offices and meeting places for seminars, workshops, committee meetings, and Quaker hospitality close to the UN. For nearly fifty years, Quaker Houses have provided a place where UN diplomats, staff, and nongovernmental partners can work on difficult issues in a quiet, off-the-record atmosphere out of the public eye.

Recent QUNO Activities and Publications:

Geneva:

Booklets:

[Arms control, human rights, and corporate responsibility towards just, peaceful, and inclusive societies.](#)

This booklet describes how QUNO Geneva's Peace & Disarmament program works on highlighting the arms-related risks to human rights and tackling the challenges in addressing these risks by building effective arms controls at the international level. Click on the link to go to the website and download a .pdf copy of the booklet.

[Sustaining peace and human rights towards just, peaceful, and inclusive societies](#)

This booklet describes how QUNO Geneva's Peace & Disarmament program works to highlight and reinforce the inextricable link between human rights and peace and to ensure that they are seen as mutually reinforcing throughout the UN's work at the policy and practice level, reaching out to a diverse range of stakeholders to promote just, peaceful, and inclusive societies. Click on the link to go to the website and download a .pdf copy of the booklet.

Report:

[Exploring Special Procedures to Enhance Conflict Prevention](#)

“Full compliance with human rights is the best antidote to the inequalities, unaddressed grievances and exclusion which are often at the root of instability and conflict.” Volker Türk, United Nations (UN) High Commissioner for Human Rights.

In accord with this understanding, QUNO Geneva's Peace and Disarmament programme has been working on leveraging human rights mechanisms for sustainable peace. This report outlines the most recent project in this regard, which was undertaken by QUNO Geneva and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in collaboration with the Department of Political

and Peacebuilding Affairs' Peacebuilding Support Office (DPPA/PBSO). This joint project sought to explore how special procedures of the Human Rights Council (HRC) could better integrate human rights and sustaining peace in their work and enhance prevention of both conflict and human rights violations across all pillars of the UN.

The project centered on direct engagement with mandate-holders of special procedures at its core while also supporting them in framing human rights challenges through a peace lens and in providing human-rights based approaches to peacebuilding challenges. The report includes focused examples on transitional justice, protest, counterterrorism, LGBT+ and business. Click on the link to read the report.

New York

[Finding Hope in Action: QUNO Programme Assistants Discuss Work Towards Peace in Israel and Palestine](#)

When faced with situations of extreme destruction, violence, and loss like those the world has witnessed in Gaza and the Middle East over recent months, all are challenged to find hope. On January 9, this challenge was addressed during a panel presentation for students from Columbia Theological Seminary on the role of young people in working towards peace in Israel and Palestine, in which QUNO Programme Assistants shared their experience of working at the UN over the past five months.

In her opening remarks, Programme Assistant Nyeri Otero-Flanagan emphasized the importance of taking action that is aligned with Quaker values, however small or inconsequential it might feel, especially in the face of such overwhelming violence and suffering. Programme Assistant Natalie Dewar echoed this sentiment, saying, "It is essential that, even in situations where we feel powerless, we each take small steps towards peace. We know that more violence will not bring peace. This is why uniting to call for a ceasefire is an essential first step towards a just and lasting peace for Israelis and Palestinians alike".

Natalie and Nyeri, beginning their Programme Assistant positions in September, have played an essential role at QUNO New York, carefully monitoring, and reporting on developments in the Security Council and General Assembly. They shared this experience as part of the January 9 panel presentation and encouraged the students to consider applying for the 2024-25 Programme Assistant positions in New York before the February deadline. In closing, they reminded the students that citizens around the world have a crucial role to play in urging their elected officials to support a ceasefire and de-escalation of hostilities in the Middle East.

Of Special Note

How to be a Hero for All Our Children - 2024 Edition | QUNO

The Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) in Geneva published an updated version of '**How to be a Hero for All Our Children,**' which is available in English, Arabic, and Spanish. It aims to connect people with the most recent climate science and suggests personal actions and questions for politicians.

'How to be a Hero for All Our Children' has been updated with the most recent climate scientific findings from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) 6th Assessment Report (AR6). This report was compiled over seven years and involved hundreds of scientists worldwide.

The updated 'How to be a Hero for All Our Children' is written for a wide audience, whether already active or new to climate concerns. It includes categories such as "What we eat", "How we grow and sell food", and "How we use and source energy." This publication is meant to aid in our collective empowerment to transform the root causes driving planetary crisis.

This publication is accessible online and via a print-at-home version which can be used for personal distribution and campaigning.

[Financial donations allow QUNO to continue this important and complex work.](#)

SEYM Friends are warmly invited to consider serving as SEYM QUNO representative as I come to the end of my term of service in 2025.

With thanks and peace,
Liz Jenkins, SEYM QUNO Representative

Jacksonville Quaker Worship Group at the Beaches
Southeastern Yearly Business Meeting
27 – 31st Third Month 2024

Jacksonville Quaker Worship Group at the Beaches has adopted the following minute:

As Quakers, we respect the universal sanctity and dignity of all people. We urge those who have influence in the Middle East conflict to set aside violence and aggression. We encourage them to devote diplomatic, financial, and material resources to peace rather than war.

Respectfully submitted,
Heidi Lowey-Ball
Convener, Jacksonville Quaker Worship Group the Beaches

St. Petersburg Monthly Meeting
Southeastern Yearly Business Meeting
27 – 31 Third Month 2024

A Call to End Conflict in Israel – Palestine
Minuted by the St. Petersburg Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends
March 17, 2024

We are heartbroken by the terror, violence, and devastation in Israel and Palestine. War is never the answer. War does not address the root causes of a conflict or resolve injustices; it only settles which nation can mobilize its fighting forces best. It makes enemies more entrenched in 'us vs. them' and revenge narratives. It deepens hatred and increases enmities and violence, making all people less safe. War is a betrayal of our humanity, and of what is most sacred.

Our Quaker faith reminds us that there is that of God within every person, without exception. And that every person has the capacity to experience and respond to the love and guidance of God. We unconditionally oppose bigotry against Jews, Palestinians and other Arabs and Muslims that has led to the rise in hateful rhetoric and actions targeting these communities in the United States and worldwide.

We unite with the calls of people across the world for:

1. an immediate lasting ceasefire and a total end to hostilities on the way to a genuine effort towards peaceful and just solutions,
2. immediate release of all hostages and prisoners held under administrative detention without charges or trial,
3. provision of urgent humanitarian aid to Gaza including resumption of funding for United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

The government of the United States has a responsibility to think with greater vision rather than contributing to the further militarizing of a tragic situation. We urge the President and Congress to join with other nations to address the roots of war, to work for a lasting solution that provides for security, justice, and dignity for all Palestinians and Israelis.

Our faith challenges us to resist the escalating pressures throughout our human family that attempt to justify atrocities against other human beings, and to remember that we are each capable of evil, even in the name of good. We take up the commitment to turn from our own hostile impulses, from amplifying division within our local communities, and from the cycles of vengeful action in conflicts worldwide, so we can move toward the courageous work of peacebuilding.

Let us seek paths to work for peace, to act in faith and love, with persistence, patience, and courage. We ask everyone, including those in power, to learn from and work with the peacebuilders, who have labored long and hard. May they lead us all in creating an enduring peace built on justice and reconciliation that provides safety, sovereignty, and a future free of war as Palestinians, Israelis and all people of the region become partners pursuing the sacred goal of Peace, Shalom, Salaam.

The St Petersburg Friends Meeting (Quakers) approved this minute on March 17, 2024, entitled “A Call to End Conflict in Israel-Palestine.”

This statement was developed from one that was minuted by the Tallahassee Friends Meeting on January 14, 2024, entitled “The Call to End Conflict in Israel-Palestine” and utilizes passages from a minute from Bethesda Friends Meeting of January 7, 2024 entitled “An urgent call to protect human life and bring a just peace to Palestine and Israel.” Recent statements made by Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) and American Friends Services Committee (AFSC) influenced this statement as well.

Statement on Conflict in Israel-Palestine

We are heartbroken by the terror, violence, and devastation in Israel and Palestine.

Our Quaker faith reminds us that there is that of God within every person, without exception. And that every person has the capacity to experience and respond to the love and guidance of God.

As a result, we unite with the calls of people across the world for:

1. a permanent ceasefire now,
2. immediate release of the hostages,
3. the provision of urgent humanitarian aid to Gaza,
4. and the creation of an independent sovereign state of Palestine beside the State of Israel.

We unconditionally oppose bigotry against Jews, Palestinians and other Arabs and Muslims that has led to the rise in hateful rhetoric and actions targeting these communities in the United States and worldwide.

The government of the United States has a responsibility — and an opportunity – to think with greater vision rather than contributing to the further militarizing of a tragic situation. We urge the President and Congress to join with other nations to address the roots of war and to work for a lasting solution that provides for security, justice, and dignity for all Palestinians and Israelis.

Our faith challenges us to resist the escalating pressures throughout our human family that attempt to justify atrocities against other human beings, and to remember that we are each capable of evil, even in the name of good. We take up the commitment to turn from our own hostile impulses, from amplifying division within our local communities, and from the cycles of vengeful action in conflicts worldwide, so we can move toward the courageous work of peacebuilding.

Let us seek paths to work for peace with the tools available to us. We are called to act in faith and love, with persistence, patience, and courage, as partners and hands of the divine spirit as we pursue the sacred goal of peace, shalom, salaam.

St. Petersburg Monthly Meeting
Southeastern Yearly Business Meeting
27 – 31 Third Month 2024

Minute on Reproductive Rights
Minuted by the St. Petersburg Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends
May 21, 2023

This minute by the St Petersburg Monthly Meeting (SPMM) ad hoc Committee on Reproductive Rights was approved by the SPMM Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business on 5/21/23.

The members of the St. Petersburg Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends draw on our shared faith and practice in approving this minute as a testimony of our beliefs.

Origin of our Opinion

Through the testimonies and practice of our Quaker belief we respect the individuality of each person's spiritual journey, knowing that decisions can lead to both endings and beginnings, often in unexpected ways. The decision to have, or not have, children and the decision of whom to marry, or not marry, are examples of deeply personal, individual decisions to be made by the person or people involved, in the presence of Spirit.

Sanctity of Life

We acknowledge the sanctity of all life, honor and value the beauty of procreation. We recognize that an embryo's potential to thrive is wholly dependent on the support and nurturing of a biological or chosen family and of society. We seek to value this by addressing injustice, inequity, and coercion in society's present stance on reproductive health.

Privacy of Health Decisions

We affirm life by endorsing laws and policies that provide access to comprehensive reproductive medicine, including access to safe and legal abortion care, for women and families. We hold that the many-faceted impacts of both pregnancy and the termination of that pregnancy, including abortion care, is a profoundly personal health care decision which should be decided by a pregnant person in consultation with their doctor and their partner if they find it appropriate. We affirm life by respecting and protecting the inalienable right every human has to determine their individual role in human reproduction and family planning. We believe that no other rights of any government, group, or individual supersede this right.

Immorality of Forced Pregnancy

We come to this view by acknowledging the historical litany of suffering caused by forced procreation and its kindred injustice, outlawed procreation. These are dual horrors which have been wielded by persons and groups of certain classes, parties, races, sexes, and genders at various times and in various places to enforce their sometimes legal, yet always unequal and morally illegitimate, privileged status among their fellow humans.

Education

The discussion of women's reproductive health must be divorced from biased, politically motivated, misinformation. We call for medically accurate sex education for all ages on the safe practice and choices related to sexual behavior. Information relating to sex, contraception and termination of pregnancy (abortion) care must be easily accessible and delivered in a truthful, non-coercive environment without religious bias of any sort. It is vital to the well-being of our communities that quality and affordable medical care and comprehensive sex education should be available to everyone.

Religious Liberty

We support rights of conscience, freedom of religion, and separation of church and state. We value honest religious liberty which upholds the right of each person to make their own faith-based or conscience-based healthcare decisions. Each person should have opportunity for personal deliberation in accordance with their own moral codes, faith beliefs and consciences, and access to the level of care they believe is right for them. We reject any notion that religious, governing, or political bodies should have any say whatsoever in women's reproductive health decisions. Religious leaders and government officials have no business imposing their personal faith strictures or religious definitions of medical services into the laws of the land or the private lives of women and families. We protest the enshrinement of any faith strictures as public policy and disassociate ourselves from these restrictive voices.

Criminalization

We are opposed to recent federal and state legal actions which threaten the autonomy of pregnant peoples' bodies, and which criminalize their private, personal decisions. We should not be outlawing an individual's right to choose an abortion, which historically has led to many tragic cases of desperation and death. We reject the reasoning that would enable judges and legislatures to ban abortion and promote forced birth. We believe we should work to decriminalize any such decisions, and to preserve an individual's right and ability to carry out their decision.

Parenthood Rights

We believe that every child should be wanted, cared for and educated in a safe, healthy and loving, environment. Our society must share the responsibility of ensuring families and children realize their full potential and aid the termination a pregnancy if desired. In the case of non-consensual conception, sexual abuse, domestic violence, health concerns and even birthing situations where trauma is not present, the health and desire of the person giving birth is paramount.

Future Ramifications

As a religious organization that adheres to the testimony of equality, we believe that rights and equitable access to care must be available to all individuals and provided where their needs can best be met. An acceptance of all the variables in regard to sexuality and gender must be introduced at all levels of society so that the rights of all parents and their children may be respected. The current frenzy of exclusion which is marginalizing and demonizing non-heterosexual parents and their families must be reversed. We are opposed to any restrictions affecting same sex and transgender families.

Societal support

We seek a country with an equitable health care system that does not impose the greatest burdens on those least able to bear them. We must maintain and improve the physical and mental health of our population with affordable, equitable, and accessible healthcare that covers the entire life span, from family planning, contraception access, and prenatal care to end-of-life care.

All families must have equal opportunities to prosper. One of the most significant factors that lead to mental and physical health failure and the termination of pregnancies is poverty. Along with prioritizing public health services and affordable health care with robust federal support, we must target poverty, ensuring that policies regarding family must also include a living wage, paid family leave, affordable housing, affordable childcare, and high-quality public schools.

It is our belief that implementation of such measures will lead to a more affirming and nurturing society.