

Southeastern Yearly Meeting
of the Religious Society of Friends
Winter Interim Business Meeting
25 First Month 2025

MINUTES

The meeting began with Silent Worship at 9:20 a.m. During the silence several messages were shared.

From the silence Clerk Bill Carlie opened the meeting with the following quote:

The Quaker Meeting is meant to be a blessed community – a living testimony to a social order that embodies God’s peace, justice, love, compassion, and joy, and is an example and invitation to a better way of life. Like our other testimonies, community can be a prophetic call to the rest of society.

SEYM Faith and Practice, pg. 76

Prior to announcements committee meetings, the Clerk began with a report from the Nominating Committee:

Nominating Committee

Positions that need to be filled are:

- Yearly Meeting Recording Clerk
- Two members for the Finance Committee
- Clerk-In-Training for Gathering Committee
- Clerk for Half Yearly Meeting
- Representatives to Quaker United Nations Office and Quaker Earthcare Witness.

Please contact anyone on the Nominating Committee (Brian Olson brianolson64@gmail.com, Beverly Ward fsEarthcare@seymquakers.org, Shawna Doran shawnadoran@yahoo.com, or Ed Lesnick edlesnick@earthlink.net) to volunteer or for more information. Members and attenders are encouraged to attend meetings of committees engaged in work about which they have some interest. Most SEYM committees need volunteers.

The Report was accepted.

Announcements:

Jerry Knutson announced that he and Steven Riddle will be leading worship sharing on the 1st and 3rd Sundays of the month at 8:45 a.m., in person at the Orlando Meetinghouse and online via zoom. The worship sharing is based on Julian of Norwich (1343-1416) whose mystical visions are relevant to our times.

The Clerk announced a pause in order that Committees might meet then reconvene at 11:00 a.m. for the Open Forum - How does the Spirit fare with thee?

At 11:06 AM, the Clerk asked Friends for a period of silence before resuming WIBM with a Monthly Meeting Open Forum.

Saint Petersburg Monthly Meeting

The Clerk reported that the Meeting welcomed new attenders from the LGBTQ+ community. There is a deep concern among Friends that matters of concern are going in profoundly the wrong direction. A connection to community is what St. Petersburg has to offer.

Orlando Monthly Meeting

Minerva Glidden reported reading in the Orlando Sentinel that ICE is now being allowed to go into public schools and arrest children without notifying their parents. Full cooperation with ICE is required; any lack of cooperation is reportable. There are no sanctuaries. Children can be interrogated without their parents. She wanted to alert Friends to these and other very concerning developments.

DeLand Monthly Meeting

Jim Cain reported that the Meeting will be watching closely for developments from the new administration. They staged a very successful book giveaway during DeLand's Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day celebration. They gave away about 800 books to interested children and adults. They are considering organizing a regional gathering for Friends in Central Florida at their place of meeting. They are very happy to be a Monthly Meeting. They are still working on the details. They are satisfied with the progress on membership. On Tuesday evenings, they provide Zoom Meetings open to Friends, covering a variety of topics.

Gavin Sherrod encouraged Friends to organize more community outreach events.

Fort Myers Monthly Meeting

Richard Frechette reported that the Meeting had given \$2500 to help with fire damage relief to one of the local monthly meetings in the Los Angeles, California, area. They have ended their effort to put a Quaker School on the Unitarian Universalist Church property in Fort Myers. They are looking at another site on which to place a school. Jim Koopman, a valued member, had recently passed away.

Suzanne Frechette reported on working with the people in Immokalee, Florida, - a location with a large immigrant population - to provide food and other needed items. A high percentage of the resident immigrants there are undocumented. The current anti-immigration efforts will have a devastating effect on them and their employers. Fort. Myers Meeting is becoming more active in responding to those efforts.

Fort Myers is now negotiating with the Fort Myers Unity Church with respect to planning the construction of their new meeting house. They are excited with the progress being made in those negotiations.

Amy Richards sang "Wade in the Water" a traditional Negro spiritual. Several Friends joined in her singing.

Palm Beach Monthly Meeting

Joel Cook reported that starting in December, Palm Beach Monthly Meeting (PBMM) had been underwriting messages on 3 National Public Radio stations reaching down to the Florida Keys. Paying for 20 messages per month, they are actually receiving 40 messages per month. Although it is too early to measure the full impact of those messages, they have had some local people starting to come frequently, if not every week. They plan to continue their sponsorship for the long term. They may change the messages from time to time, in order to invite people to specific events at PBMM.

PBMM is providing an internet hub in their Meeting House, so people can attend the Michener Lecture virtually.

Havana Unprogrammed Worship Group

Mercedes Soca, Sarasota Monthly Meeting, attending at Saint Petersburg Monthly Meeting, reported that Havana Unprogrammed Worship Group is no longer meeting in person - only on WhatsApp. She is trying to get the Clerk to come to Florida. She believes such a trip will help him get a better understanding of the Spirit. She asks Meetings to invite him to speak and to demonstrate to him in person what he could

otherwise only read about. Things are very bad in Cuba. They need encouragement. They need to know more about Quakers and Quakerism.

Quaker Meeting of Melbourne

Hope Ascher, Clerk, reports they also are experiencing new attenders. They meet in person at the Unitarian Church, and by Zoom for non-resident members. They also meet once a month at a riverside park for a potluck. Their sign stresses the All in “All are welcome.”

Some food insecure people have joined in their potlucks. They find Friends Journal to be a rich resource for their study. They are following the Spirit, with respect to the changes in the political environment. They have become healthier, because they have become more active. They are, however, still a small and aging Meeting.

Saint Augustine Worship Group

Richelle Ogle reported that Saint Augustine is meeting at the United Church (one congregation including United Church of Christ - UCC - and Disciples of Christ). Average attendance is about 14, with a range of 12-20 attenders. They are under care of Orlando Monthly Meeting. They have been led to commemorate the Civil Rights Act - in the context of the Saint Augustine riots related to its adoption.

They have sponsored a lovely series of events in partnership with their host church. People came from Orlando and other places in Florida. They educate people in the community, and they honor Black Saint Augustinians. They have made a good connection with Saint Paul AME church, with the African American museum, and with the Jewish history museum.

Sixteen Rabbis were arrested during the riots. They wrote letters to their respective congregations. They met often, reporting that this was the most important thing they had ever done. Now that the political environment has changed, Saint Augustine Worship Group is discerning what to do next.

Lakota Tribe of North America

Amy Richards reported on the Lakota Tribe of Native Americans: “We are still here. We are not alone. We are working on similar issues.”

Miami Monthly Meeting

Brian Olson from Miami Meeting reported receiving three new members, including one professional musician of folk music and music direction. An independent school is negotiating with the meeting about moving into the Bartram House. The Meeting has had discussions with a podcaster. He is encouraging people to build communities; to talk with our neighbors: <https://www.northernspiritradio.org/spirit-action/10-things-do-now-trump-has-won>

The Open Forum closed at 12:05 PM.

The Clerk opened the Meeting for Business at 1:07 p.m., from the silence with the following quote:

We know the power of God’s Spirit at work in the lives of people within the community of our meetings. These people may have been drawn into the community by a sudden conviction, a long period of seeking, or have grown up within it from childhood. We also know that we are engaged in a life-long growth into faith and experience a continuing irruption of grace into our lives which demands and sustains a commitment to a life of

discipleship. We recognize this power at work in people of all ages, races and creeds: a transforming power which can issue in lives of joy, humility and service.

London Yearly Meeting, 1986

Roll Call of meeting attendance was completed.

Southeastern Yearly Meeting Administrative Secretary announced the availability of SEYM publications in the meeting room. The publications were also available for order online. Ellie Caldwell's book was available for \$5 each less discounts for larger orders. All proceeds from the sale of her book go to fund the Youth Program and the Youth and Young Adult Coordinator fund.

Karen Putney spoke at the beginning of Winter Interim Business Meeting, asking us to register for the National Friends Committee on National Legislation call, so we can stay informed and be better able to work together in support our Quaker Testimonies, given the current hostile political environment.

Yearly Meeting's Clerk's Revised Call for Discernment

At the Clerk's request, the Recording Clerk read all three Winter Executive Committee (WEC) action minutes from the Winter Executive Committee meeting on 24 First Month 2025:

25WEC01 Winter Executive Committee recommends that Winter Interim Business Meeting lay down Minutes 24FIBM04 and 24FIBM0 and any further discernment on the proposed covenant between Southeastern Yearly Meeting (SEYM), Fort Myers Monthly Meeting, and the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Fort Myers.
Approved.

25WEC02 Winter Executive Committee recommends that the issues brought forward by the *ad hoc* Quaker Call Committee be forwarded to Yearly Business Meeting.
Approved

Yearly Meeting's Clerk's call for an accessible process for prompt YM statements on social justice issues between formal business sessions.

Yearly Meeting clerk noted that Faith and Practice allows that YM clerk in named as spokesperson on behalf of the Yearly Meeting as issues arise between business meetings. The clerk recommended that such statements should in good order be a product of our corporate discernment to maintain unity and clearness. The clerk proposed the following minute to set up a process where such issue statements can be made promptly and maintain good order among Friends:

25WEC03 Winter Executive Committee recommends to Winter Interim Business Meeting that if a monthly meeting, worship group, or yearly meeting committee, wishes to draft a public statement on behalf of Southeastern Yearly Meeting, the monthly meeting, worship group, or YM committee, should send a well-seasoned draft of the proposed statement to the Yearly Meeting (YM) Clerk. The YM Clerk will then distribute that draft to the Executive Committee (EC) for discussion and discernment, calling a meeting of the EC if necessary, to reach unity on an appropriate statement for publication.
Approved

The YM Clerk explained the context of those minutes and asked those assembled for WIBM for discussion or approval of those Executive Committee numbered minutes.

25WIBM01 The Winter Executive Committee minutes were approved as read.

APPROVED

Finance Committee Report

Dan Vaughn, clerk, read the following Queries for consideration by monthly meetings as they reviewed the proposed Annual Budget for SEYM previously distributed to all members of SEYM:

- Have you saved money for yourself or your family? If there is money left over in your estate at the end of your life, have you planned for its distribution?
- Has your Meeting saved money for its future needs and objectives?
- Has your Meeting donated money to SEYM? Should SEYM accumulate any donated money that exceeds its annual operating expenses?
- What should be done with any accumulated donations? Should that money be invested so as to produce a monetary return, thus lowering future contributions needed from Monthly Meetings? Should that money be invested in grants or gifts to other tax-exempt organizations? Should that money be invested in SEYM projects? Should that money be invested in grants to Monthly Meetings needing support for their own projects or needs? How would those queries be answered by those Monthly Meetings and individuals who gave the money that has resulted in SEYM's present accumulation?
- Should SEYM facilitate the accomplishment of projects that are greater in size or scope than could be accomplished by a single Monthly Meeting?
- How should SEYM plan to dispose of its accumulated donations were it ever to become insolvent?
- SEYM is created, supported, and staffed by Monthly Meetings. Its Annual Budget is an enlightened reflection of what all its constituent Monthly Meetings envision to be its function and purpose. The Apportionments of that budget are, therefore, not burdens imposed on Monthly Meetings by SEYM, but equal shares of the responsibility voluntarily assumed by each Monthly Meeting, to accomplish their jointly discerned work of the Spirit within its territorial jurisdiction.

Please take these Queries back to your Monthly Meetings for their consideration as they discern what role SEYM should now play in the work of the Spirit.

Joel Cook then summarized the proposed Annual Budget. It is only a draft. It will be reviewed, and a final budget will be approved at Yearly Business Meeting in April.

Hope Ascher of the Quaker Meeting of Melbourne asked when the contributions would best be received. Joel responded that any time is a good time.

With respect to the apportionments, Karen Putney asked about members who no longer participate. Brad Stocker also asked about membership and the membership rolls. Similar experiences with non-participatory members were shared by others in attendance.

Karen Putney reminded us that membership has an important additional function: to express our identity. Unless a member requests that their membership be laid down, that function should also be considered and respected.

There was an extended discussion about membership in the context of apportionments.

Kathy Hersh commented that we had spent a significant amount of time talking about money and the budget. She suggested that in the future, we should start the agenda discussing what we are doing and then transition into how we will pay for it.

Phil Stone noted the complexity of the SEYM system of financial management. The Finance Committee Clerk responded that committees have been asked to respond to the proposed budget. The Finance Committee would welcome a response requesting a simplification of the SEYM financial management system.

The report was accepted.

The Session was recessed at 2:30 PM and resumed at 3:00 PM.

Field Secretary for Earthcare Report

Beverly Ward gave highlights from the report of the Field Secretary for Earthcare and urged everyone to read her [report](#). You can also find it on the SEYMquakers.org website.

The report was accepted.

Youth and Young Adult Coordinator (YYAC) Report

Rachel Dellinger referred attendees to the YYAC report in the DIAs and added the update that Gavin Sherrod, Orlando Monthly Meeting, would represent SEYM Young Adults at the Friends World Committee for Consultation, Section of the Americas, meeting in Arizona.

Rachel also asked to be notified about any graduating seniors in SEYM, in order that they might be recognized at YM.

The Report was accepted.

Worship and Ministry Committee Report

Jan Dahm referred to the Worship and Ministry report in the DIAs. She also asked that we remember to keep our hearts open to spirit, to listen deeply, and to create safe spaces.

Brad asked for specific suggestions for how to help or refer people for assistance who are now targeted. Brian Olson, member of the Peace and Social Concerns committee said that was the topic of the committee's meeting. So far, they were suggesting being aware and using phone cameras to record what we observe.

The report was accepted.

Committee for Ministry on Racism (CMOR) Report

Kathy Hersh began the report by pointing out that racism underlies much of Trump's base and agenda. On behalf of the committee, she requested that SEYM pledge to "become an anti-racist yearly meeting in earnest". She also asked that the Gathering Committee approve CMOR's request for a workshop session time slot that does not compete with any other workshop.

25WIBM02 WIBM grants the request of the Committee for Ministry on Racism that the SEYM yearly meeting in 2025 "become an anti-racist yearly meeting in earnest" and set aside time for an interactive plenary session with all attenders of YM encouraged to participate.

APPROVED

The report was accepted with gratitude.

Public Comments by the Yearly Meeting

The Clerk described the process approved by Winter Executive Committee for providing public statements on behalf of SEYM. The Yearly Meeting will then decide how to disseminate the statement. Others may adopt or incorporate any part of such a statement.

The report was accepted.

Nominating Committee Follow-up Report

Brian Olson reported that there were no changes from his report as Clerk of the Nominating Committee, this morning. Anyone interested should speak with any member of the nominating committee. Hope Ascher, clerk of the Quaker Meeting of Melbourne, expressed her appreciation for the work of the Nominating Committee.

The report was accepted.

Committee on Organizational Documents

Dan Vaughn, clerk, reported that the SEYM Committee on Organizational Documents had been working weekly on Zoom, for two hours each week. He asked those who had been sent drafts of the section pertaining to Officers in the Operations Handbook to review the drafts and respond to their request for comments and suggestions.

The Report was accepted.

Half Yearly Gathering Committee Report

Brian Olson, clerk, reported that 2024's Half Yearly Meeting worked reasonably well. The committee is working on meal plans that can be made on-site rather than using a catering service.

The report was accepted.

Gathering Committee Report

Vicki Carlie reported that the Gathering webpage was up. Rashid Darden has agreed to be the Walton Lecturer on the topic of "The Audacity of Defiance; how to live through the rest of the 21st century." Registration opens February 7. The Annual Gathering will be held the 16th through the 20th of April 2025. Dayspring Camp and Conference Center has installed a new audio system. The camp has raised its rates. Reservations for nearby state-operated camp sites fill up quickly. Register early, and reserve early.

The report was accepted.

Archives Committee: No report.

Earthcare Committee Report

Brian Humphrey reported that increasing electrical demand from AI and technology placed an even greater strain on our environment from their demands.

The report was accepted.

Peace and Social Concerns Committee: No report

Youth Committee Report

Hope Ascher reported for the committee. The committee discussed an intergenerational service project to take place during Yearly Meeting that would involve writing post cards to pertinent officials regarding concerns that SEYM youth will discern as priorities. Donations may be requested from monthly meetings of postcards and stamps for that purpose.

Friends Committee on National Legislation Representative Report

The report from Eileen Zingaro, Clearwater Monthly Meeting is attached.
The report is accepted as published.

25WIBM03 Southeastern Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends expresses deep gratitude for the hospitality of Orlando Monthly Meeting in hosting the Winter Interim Business Meeting, with its provision of abundant food, a loving welcome, and a warm meetinghouse in which to join Friends in worship and business.
APPROVED.

25WIBM04 Southeastern Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends expresses heartfelt gratitude to Susan Wade for her hard work for SEYM, and her untiring dedication to the upbuilding of our Quaker Community.
APPROVED

After a period of silent worship, the meeting closed at 3:52 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Daniel R. Vaughen
Recording Clerk

Participants:

Clearwater Meeting

Phil Stone

Deland Meeting

Jim Cain

Ed Chew

Cheryl Demers-Holton

John Heimburg

Carl Hersh

Kathy Hersh

Stephen Tonjes

Dan Vaughen

Susan Vaughen

Fort Lauderdale Meeting

Brian Humphrey

Fort Myers Meeting

Richard Frechette

Suzanne Frechette

Gainesville Meeting

Shawna Doran

Liz Dykes

Jean Larson

Gail Stallings

Havanna Worship Group

Mercedes Soca

Jacksonville Worship Group

Sandra Clark

Quakers of Melbourne

Hope Ascher

Larry Ascher

Miami Meeting

Steve Donachie

Clyde Dunton-Gallagher

Brian Olson

Brad Stocker

Orlando Meeting

Nelson Betancourt

Esme Dellinger

Rachel Dellinger

Gary Evans

Minerva Glidden

Pierre Ivory

Chelsea Jones

Jerry Knutson

Chris Laning

Ed Lesnick

Jennifer Mendoza

Kasper Ronning

Judy Schmalstig

Dennis Schmalstig

Gavin Sharrod

Palm Beach Meeting

Joel Cook

John Palozzi

John Rasmussen

Amy Richards

Saint Augustine Worship Grp

Bonnie Eadie

Beth Lamon

Dianne Langan (St. Petersburg)

Richelle Ogle

Tina Spielmann

Grethen Van Aken Johnson

Saint Petersburg Meeting

Bill Carlie

Vicki Carlie

Erin Childs

Brandon Coldicott

Anne Martin

Linda Morganstein

Mercedes Soca

Susan Wade

Tallahassee Meeting

Neil Andersen

Phoebe Andersen

Peter Crockett

Warren Hoskins

Rebecca Miles

Susan Taylor

Tampa Meeting

Jan Dahm

Lisa Erazmus

Karen Putney

Beverly Ward

Cece Yocum

Treasure Coast Worship Grp

Joel Cook (Palm Beach)

Amy Richards (Palm Beach)

Visiting Friends

Gaven Green, AFSC

Angela Hopkins, New York YM

Michael M. Nicholson, FCNL

Anne Pomeroy, New York Y

Yearly Meeting Clerk's Revised Call for Discernment

SEYM Winter Interim Business Meeting

25 January 2025

On November 11, 2024, the Yearly Meeting (YM) clerk sent out a call for Discernment over entry into a covenant between Fort Myers Monthly Meeting, the Unitarian Universalist (UU) Congregation of Fort Myers and SEYM to open "Watershed Friends School" on the campus of the UU Congregation of Fort Myers near the site where the Meetinghouse of Fort Myers Monthly Meeting has been proposed to be constructed.

At Fall Interim Business Meeting (FIBM), the following Minutes were approved related to this proposal:

24FIBM04 Friends authorize the creation of a new accounting fund for the purpose of supporting the establishment of an independent Quaker School at Fort Myers, Florida, as described in the Covenant between Fort Myers Monthly Meeting and the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Fort Myers. The fund is authorized to receive donations from Southeastern Yearly Meeting, individuals, monthly meetings, and/or outside organizations. Distribution of those funds will be made upon approval of, and direction by, the SEYM Executive Committee, or its designees.

APPROVED

24FIBM05 Friends authorize the Trustees to transfer to the new accounting fund the amount of \$15,000 from the unrestricted funds managed by the Trustees.

APPROVED

In response to a proposed contract forwarded by the *ad hoc* Quaker Call Committee, a called Executive Committee Meeting was convened on November 24, 2024, to discern way forward with this proposed contract. During the course of that discernment, it was reported by representatives of Fort Myers Monthly Meeting that the "Watershed Friends School" proposed in the covenant will not proceed as the facilities on the UU campus are no longer available to the project.

In that the accounting fund and the \$15,000.00 to be transferred into that fund were specifically premised to be in support of the "Watershed Friends School" project to be established on the UU Congregation of Fort Myers Campus as detailed in the proposed Covenant, and with the news that this school will no longer be opened, the clerk laid the matter aside, and with the approval of Friends closed the Called Executive Committee Meeting (Minutes Attached).

The *ad hoc* Quaker Call Committee, through its clerk, has requested further discernment on this matter and the proposed contract and Covenant.

As YM clerk, I feel that the questions for discernment have changed in light of recent events. I would offer a few observations and revised queries:

Observations from FIBM and Fall Executive Committee (FEC) Meetings

- The sense of both FEC and the body gathered at FIBM was clear that Friends support and hold in high regard Friends Schools and their mission.

- The sense at FIBM was clear that Friends would support a reasonable proposal from a constituent Monthly Meeting to open a Friends School both spiritually and financially given available resources.
- There was no unity at either FIBM or FEC on SEYM committing as a partner in the formation of a Friends School.
- There is no current viable proposal to open a Friends School in SEYM from any constituent Monthly Meeting and no such proposal is expected at this time.
- The proposed consulting contract brought to Executive Committee was to assist the *ad hoc* Quaker Call Committee (QCC) to develop the plans, corporate structure, and promotional materials for a hypothetical Friends School that may or may not be opened at some future date at no named location.
- The proposed consulting contract had included fees of \$15,000.00.
- The QCC has no budget to fund the proposed consulting contract. At the called Executive Committee Meeting, the QCC was apparently proposing to repurpose the donation from SEYM Trustees made for the specific support of the once proposed “Watershed Friends School” to fund this more generic purpose.
- This proposed repurposing of the accounting fund and donated funds was inconsistent with the Sense of the Meeting that approved the Minutes of FIBM to set up this funding. Given the lack of clarity over the appropriate use of these funds in the absence of a viable proposal to open the “Watershed Friends School”, and that there being no pressing need to meet the academic calendar to open this school, the Queries
- Should SEYM promote and seek to actively partner with a Monthly Meeting or other similar partnership to open a Friends School that would be in some manner under the care of SEYM?
- Should SEYM maintain its role as described in Faith and Practice of offering Spiritual and occasional financial support to its constituent Monthly Meetings when requests for such support are received and Friends are in unity?
- Should Minutes 24FIBM04 and 24FIBM05 be laid down and any funds transferred under 24FIBM05 be transferred back to the Trustees for management given the new understanding that the proposed Friends School described in the covenant will not proceed?
- Entry into the proposed Covenant between Fort Myers Monthly Meeting, the UU Congregation of Fort Myers and SEYM was distributed for Meeting discernment. In that we now understand that Fort Myers Monthly Meeting and the UU Congregation of Fort Myers are no longer working to open the proposed Friends School, should all further discernment on this Covenant be laid down?

Scheduling:

Under the normal order of business, a budget request by any Yearly Meeting Committee for this size of expenditure should be brought to Winter Interim Business Meeting, before the body, for discernment. If

approved, it may then be forwarded to the Finance Committee for their use in preparing the budget for 25/26. This will allow the proposal to be reviewed by the Yearly Business Meeting in context with the other Yearly Meeting programs. Faith and Practice specifically reserves approval of the budget to Yearly Business Meeting.

Discernment of the proposed covenant, if not laid down at WIBM, would be a decision that could have implications on future budgets and Yearly Meeting programs or resources for years to come. Consistent with Faith and Practice, decisions of this magnitude are reserved to Yearly Business Meeting.

Winter Interim Business Meeting will be held on January 25, 2025.

Yearly Meeting will be held April 16-20, 2025

Faithfully submitted for your discernment,
William Carlie, clerk

Youth and Young Adult Coordinator Report

SEYM Winter Interim Business Meeting, Jan 2025

25 January 2025

Youth and young adults made up over half the attenders of Half-Yearly Meeting. This group was faithful to the traditions handed down to them from older SEYM adults: kayaks in the spring, s'mores around a fire, hikes in the forest, and long conversations over meals. Youth contributions to Saturday night's talent show included a charismatic MC (Nova), a song sung completely in Russian (Jason), and a poem about the meaning behind a name (Kasper).

Young adults at OMM are currently led to explore their spiritual gifts and use them for the betterment of the wider community. One member recently attended a spiritual gifts workshop at Pendle Hill, where he was given a questionnaire as a guide to discerning one's gifts. Several young adults at HYM completed this questionnaire, and the youth were given a simplified version in FDS. They look forward to hearing our Michener lecturer speak on spiritual gifts in January. Other leadings of our young adults include participating in local mutual aid groups and helping the homeless. To this end, we have begun exploring partnerships with Central Florida Mutual Aid, the Christian Service Center, and Hope Community Center's new Hope CommUniversity.

The youth at OMM have continued in their curriculum of Bible literacy and studied the history and traditions of Christmas and the winter solstice. They have a deep need for a spiritual home where they feel accepted just as they are. A youth serves as clerk of the hospitality committee, and two of the other four members of hospitality are also under 16 years old.

It was my great pleasure to worship with the St. Augustine, Gainesville, and Jacksonville meetings. As of the reading of this report, I also will have visited the meeting in Savannah, Georgia. The St. Augustine and Jacksonville meetings are small but mighty, and both are eager to welcome young people into their fellowships. The Gainesville meeting is blessed with several young children and a dedicated First Day School teacher. On the day I visited, a group of college students were greeted with joy as they experienced their first Quaker meeting. Spirit is clearly at work in Gainesville.

We celebrated Kira, Daniil, and Cassie's birthdays. Please send names and birthdays of your meeting's youth and young adults to yyacoordinator@seymquakers.org so we can celebrate with them, as well.

The first YYA project of the new year will be the launching of two book clubs. Young adults will read a novel by our upcoming Yearly Meeting speaker, Rashid Darden. Youth will read *The Sapling Cage* by Margaret Killjoy. (The youth program was pleased to receive 12 free copies of this new release from Firestorm Books in Asheville, NC, an ally in SEYM's work against book banning.)

Also in 2025, the youth program looks forward to sending a representative to the Friends World Committee for Consultation Section of the Americas Section Meeting in Phoenix, Arizona. Youth also will be traveling to the Friends General Conference YAY Gathering, attending a youth and families retreat, and strengthening friendships at Yearly Meeting.

In gratitude for the privilege of serving SEYM and the next generation of Quakers,
Rachel Dellinger,
Youth and Young Adult Coordinator, December 14, 2024

Worship and Ministry Committee Report

SEYM Winter Interim Business Meeting

25 January 2025

The SEYM Worship and Ministry Committee continues to do God's work of bringing Spirit to any and all in the SEYM community and beyond. In our committee meetings and in other venues in which committee members participate, we have tried to be a listening ear and spiritual presence, especially during these uncertain times.

Joel Cook's workshop, *The Friends We Are Becoming: Stories of Transformation* was enjoyed by those who attended in November. He had initially postponed his workshop and offered an informal session of sharing among SEYM Friends regarding the hurricanes.

Cheryl Demers-Holton continues to hold the bi-weekly Seekers Book Club where discussions on the current book are lively, deep, and always grounded in Spirit. Seekers of all experience are welcome to share in a time both thoughtful and joyful.

Queries for the Journey are still offered weekly, providing spiritual consideration in the manner of Friends for individuals, small groups, and Meetings/Worship Groups.

We held our quarterly Extended Worship on 14 Twelfth Month 2024 and it was attended by several Friends who brought their hearts to worship over a three-hour period. Some Friends took advantage of the idea of hubs set up so Friends who wished to have the "face-to-face" experience, could gather with other Friends at their meetinghouse or elsewhere and still be a part of the online worship.

We welcome Adria (Gulizia) DiCapua as our 2025 Michener Lecturer for the WIBM and Michener Lecture weekend. Adria is a member of Chatham Monthly Meeting (NYM) and is a lawyer, mediator, teacher, and mother. She carries a concern for how Friends' traditional faith and practice translates into an increasingly unstable, atomized, and uncertain world. Her topic is **As the Good Shepherd: Leading and Being Led as Friends**. More information is available on the SEYM website.

Overall, the Worship and Ministry Committee continues to seek new opportunities for Spirit to engage with Friends and bring peace and nurture to all. We hold the spiritual deepening of all SEYM Friends as our concern and keep an understanding in our hearts that the transition into the new year may be unsettling for so many. We ask that all be tender with one another and find strength by listening deeply in the spaces provided.

Jan Dahm, Lisa Erazmus, Richelle Ogle,
Co-clerks of SEYM Worship and Ministry Committee

Ad hoc Quaker Call Committee Report

SEYM Winter Interim Business Meeting

25 First Month 2025

The *ad hoc* SEYM Quaker Call Committee meets faithfully and in search of Spirit as it responds to the charge from SEYM which was given to us in October 2023 at Fall Interim Business Meeting. The charge reads as follows:

The SEYM *ad hoc* Quaker Call Committee is charged with discerning whether, and if so, how SEYM might now be called to encourage and empower SEYM Monthly Meetings to actively, but non-violently, resist political pressures emanating from governmental entities in Florida intended to counter the principles and values of the Religious Society of Friends. In their discernment, consideration may be given to establish one or more Quaker Schools, Interfaith Conference Centers, or other multiple-Meeting sponsored educational projects likely to benefit the wider community.

The Call Committee, after much time in discernment and extensive research, recognizes a special leading which is to establish a Quaker School or schools in Florida. We all agree on the importance, if not absolute necessity, of bringing educational opportunities founded in Quaker principles and values to our communities. During our discernment we keep the Executive Director of the Friends Council on Education informed of our various activities and remain encouraged by the Quaker support.

When presented to Friends and non-Friends, we are overwhelmed by the enthusiasm of the idea of making available any and all such programs and varying genres possibly available for both children and adult education. Our research and minutes are recorded and can be used readily. We believe this information provides an excellent foundation for continuing the formation of Quaker educational programs.

We remain excited that many Friends although not on this Committee have a strong desire for continuance as we foresee the creation of one or more Quaker Schools in Florida. This vision is foremost in our hearts as we present to Executive Committee a suggested minute(s) for approval by SEYM.

We are proposing SEYM draft minutes to include:

- SEYM will lay down the *ad hoc* Quaker Call Committee effective immediately and seek the establishment of a SEYM standing committee that will be charged to report in greater detail the establishment of a Quaker school or schools in Florida.
- The \$15,000 seed money from unrestricted funds, which was originally directed during the Fall Interim Business Meeting 2024 to be used for a Quaker School in Fort Myers, be directed to support the activity of the standing “school/education committee”.*
- SEYM will hire a coordinator to provide SEYM with recommended options offering educational programs to the general public that promote the principles and value of the Religious Society of Friends.

**Minute: The Southeastern Yearly Meeting Annual Budget for Fiscal Year 2024-2025 is amended by the addition of a new Line 9000 Expense, “Out To Other Classes,” in the amount of \$15,000,*

for the purpose of starting an Independent Quaker School in Fort Myers, Florida. That amount shall be initially funded by the Trustees. It shall be disbursed or increased by donations from monthly meetings, other public and private entities, and individuals, upon the approval, and at the direction, of the Executive Committee, or its designees.”

Any standing committee should recognize that these programs may require establishing corporations and naming a Board which should include, at minimum, one member from a Florida Monthly Meeting as recommended by the Friends Council on Education. The standing committee should be aware that most educational programs require charging for services while making available scholarship or low-cost programs. The schools may choose to accept available State or Federal funding and outside donations in order to remain financially stable.

It is the request of the *ad hoc* Quaker Call Committee to lay down our Committee as it believes it has fulfilled its original charge and discerned the path to which it has been lead as well as providing a strong foundation for Friends to continue this mission aimed at academic freedom in the State of Florida. This Quaker Call Committee has made many Friends and friends who are encouraged by the vision of having a Quaker School in Florida and hope Friends will reach out to all who offer to participate in the effort to open one or more Quaker Schools in Florida.

Friends Committee on National Legislation Representative's Report

SEYM Winter Interim Business Meeting

25 January 2025

Annual Meeting and Quaker Public Policy Institute, 13-17 Eleventh Month 2024
"ADVOCACY THAT NEVER GIVES UP"

As only one of the three Representatives from SEYM to Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL), I along with my husband, George, flew to Washington to participate in this very meaningful time for Friends, hosted by FCNL's incredible, energetic, and dedicated staff. This report is focused on the Public Policy Institute portion of the Annual Meeting which occurred over the first day and a half period.

Through the Quaker Public Policy Institute hundreds of advocates lobby their federal officials to advance just public policies. On November 14th representatives from FCNL collectively visited over 100 offices of their Congressmen. The participants from Florida to the Quaker Public Policy Institute included Aurelio Anderson, Tallahassee MM; Youme Nguyen Ly, Miami MM; Eileen and George Zingaro, Clearwater MM; and one other Friend (un-named). We spent a couple hours over lunch laying out our visit before going to the congressional offices.

Every year, FCNL determines the "ASK" they hope we will make on our visits. This year, we asked the Senator to "Co-sponsor and vote in favor of Joint Resolutions of Disapproval to block the sale of offensive weapons to Israel". In Representative Gus Bilirakis' (12th District) office we asked him to "make a public statement that opposes more offensive weapons for Israel". (Only Senators could co-sponsor this resolution.)

We were scheduled for two Lobby visits on 11/14: the first one in Senator Marco Rubio's office to meet with Will Green, Legal Assistant, and Cole Ireland, Legal Correspondent; the second in Representative Bilirakis's office to meet with Nathan Stamps, Legal Assistant. Although it is not often that we are able to meet directly with our senators or congressmen we were kindly received. Nevertheless, as we were leaving we met Rep. Bilirakis in the hallway who remembered me from our many visits over the years and we, of course, made our "ask" again. It is a tough "ASK", as we all knew, but the impact of these visits does not fall on deaf ears. In our Florida meetings we included emphatically the need to allow aid into Gaza which received agreement in both offices.

Each year FCNL presents two awards during the Annual Meeting and Quaker Public Policy Institute (QPPI). Each goes to an outstanding member of Congress who has displayed leadership in advancing legislative priorities consistent with those advocated by FCNL. The Snyder Peace Award was given to Senator Rand Paul (KY) and the Justice Award to Senator Cory Booker (NJ). Neither could accept in person but each recorded a video accepting the award and giving a message.

At the end of the plenary, we received a very special surprise when Representative Barbara Lee from California spoke to us about her history as a Congresswoman. She is retiring at the end of this term and has truly been an inspiration to not only her constituents but to all Americans.

FCNL Annual Gathering is always wonderful, and I encourage Friends to make it part of their future plans.

Eileen Zingaro, SEYM FCNL Representative