

SIERRA CASCADES YEARLY MEETING OF FRIENDS

Quarterly Gathering – February 26, 2022

Opening

After the clerks opened Worship Through Business at 1 p.m. on Saturday, February 26, 2022, Friends gathered in silent worship. Co-Presiding Clerks Mike Huber and Sarah Katreen Hoggatt welcomed all to our Quarterly Gathering and reminded us that:

“We are gathering on the traditional lands of the Klamath, Kalapuya, Molalla, Multnomah, Chinook, Paiute, Cowlitz, Yakama, Snohomish, Nisqually, Snoqualmie, Duwamish, Suquamish, Siletz, Coos, Tillamook, Umatilla, Tulalip, Lummi, Makah, Kathlamet, Quileute, Quinalt, Wahkiakum, Clackamas, Willapa, Umpqua and many, many others.”

Introductions

The Co-Presiding Clerk, Sarah Katreen Hoggatt, introduced our visitor to our Quarterly Gathering:

- Jolee Robinson (Adelphi Monthly Meeting in Baltimore Yearly Meeting)

Announcements

The Co-Presiding Clerk, Sarah, made the following announcement:

- Friends General Conference (FGC) is gathering in Monmouth, Oregon in July 2023.
- Clerks took time to acknowledge our loss of Bernie Bosnjak this last winter who was the pastor of Hillsboro Friends Church. She will be greatly missed. (March 15, 1945 - November 28, 2021)

People Care Committee Report

Norma Silliman, People Care Committee clerk, reminded us, People Care is intended to support individual ministries with discernment or support for travel and to support people who are in transition and in hard times. They have:

- worked with Jade and Tom Rockwell on their plans to visit Friends in Cuba
- supported Hillsboro Friends as they grieve the loss of their pastor, Bernie Bosnjak, and handle necessary next steps

Cuba Visit

Norma invited Jade and Tom Rockwell to share their experiences visiting Friends in Cuba. Jade and Tom shared they took latex gloves and household supplies provided by local meetings in Richmond, Indiana. They also shared FUM and NEYM are contributing financially to the support of Cuban pastors in Friends churches. They shared that in Cuba, patients are required to provide latex gloves and sutures to surgeons before having surgery. During COVID, people were in house arrest for much of

the past two years and do not have internet access in addition to the fact that Zoom has excluded Cuba. Public school classes are broadcast on public TV in Cuba.

As part of Jade and Tom's visit, People Care proposed sending video messages and music from our churches. This was greatly appreciated by Cuban Friends, particularly since music plays an important role in Friends' worship services in Cuba and they are exploring reclaiming more of Cuban culture. In return, they recorded video greetings to us, and Jade and Tom shared this with our gathering.

Co-Presiding Clerk Michael Huber expressed gratitude to Jade and Tom and joy in hearing (and seeing!) about their journey among Cuban Friends.

Nominating Committee Report

Matt Boswell, Nominating Committee Clerk, reported the committee had no names to bring forward for approval. They are reviewing appointments that are expiring soon.

Matt reported that the committee's philosophy is to connect people to positions rather than to recruit people. He has noticed the committee sizes are dwindling, perhaps due to Covid. He also thinks folks are tired and that when we meet again in-person/hybrid, this will galvanize more interest.

A committee rundown:

- Coordinating: 3 (2 in June. Two years ago, there were 9.)
- Abuse Prevention: 3
- Communications: 2
- Epistle: 3
- Nominating: 4 (3 in June)
- Nurture of Ministry: 4
- Quarterly: 4
- Youth Committee 1-3 (in June)

There is a tension between our needs and desires. We look at the committees and see needs but if there are not people willing to join them, we are stuck. If someone wants to offer their time toward our work, Matt is happy to discuss committee options with them.

Current openings Nominating Committee is looking to appoint include Co-Presiding Clerk and an Assistant Clerk. It could make sense for an Assistant Clerk to come on and train as Co-Presiding Clerk or we might have two Co-Clerks. The committee is also looking for a Co-Recording Clerk who could be able to participate in-person in June.

The Stories Project also seeks to have membership from each member church to form a team of story gatherers and we are also looking for a new treasurer.

If people want further information on the committees, they can read information on our website and nominate yourself or someone else.

Friends in attendance shared how the Youth Committee needs a leader and the Abuse Prevention Committee desires 5 members. Dave Cundiff said our current treasurer, Robert Wade, would like to train a successor but plans to continue for the present time.

Mike Huber, Co-Presiding Clerk, has noticed in his conversations with committee clerks that some committees don't have leadership, and some are not meeting. While this is not surprising in view of the COVID epidemic, we should be aware that our integrity as a yearly meeting is worked out in our committee tasks.

FWCC Representative Report

Gil George, one of our FWCC Representatives, has joined the staff of FWCC. FWCC has been around since the 1920s with the goal of getting Quakers to talk with one another across divisions. The mission of FWCC is to bring Friends from varied traditions and cultural experiences in worship, communications, and consultation, to express our common heritage and live our Quaker values.

Each yearly meeting appoints representatives to FWCC which form the program groups, with support from administrative staff. The representatives *are* the committees. There are 4 sections: Americas, Africa, Europe and Middle East, and Asia/Australia/New Zealand.

People can find online courses on the FWCC website: www.fwccamericas.org and events on www.fwccamericas.org/events. There is also an FWCC YouTube channel that can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCtP28ZV5tL-irfUs6LzHrIA/featured>. Their phone number is 215-241-7250.

On the website can be found newsletters, epistles, and yearly meeting calendars, online religious education material, and scholarship funds.

The next World Quaker Day is on October 2, 2022. There is a Reunion of the Section of Americas on March 12, 2022, and FWCC is planning an in-person gathering for March 2023 in North Carolina. There is no charge to attend the session on March 12, 2022, though donations are welcome. There is also a Latin American and African conference for Women coming up. There will be translation services

in all events. We have noticed that Quakers from abroad are forming Quaker groups in the US that reflect their cultural backgrounds and values.

FCNL Representative Report

Kendra Purcell, our FCNL representative, grew up in New Hampshire and was involved in politics since she was young. Kendra was amazed to learn there was a Quaker lobby group promoting restraint in military spending along with access to food and housing. FCNL also walks people through the process of meeting local representatives.

FCNL's legislative priority in 2021 was to make the child tax credit permanent. Kendra expressed value in being a citizen of a representative government and that we need to bring the same energy that corporations bring to the legislatures through lobbying. FCNL is revising its legislative priorities this year. She relayed that our meetings need to hold discussions about priorities and send letters to FCNL. She would like to have 5 representatives total from SCYMF.

Co-Presiding Clerk, Mike Huber, expressed our gratitude to Kendra for her work as our representative.

Gathering Committee Report

Annual Sessions are June 17-19, 2022. The plan is to meet in-person and our yearly meeting has made a deposit with Canby Grove Christian Conference Center (they have been hosting in-person gatherings for the past year). Our yearly meeting has limited scholarship support. We will have some sessions on Zoom so people can join online. The committee is seeking technical expertise and/or access to equipment to provide a hybrid meeting. There will be a children's program available. While we have funds approved for a Youth Coordinator, Mike Huber, Co-Presiding Clerk, reminded us how the Youth Committee is holding this appropriation but that the committee is dormant right now. While we would like to offer such a program, we are not prepared to do so this year. This was confirmed by Wendy Davenport, Youth Committee member.

Treasurer's Report

Robert Wade, our treasurer, shared our financial situation.

- As of December 31, 2021, the most remarkable event was a final payment from Northwest Yearly Meeting of \$126,041 paid in July and October. No decision has been made as to where this money will be held.
- Our current assets are \$319,735, mostly in cash and some of it is in mutual funds.
- While as yearly meeting, we have generated \$60,000 from membership over the first 4 years, 2021 was the first year with a negative cash flow of \$6,000. Donations are down 24% since COVID began.
- We started to spend on two SCYMF priorities in 2021 for:

1. Health care and disability insurance for full-time pastors and other staff of member churches
2. For prevention of abuse of children (the Abuse Prevention Committee budget).

While as SCYMF, we have money in the bank, we still need participation in the form of donations and/or committee participation. The Financial Committee also needs to hear from other committees about their budget needs. Gil George noted there are similar trends across the non-profit world with falling donations.

Dave Cundiff, clerk of Finance Committee, noted the committee doesn't think we will need most of the money from Northwest Yearly Meeting right away, but the stock market is at an all-time high and this may not be a prudent time to invest the money. Moreover, this inheritance from Northwest Yearly Meeting also represents money generated via the use of stolen lands and racial privilege. Finance does not know what proportion of this money rightfully belongs to others.

Finance Committee Report

Dave Cundiff, clerk of Finance Committee, is grateful for the work of Finance Committee in making the ministries of the yearly meeting possible. They are not in charge of the bus trip but try to keep the bus running. Finance Committee touches on everything but controls very little.

Dave reported:

- One reason Finance Committee is encouraging contributions is when the cost of doing something is artificially low, then we don't season our enthusiasm by our financial willingness to sacrifice for it.
- The committee recommends a balanced budget every year as a spiritual discipline.
- In-person gatherings may generate a sense of caring and financial commitments.
- Finance Committee is willing to follow the lead of the yearly meeting, but we recommend raising the contribution level to generate a balanced budget.
- The SCYMF Bylaws specify our fiscal year is January 1-Dec 31. However, Annual Sessions take place in June. It would help to align the fiscal year with our Annual Sessions. If there are reasons to continue our current fiscal year, please let the Finance Committee know. Otherwise, the committee will propose changing the fiscal year to July 1- June 30.

Abuse Prevention Committee

Jade Rockwell, an Abuse Prevention Committee member, proposes three things:

1. SCYMF will create a centralized system to increase child safety in all participating monthly meetings. Protecting children will be part of our covenant with one another. Monthly

meetings will adopt and participate in common policies, training, and safety processes together. (Specifics will be approved by the yearly meeting at a later date (June 2022)).

Guidelines include: two adults with a minor at all times and specific procedures in identifying safe adults to work with children. There will be two places to track these records. The committee has found there may be good policy in place but insufficient training and record keeping. This proposal achieves accountability.

2. Permanent committee: The yearly meeting will establish a permanent committee with a representative from each monthly meeting that will help with the implementation of safety policies and oversight of specific issues of concern when they arise. Prior to a policy being adopted (2022 annual sessions at the soonest), members of this committee will participate in extended education being offered through Safe Communities and give feedback on the policy to be proposed.

Because these are critical matters of safety, the committee wants to transition from a taskforce to a permanent committee. While the committee is assessing what is practical for monthly meetings to implement, they don't know the lay of the land in each church.

3. Spring 2022 interim policy: All individuals who work with minors in any monthly meeting and/or at Annual Sessions will attend the basic two-hour training on sexual abuse prevention offered by Safe Communities this year and undergo a screening through the Abuse Prevention Task Force. These two requirements will be completed as soon as possible, no later than annual sessions this year. The trainings will then be available in an accessible archive.

The yearly meeting needs to have these policies in place to be in legal compliance with our insurance. Not having these policies in place leave us open to liability and lawsuits as Northwest Yearly Meeting had a sexual abuse lawsuit.

Rachel Hampton stated West Hills Friends Church put policies in place years ago and want more details on this policy before switching to a new policy. They also have a concern for vulnerable adults and would like protections for them written into the new policy as well. Jade replied that Safe Communities recommended policies for children and vulnerable adults are two separate policies.

Friends expressed appreciation for the work of the committee while also acknowledging approval should be considered at annual sessions. Jade reminded us we are contracted for five training sessions through Safe Communities and two have taken place. Some of what is proposed needs to be decided before annual sessions.

Mike Huber surmised there is no push back about protecting our children and we also want to protect vulnerable adults. We will work on the children's policy first. We acknowledge there is hesitation around a central authority, and we will be mindful of local structures and policies already in place.

Robert Wade, treasurer, brought forward that to create a new committee, by-laws need to be changed in addition to amending the section around the independence of the local meetings and limited influence of the yearly meeting. While we may approve of these recommendations, the implementation would need to be done carefully.

The committee strongly reminded us that no matter how we feel about central authority, the entire yearly meeting will be held legally liable if something does come up in a local monthly meeting. Insurance policies all say the insurance has a duty to defend, but in fact, they may not do so, if we don't meet certain conditions and we would have to pay all damages. Collectively, we can say that this is how we can keep each other safe.

We acknowledge this conversation may be hard for victims among us and remind the gathering the yearly meeting will handle the financial funds needed for implementation, not the monthly meetings.

MINUTE PROPOSED: We see value in the Abuse Prevention Task Force looking for a way to find safety for our children in our local meetings. APPROVED

We find value in the Youth Committee working together with the Abuse Prevention Committee even while the Youth Committee has no leadership currently in place.

Some meetings do not have children, but it is those meetings without a children's program and followed policies in place that can place visiting children in the most vulnerable positions. We, therefore, also find value in each monthly meeting having representation on the committee.

MINUTE PROPOSED: We approve making the Abuse Prevention Task Force into a standing committee with representatives from each monthly meeting. APPROVED

We currently do not have a policy requiring background checks. Previously, SCYMF background checks have been run through Matt Pratt-Rusum and tracked both at West Hills Friends Church and Rachel Hampton. This would change the responsibility to the Abuse Prevention Committee.

MINUTE PROPOSED: Friends feel clear that, for Annual Sessions, the people working with children be trained by Safe communities for 2 hours and have background checks. APPROVED

Discussion was held around how best to make sure every monthly meeting is in legal compliance while also respecting their decisions as a monthly meeting. Background checks, in particular, are badly needed after two years of only meeting online during COVID. While background checks do not technically expire, checks several years old, such as 4-5, are not looked on favorably as up to date in the legal courts. We also acknowledge that

One question is what do we do if a meeting is not in compliance with the future abuse prevention policy? While the legal system expects hierarchy, Quaker process does not. We need to address both legal requirements and meetings respectfully. We as a yearly meeting are responsible for the implementation of protection for children and this is a safety issue. Cooperation is needed from the monthly meetings to protect our children and be in legal compliance.

Mike Huber, Co-Presiding Clerk, reminded us we have people with expertise who care. We want to inform monthly meetings we have resources available instead of insisting on compliance. It is important while we also want to say please. We urge monthly meeting to move forward by a certain date.

MINUTE PROPOSED: We urge monthly meetings to take advantage of the resources, which SCYMF is providing, before Annual Sessions, and to conduct background checks on childcare staff within the monthly meetings. APPROVED

Jade Rockwell expressed that after hearing many hard stories from other yearly meetings, she is grateful to be involved in a yearly meeting that is taking abuse protection seriously.

The next training is on March 26. It will deal with offender behavior and is free. The Abuse Prevention Committee are working on getting previous training sessions archived in an accessible location on the SCYMF website.

Equity and Inclusion Committee

Jen Seamans reported on Cherice Bock's work in protesting an oil pipeline being built across indigenous lands.

Minute of Support for Indigenous People

The Minute of Support for Indigenous People is taken with permission from North Pacific Yearly Meeting. It acknowledges the theft of indigenous lands and how we, as Quakers, have benefited from the theft. The document includes such language as, "SCYMF repudiates the doctrines of discovery. We acknowledge and regret Friends' role in the ensuing land theft and in the forced assimilation and genocide conducted at residential schools for children indigenous to..."

Participants expressed excitement, appreciation, and their desire for this to be a “living document.”

Dove suggested each meeting find out whose land the building is on and to whom they would make reparations.

Jade recommends *The Gods of Indian Country* by Jennifer Graber. It focuses on Quaker missions and the Kiowas.

Closing

Sarah Katreen Hoggatt, Co-Presiding Clerk, closed our Worship through Business meeting by encouraging all participants to take a moment and breathe deeply. We closed the gathering with gratitude.