

Orlando Monthly Meeting
Meeting for Business Minutes

4-9-2017

Meeting Clerk, Stephanie Preston, convened the meeting at 11:45 am.

Friends settled into worshipful, attentive silence in preparation for 4th Month Meeting for Worship with an Attention to Business.

The Clerk offered a reading for Friends' consideration.

“Any great change must expect opposition because it shakes the very foundation of privilege.” - Lucretia Mott

Treasurer Report - Tom Gottshalk distributed the March 2017 report, which is also the First Quarter report. The Treasurer provided explanations of specific items. Lake Highland Preparatory School submitted \$2000 as the 2016 fee for using the OMM parking lot. The 2017 fee is to be received at summer's end. A down payment has been made for the audio-visual system. Due to Bil Meeler's departure, the budget line items for maintenance, repairs, and housekeeping and the Property Agent are under reconsideration.

Trustees Report – On behalf of Trustees' Clerk, Chris Laning, the meeting Clerk conveyed the Trustees are considering investment possibilities.

Membership Matters – Stephanie Preston

2017-04.01 Friends approve the second reading/final approval of Gary Evans for membership.

A farewell letter from Bil Meeler was read. (Attached)

Membership Clearness Committee Report – Tom Gottshalk

2017-04.02 Friends joyfully approve Gregory Allen-Anderson to membership in the Orlando Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends. We are all familiar with his participation in our community in many ways, and we thank him for that. We look forward to his continued valued activities.

Property Committee - Ray Jenkins. The electric wiring and security cabinet for the A-V system have been installed. We are awaiting the equipment.

Hospitality – Kate Joseph. Orlando Monthly Meeting will host guests from the Islamic Center on April 30. The meeting will be updated as we come closer to the event.

Peace & Social Concerns – Committee of the Whole

Vicki Carlie presented a statement regarding climate change for Friends' consideration.

While Friends were in basic agreement, some suggested modifications were brought forth. Vicki and the meeting Clerk made the appropriate alterations. To give credit to these ideas, both the original and amended statement (Minute **2017.04-03**) appear at the end of these minutes. (2 Attachments)

2017-04.03 Orlando MM approves the statement on Climate Change and Environmental Protection of April 9, 2017, as amended.

2017-04.04 Meeting approved OMM Clerk and OMM Friends to use the statement on Climate Change and Environmental Protection publicly in communication with elected officials, media, and other gatherings related to faith concerns and climate issues.

2017-04.05 The OMM statement on climate change and environmental protection will be forwarded to the SEYM Earthcare Committee for sharing and discernment.

The Clerk stated, “Special thanks to Vicki Carlie for bringing forward a draft of this statement for our consideration. We especially look forward to sharing it when we accompany members of the Citizens' Climate Lobby to visit representatives of U.S. Senator Marco Rubio's Orlando office on 4/17/2017.”

SEYM Requests for Discernment.

Stephanie Preston presented two requests (items) for monthly meeting discernment from the SEYM Ministry on Racism Committee. Orlando Friends began their discernment of these items at the March business meeting, completing their discernment at the April meeting for business. The specific requests and explanations from SEYM Ministry on Racism Committee are attached.

Item 1. Orlando Friends discussed a proposed SEYM minute supporting the removal of the “Exception Clause” of the 13th Amendment to the Constitution. (Attached)

Friends discussed the SEYM Ministry on Racism Committee's proposed minute. Meeting Clerk, Stephanie Preston, will provide Orlando Monthly Meeting's input to SEYM.

A summary of Feedback/Comments for SEYM Committee for Ministry on Racism (Susan Taylor & Ellie Caldwell) from OMM Business Meetings held on 4/9/17 and 3/12/17.

1. There can be other intermediate steps taken beside just amending Constitution. For example, "ban the box" on employment applications. We can use other means to address racism concerns
- 2.. We like the idea that we are talking about this, but this particular goal does not feel reasonable/realistic.
3. This proposed minute feels too ambitious. What are other intermediate steps can be taken beside this to address racism?
4. Inmates regard work opportunities in prison very highly; modifying the 13th amendment could be an unintended consequence of taking these opportunities away
5. What is planned to happen with this minute if it is approved? Opening up the Constitution feels very extreme/dangerous. There is a difference between consensual vs. forced labor. Can we address the problem without amending the Constitution? Another concern is making money from the incarcerated. That is, someone being imprisoned speaks to the problem of profit from private prisons.
6. We are taking a stand as a faith community with the proposed minute; it is not so much about actually trying to get the Constitution changed. What other ways can we make a statement?
7. The drafted document confuses items that are unrelated. This concern is not a constitutional issue. It is more of a statement of values; encourage Quakers to continue work on these issues, knowing that they go beyond 13th amendment.
8. There are ways to address racism that feel more realistic and achievable, including on the state and local level. The proposed statement was an optimistic one in October 2016 before the election.

Item 2. SEYM asked monthly meetings to consider a request for the yearly meeting to contribute funds for the Institutional Assessment of Structural Racism In Friends General Conference (FGC).

The Clerk distributed information and rationale received from FGC. These documents were previously posted in the February and March minutes. (Attached)

As the outcome of OMM's discernment of the FGC assessment item, The Clerk will submit the following summation on behalf of Orlando Friends to the SEYM Ministry on Racism Committee.

Orlando Friends are not in unity of passing a minute asking SEYM to financially support the FGC Institutional Assessment on Racism *at this time*. We are, however, in support of the spirit of the efforts by FGC to exam this ongoing problem. The reservations of Orlando Friends have to do with a concern about the historical efficacy of such endeavors, especially if those conducting the assessment are people who carry white privilege and do not include individuals

of color. We want to make sure that the assessment is carried out with integrity in respect to the very problem being examined. It is especially important that the voices of people of color are heard directly. We also recognize that structural racism is connected to all other forms of oppression including patriarchy, sexism, homophobia, etc. Quakers do not function in a traditionally hierarchical organization, how we undertake this assessment matters.

Following silent worship, the Clerk ended the meeting at 1:15 pm

In attendance:

| | |
|---------------------|-------------------|
| Bill Carlie | Liz Jenkins |
| Ed Lesnick | Minerva Glidden |
| Eduardo Ysern | Mira Tanna |
| Greg Allen-Anderson | Ray Jenkins |
| Jerry Knutson | Stephanie Preston |
| Kate Joseph | Tom Gottschalk |
| | Vicki Carlie |

Faithfully submitted by Ed Lesnick, Recording Clerk

OMM TREASURER'S BUDGET REPORT FOR MARCH 2017 (Q1)

| Chart of Accounts | 2016 Budget | 2017 Revenue | % of Budget | 2017 Budget | Remaining |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|-------------|---------------------|-------------|
| | | | | Proposal | |
| 5100 Support Gifts | \$ 9,000.00 | \$1,535.00 | 17.06% | \$ 9,000.00 | \$ 7,465.00 |
| 5200 Reimbursement/Use of MH | \$ 4,125.00 | \$2,000.00 | 100.00% | \$ 2,000.00 | \$ - |
| 5500 Trustee transfers, yearly | \$ 49,350.00 | \$62,000.00 | | \$ 62,000.00 | |
| 5600 Trustee transfers, Grants | \$ 16,875.00 | \$16,000.00 | | \$ 16,000.00 | |
| 5700 Return Credit | | \$1,238.82 | | | |
| 5800 Reserves allocated to budget | \$ 6,900.00 | \$6,900.00 | | \$ 6,900.00 | |
| TOTAL REVENUE | \$ 86,250.00 | \$89,673.82 | | \$ 95,900.00 | |

EXPENSES

| OPERATING EXPENSES | | Expenses | % of Budget | | Remaining |
|---|---------------------|--------------------|---------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| 6010 Repairs & Maintenance | \$ 8,000.00 | \$103.15 | 0.86% | \$ 12,000.00 | \$ 11,896.85 |
| 6040 Housekeeping | \$ 1,800.00 | \$600.00 | 33.33% | \$ 1,800.00 | \$ 1,200.00 |
| 6045 Pest Control | \$ 2,000.00 | \$234.00 | 11.70% | \$ 2,000.00 | \$ 1,766.00 |
| 6050 Grounds Care | \$ 2,600.00 | \$400.00 | 11.11% | \$ 3,600.00 | \$ 3,200.00 |
| 6090 Utilities, MH | \$ 2,800.00 | \$502.84 | 16.76% | \$ 3,000.00 | \$ 2,497.16 |
| 6100 Insurance | \$ 4,000.00 | \$990.99 | 24.77% | \$ 4,000.00 | \$ 3,009.01 |
| 6110 Utilities, WC | \$ 1,200.00 | \$248.81 | 20.73% | \$ 1,200.00 | \$ 951.19 |
| 6120 Taxes, City Services | \$ 1,300.00 | \$0.00 | 0.00% | \$ 1,300.00 | \$ 1,300.00 |
| 6150 Professional fees | \$ 900.00 | \$70.00 | 7.78% | \$ 900.00 | \$ 830.00 |
| 6160 Property Agent | \$ 12,000.00 | \$4,000.00 | 33.33% | \$ 12,000.00 | \$ 8,000.00 |
| 6500 Other Property Expense | \$ 500.00 | \$9,940.74 | 82.84% | \$ 12,000.00 | \$ 2,059.26 |
| TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES | \$ 37,100.00 | \$17,090.53 | 31.77% | \$ 53,800.00 | \$ 36,709.47 |
| 6060 Bank Service Charges | \$ 75.00 | \$0.00 | 0.00% | \$ 75.00 | \$ 75.00 |
| 6070 Phone | \$ 500.00 | \$132.63 | 22.11% | \$ 600.00 | \$ 467.37 |
| 6155 Treasurer's expenses | \$ 550.00 | \$28.78 | 4.80% | \$ 600.00 | \$ 571.22 |
| 7030 Outreach & Adult Ed. | | \$0.00 | 0.00% | \$ 1,000.00 | \$ 1,000.00 |
| 7050 Fellowship & Hospitality | \$ 400.00 | \$389.05 | 12.97% | \$ 3,000.00 | \$ 2,610.95 |
| 7070 Library & Subscriptions | \$ 250.00 | \$0.00 | 0.00% | \$ 250.00 | \$ 250.00 |
| 7080 Archives | \$ 50.00 | \$0.00 | 0.00% | \$ 50.00 | \$ 50.00 |
| 7090 Communications | \$ 400.00 | \$0.00 | 0.00% | \$ 400.00 | \$ 400.00 |
| 7100 Travel | \$ 2,000.00 | \$0.00 | 0.00% | \$ 2,000.00 | \$ 2,000.00 |
| 7110 Travel for SEYM | \$ 2,000.00 | \$0.00 | 0.00% | \$ 2,000.00 | \$ 2,000.00 |
| 7150 Care & Community | \$ 1,000.00 | \$500.00 | 50.00% | \$ 1,000.00 | \$ 500.00 |
| 7170 Peace & Social Concerns | \$ 100.00 | \$0.00 | 0.00% | \$ 100.00 | \$ 100.00 |
| 7200 SEYM Field Secretary for Earthcare | \$ 1,250.00 | \$0.00 | 0.00% | \$ 1,250.00 | \$ 1,250.00 |
| 7210 Young Friends Group | \$ 3,000.00 | \$850.00 | 28.33% | \$ 3,000.00 | \$ 2,150.00 |
| 7220 SEYM | \$ 4,911.00 | \$0.00 | 0.00% | \$ 5,998.00 | \$ 5,998.00 |
| 7230 Worship & Ministry | \$ 250.00 | \$0.00 | 0.00% | \$ 250.00 | \$ 250.00 |
| 7500 Other expenses | \$ 300.00 | \$0.00 | 0.00% | \$ 300.00 | \$ 300.00 |
| TOTAL ACTIVITIES | \$ 17,036.00 | \$1,900.46 | 8.69% | \$ 21,873.00 | \$ 19,972.54 |

CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

| | | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|---------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| 7300 | Homeless Ministry | \$ 4,000.00 | \$0.00 | 0.00% | \$ 4,000.00 | \$ 4,000.00 |
| 7400 | Special Ministry Projects | \$ 5,000.00 | \$162.00 | 3.24% | \$ 5,000.00 | \$ 4,838.00 |
| 8240 | Meeting Projects | \$ 190.00 | \$0.00 | 0.00% | \$ 190.00 | \$ 190.00 |
| 8330 | Scholarships | \$ 1,500.00 | \$180.00 | 12.00% | \$ 1,500.00 | \$ 1,320.00 |
| 8500 | Donations | \$ 1,000.00 | \$0.00 | 0.00% | \$ 1,000.00 | \$ 1,000.00 |
| 8600 | Grants | \$ 15,875.00 | \$0.00 | 0.00% | \$ 16,000.00 | \$ 16,000.00 |
| 9000 | Pendle Hill S.F. Award | \$ 6,900.00 | \$0.00 | 0.00% | \$ 6,900.00 | \$ 6,900.00 |
| TOTAL CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES | | \$ 34,465.00 | \$342.00 | 0.99% | \$ 34,590.00 | \$ 34,248.00 |
| TOTAL EXPENSES | | \$ 88,601.00 | \$19,332.99 | 17.53% | \$110,263.00 | \$ 90,930.01 |

General Fund 2017 Budget

| | |
|---------------------------------|--------------|
| Revenue | \$ 89,673.82 |
| Expenses | \$ 6,010.04 |
| Trustee Transfer | \$78,000.00 |
| | |
| SEYM Budget for FY2017 will be: | \$5,998.00 |
| | |

General Fund Assets

| | |
|---------------------|--------------|
| Checking Acct. Bal. | \$71,912.72 |
| Savings Account | \$30,150.95 |
| TOTAL | \$102,063.67 |

PENDLE HILL SCHOLARSHIP FUND

| | | |
|------------------------------|-------------|----------------------|
| Beginning Balance | \$ 7,500.00 | |
| Awards | \$ 600.00 | |
| Ending Balance | \$ 6,900.00 | (\$1225.00 Refunded) |
| Reserves in Checking (#9000) | | |

Presented by Tom S. Gottshalk, Treasurer
Orlando Monthly Meeting of the
Religious Society of Friends, Inc.
Budget Report for Mar. 2017 (Q1)

April 9, 2017

The Clearness Committee Meeting for Membership to the Orlando Monthly Meeting and the wider Religious Society of Friends in consideration for Gregory Allen-Anderson was completed on April 8, 2017.

Committee Members were:

Tom S. Gottshalk, Clerk

Martha Morris

Kay Lesnick

We joyfully recommend Gregory Allen-Anderson to membership in the Orlando Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends. We are all familiar with his participation in our community in many ways and we thank him for that. We look forward to his continued valued activities.

With gratitude to all,

Tom S. Gottshalk

March 27, 2017

Orlando Monthly Meeting

Friends -

Yesterday was my bon voyage potluck at the Meeting House - incredible food, lots of smiles, well-wishes, merriment and avoidance of eye contact 'cause farwells can be stressful. It is very important that I let you all know the profound sadness that I am experiencing, and will for some time, as I pay heed to that which is calling me forward.

I have learned so much in your midst. Your physical presence will be sorely missed, but I carry each of you in my heart and will endeavour to represent you well.

I am deeply grateful for all your love and support. I am celebrating an awareness that my relationship with OMM is not ending, but simply evolving.

Wishing you all warmth, peace and beauty at every turn!

Bil Meeler

Minute 2017.04-03. Approved: April 9 2017

Orlando Monthly Meeting Statement on Climate Change & Environmental Protection

We call on all our members of Congress, members of the Florida Legislature, the Governor of Florida, and local governments to uphold and enact laws, regulations, and policies that protect our natural environment from pollution, habitat loss, and climate change.

We ask you to uphold the integrity of our environmental agencies and protect public lands. The environment belongs to all of us; it is the role of government to preserve it for future generations and defend it against exploitation by private economic interests.

Urgent Action is needed if we are to avoid the catastrophic impacts of climate change. All reputable scientists agree that Climate Change is real, and is caused by increased carbon emission mostly from burning of fossil fuels. This threatens all life on Earth. Our glaciers are melting, our seas are rising, and our ecosystems are suffering disruption from a warming climate, seasonal weather changes, and more pests and diseases. Climate change is already threatening our economy, impacting our food supply, and causing flooding of coastal communities.

We ask our government to support society's transition to clean energy sources, and redirect subsidies from fossil fuel industries to support displaced workers and communities impacted by the transition to clean energy.

Clean energy is the energy of the future. Countries and communities around the world are proving that alternative energy and sustainable practices are not only viable, but can be a boon to economies. Clean and sustainable sources of energy are now readily available and comparable or cheaper in cost than fossil fuels. Solar and wind power create more jobs than fossil fuel industries.



Faith statement on Care for the Earth

It is our experience and testimony that the Light, Life, Love, and Wisdom of God calls us to live in a holy relationship with creation. It is contrary to the Spirit of God to waste or exploit nature on human greed or vanity. We are called to be good stewards of the earth, to live simply and sustainably, with care and reverence for all creation, preserving earth's biodiversity and abundance for future generations.

"It would go a long way to caution and direct people in their use of the world, that they were better studied and knowing in the Creation of it. For how could [they] find the confidence to abuse it, while they should see the great Creator stare them in the face, in all and every part of it?"

---William Penn, 1693

In faith and unity,
Orlando Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) April 9, 2017

Requests from SEYM Ministry on Racism Committee

'End Slavery for All'

The Committee for Ministry on Racism asks Monthly Meetings to comment on, and/or approve, their draft of a minute entitled "End Slavery for All," which is attached below. Please send your comments to Susan Taylor at susantaylor410@gmail.com or Ellie Caldwell at caldwellellie@hotmail.com. The Committee will incorporate, and/or respond to, Monthly Meeting comments to prepare a final draft for Yearly Business Meeting.

END SLAVERY FOR ALL Second Draft

The SEYM Committee for Ministry on Racism asks Worship Groups, Monthly and Yearly Meetings to affirm, and publicize the need for:

1. The removal of the exception clause of the 13th Amendment to the US Constitution which otherwise abolishes slavery. Exception clause has been put in bold below.
2. Knowledge that the purpose of prisons should be to protect members of society and to prepare those imprisoned to return as productive members of their community through provision of comprehensive education and training.
3. Persons formerly in prison to have full restoration of constitutional rights, including access to housing and jobs.

§§§

The 13th Amendment reads:

Section 1. Neither slavery or involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.

Section 2. Congress shall have the power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

§§§

We seek this in the light of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) testimony on equality and our history of seeking to honor that of God in everyone through justice that restores. Currently, persons in prisons are coerced into working in what amounts to slavery. They leave prison with severely restrictive conditions of freedom that shackle their efforts for normalcy, often for the rest of their lives.

Proposed FGC Institutional Assessment on structural racism

Winter Interim Business Meeting took up the proposed FGC Institutional Assessment on structural racism.

Both the SEYM FLGBTQ Representative (Friends for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, & Queer Concerns) and the SEYM Committee for Ministry on Racism recommend that SEYM approve contributing funds for the proposed Institutional Assessment of Structural Racism of Friends General Conference. Please consider whether your Meeting approves, and empower your SEYM representatives and members to speak to this issue in April. Please see the reports below for background information: a segment from our FGC Representatives' report to WIBM, and a segment from the November Vital Friends FGC e-Newsletter that refers to this commitment and provides a summary for Friends. Also see the FGC Representatives Report in these Documents in Advance. (YBM 2017)

From FGC Representatives Report to WIBM 2017

Institutional Assessment Proposal

Quakers strive to put Spirit at the center of our lives. However, we are also cultural beings, socialized into the dominant culture. Structural oppression, for example, has played a profound role in the life and ministry of the Religious Society of Friends for over 350 years. Structural oppression doesn't diminish the presence of the Spirit in us or the vision of a "great people to be gathered." We wish to live our testimonies of equality and integrity.

The FGC Diversity Committee proposed, and the Central Committee approved an "Institutional Audit." With the help of outside consultants, an assessment would examine the structure, processes, and resources of the organization to help us see where we now regard structural racism, and develop steps to move us toward a greater understanding of and better structural form to overcome the racism inherent because of white privilege. This process involves the entire FGC organization including Central Committee members. Outside consultants will not make the assessment but will be hired to help FGC gain the skills and knowledge to undertake the assessment. The focus will be specifically on Friends General Conference as an organization (committee and staff structure). Our hope is that our experience with the assessment and the resulting work within FGC will be both informative and inspirational for yearly and monthly meetings, providing a model and specific ideas for change among FGC Friends.

The calling arose from several factors, among them:

1. Discriminatory actions by the college security services employees at the 2016 Gathering
2. Need to promote concrete and meaningful change that opens a window into other areas of exclusion in our organization (Age, Youth, Income levels, etc.)
3. Acknowledgment that several of FGC's member yearly meetings, plus a few congregations, have sent formal communications endorsing the request for an institutional assessment
4. Recognition that many FGC Friends are responding to the concerns of the Black Lives Matter movement

Two of the goals of an institutional assessment on racism:

1. Build institutional capacity around seeing and overcoming structural racism. FGC wants to acquire the skills to continue this work without the help of outside consultants. This would involve training FGC teams.

2. Name the barriers to full participation in FGC at all of its levels. FGC wants to be thorough in examining all levels and aspects of the institution.

Financial support is necessary. The assessment will be accomplished through Yearly Meetings, Monthly Meetings, individual donations, and grants. The approximate cost for the assessment is \$60,000 over a two-year period.

The SEYM Representatives to Central Committee ask the SEYM's Ministry on Racism to consider this project for discussion at WIBM.

From Vital Friends Newsletter, November 2016

Institutional Assessment Friends General Conference (FGC)

Central Committee united around the need to undertake institutional assessment to uncover structural racism within our organization – and to prepare plans for dismantling such structures. We heard from many yearly and monthly meetings about the importance of taking this step. As part of our commitment to collaborate with our affiliated yearly and monthly meetings, we will be sharing our learnings from this assessment with Friends across the USA and Canada.

Although structural oppression doesn't diminish the presence of the Spirit in us or the vision of a “great people to be gathered,” it does create barriers that are stumbling blocks to full participation by many in our faith community. In dismantling these stumbling blocks, we must tap into the power of the Spirit while acknowledging the truth that structural oppression and systemic racism does spiritual violence to us all. To be faithful in this time we must do more than admit that such oppression and attitudes of privilege exist. We must act to eliminate them if we wish to be fully inclusive in ways that are more than mere words.

After getting bids from anti-racism consulting firms and building a draft budget, it's become clear that this assessment may cost as much as \$60,000. We will need financial support from meetings and individual Friends on top of their regular support for the FGC's ongoing programs and services. We do have some pledges in hand for this work, but we need many more.

---From Vital Friends, FGC E-Newsletter,
Barry Crossno, FGC General Secretary and FGC Staff. November 2016

Report for Central Committee

Issues of Race at the 2016 Gathering: Steps Taken & Additional Considerations

Authors: Frank Barch, Presiding Clerk and Barry Crossno, General Secretary

Reviewer: Jean-Marie P. Barch

Date: August 10, 2016

Preface

Almost 1,000 Friends from the United States, Canada, and around the world came to the College of St. Benedict in St. Joseph, Minnesota July 3-8 for the 2016 FGC Gathering. From the opening message shared Sunday evening by Barry Crossno, the General Secretary of FGC, naming concerns of Friends of color about white supremacy, FGC and the Gathering, through the vocal ministry of Peggy Senger Morrison on Friday evening and everything in between, this was a Gathering that was challenging, joyous, troubled, deep, spiritual, and much more.

This year's theme was "be humble, Be Faithful, BE BOLD." Gathering attendees were humbled as we were challenged to face, despite our ongoing work and statements on matters of race and power, that we who comprise FGC, even in Gathering planning, often default to a position of meeting the needs of our primarily white constituents instead of moving toward actions that will make the safety and full participation of all races and ethnicities more likely.

What Happened

For the past few years, FGC has hosted a pre-conference for Friends of Color. The intention of this event is create an opportunity for Friends of Color to gather together in fellowship prior to the start of the Gathering. For many of these Friends, they may be the only person of color in their local Quaker meeting. Therefore, meeting together is an important way to feel supported as there can be challenges in being the only Friend of Color in a predominantly white setting. The pre-conference is also valuable because it creates a web of support among Friends of Color so that they feel more empowered to engage with the entire Gathering community, which is predominantly white. Distressingly, a number of Friends of Color experienced micro-aggressions and harassment from campus security after arriving for the pre-conference. There were reports that campus security followed some Friends of Color through parking lots and that security also surveilled and profiled them in various ways. This made these Friends deeply uncomfortable for reason everyone can understand. No one should ever be treated this way—and it's made even more egregious given these Friends were making a financial and time commitment to go on a spiritual retreat.

What this episode lifted up with great clarity is that the Gathering often locates itself in places where Friends of Color have had negative experiences either on campus or in the surrounding community. Friends of Color have lifted up for more than a decade that this is a very real and serious problem and that FGC has failed to concretely and successfully address the situation. This has been a systemic failure over a long period of time and it must change. While FGC has tried to find historically black colleges in the past to host us, or find more diverse urban campuses where Friends of Color might feel safer, it's also true that we have not succeeded in doing so. There have been reasons cited as to why, but regardless of the whys we must find a solution so that the Gathering becomes a safe container for all Friends, not just white Friends. One glaring problem is there have been no Friends of Color involved in site selection. Friends of Color must have a more direct role in site selection and have positions of authority within the structure of FGC. This Gathering has brought into stark relief that FGC as an institution must find a way forward so that we can become the community we have been working and praying to become.

Steps Taken So Far

During the Gathering, the first step was for our Gathering Coordinator and several Friends of Color to engage with our host about how security is being handled. The report that the General Secretary received was that the meeting went well. The Benedictine Sisters and the administration have a commitment to hospitality and were concerned to learn that Friends within our community were having a negative experience. It was agreed that patrols would be lessened. Also, they volunteered to move some of their security patrols out of cars and into golf carts or on to foot in an effort to lessen their own visibility and try to create a more comfortable space for Friends. We appreciated the campus hearing our concerns and taking steps to try to create a more hospitable and safer feeling environment for all Friends for the remainder of our time there. The above was also a new learning for us as organizers. While we often have talks with campus security before the Gathering about various issues, we want to more proactively suggest to future campuses ways that their security units can reduce their visibility and create a greater feeling of welcome and safety for all Friends.

As agreed during the Gathering by a number of FGC clerks, the General Secretary and several Friends of Color, the composition of the Gathering Site Selection committee was changed after the Gathering so that it now includes Friends of Color. Four such Friends have now been confirmed to serve. This means that the Site Selection Committee will have a majority membership of Friends of Color. Our hope, coupled with committed effort, is that this results in future sites, after Niagara (which is already contracted), that support safe and positive experiences for Friends of Color. We are grateful to the Friends of Color who made this issue clear as well as to those Friends of Color who have agreed to serve. We also wish to thank the previous and continuing members of the Site Selection Committee for their devoted service and a number of other Friends on Central Committee for acting with speed and conviction in the week after the Gathering to help make this change.

For Our Discernment

In addition to the above steps already taken, many Friends at the Gathering and beyond have encouraged FGC to engage in an institutional audit that will help FGC “identify and provide recommendations to correct any structural racism or implicit bias within the organization.”¹

The issue of an institutional audit had been brought to a number of Clerks and the General Secretary in the spring of this year by our Ministry on Racism Fellow, Richie Schulz, among others. We were told the price was \$19,000 and that it would require time from individuals across the organization. At the time, we were faced with the need to make significant budget cuts. Further, staff and volunteers were feeling very stretched by all the changes presently underway. After discussion, it was felt by a number of Friends, including a couple of Friends who are involved in anti-racism work and very involved in FGC, that this was something important to consider after this fiscal year and after the implementation of the many changes that are pressing on this organization. In other words, this year was not the time for an institutional audit. This was shared with some of the Friends who were advocating the audit. As you might guess, they were not in unity with our assessment.

Given what happened at the Gathering and the very public discussions that occurred around it, Friends in support of an institutional audit once again lifted it for consideration. The General Secretary, Presiding Clerk and others concurred publically that it should receive consideration. Some Friends in favor of the audit then started circulating a petition at the Gathering calling for the audit, which has created an expectation among some Friends that it will be budgeted for and completed. While this creates pressure, we are clear that it is Central Committee, who carries the knowledge and priorities of the entire organization while listening for the guidance of the Divine, that must discern how best to move forward.

Further, the decision to do an institutional audit must be made by Central Committee as it would require both currently unbudgeted funding and time from staff and volunteers across the organization. Even with the latest reductions in staff and programming, FGC is pressed financially. We’re also stretched thin, despite the generosity of so many of you who are reading this, in terms of staffing and volunteer resources. The result is that it is sometimes taking us longer to execute work than we had planned. Therefore, adding an institutional audit to the mix will further strain our existing resources. To say these things is not to argue for or against the audit. It is simply to acknowledge our situation so that as a body we can make informed decisions and have some sense of the possible outcomes.

With the above stated, we recognize the moral reasons for doing the audit. We also want to point out that the public desire to see us do the audit may mean that the additional resources we need to carry it out may be available. In fact, Ann Arbor Meeting has just committed \$1500 towards the audit to encourage us to commit to it. There may be other Friends who would come forward if we make a public appeal (being clear that Friends donations should be new money for this purpose on top of existing donations—we don’t want to divert funding from existing programs and potentially increase the pressure on our reserves).

¹ Wording is from a minute from Ann Arbor Friends received after the Gathering encouraging us to do the audit.

Certain staff and Central Committee members will soon be embarking on the process of learning more about what we could expect to gain from an institutional audit and what is required to complete such an audit (financial, staffing, etc.). We will also be testing if there is donor support for this activity. This information will be brought to the Committee for Nurturing Ministry, the Committee for Discernment Planning and Priorities, Executive Committee and finally to FGC's Central Committee which must enter into discernment concerning the benefits of this action and potentially approve the funding and resources to complete it. Given that we as a body have chosen, even in the midst of laying down other programs, to commit significant resources to anti-racism work, we imagine the possibility of an institutional audit will be something upon which we will all deeply discern.

We look forward to your thoughts and will be bringing more information forward as we have it.

FGC's Institutional Assessment

A Spiritual Challenge Intertwined with Cultural Challenge

Quakers strive to put Spirit at the center of our lives. However, we are also cultural creatures, and we have been socialized into the dominant culture. Structural oppression, for example, has played a profound role in the life and ministry of the Religious Society of Friends for over 350 years, even while Quakers have been engaged in important social justice movements such as Abolition, anti-war efforts, prison reform, and more.

Structural oppression doesn't diminish the Spirit in us or the vision of a “great people to be gathered.” It creates structural barriers that become stumbling blocks to full participation by all in our faith community. To dismantle these stumbling blocks we must tap into the power of the Spirit while we also acknowledge the truth that structural oppression and systemic racism in particular hold all of us captive. You can't address a problem if you don't think it exists.

We are challenged to develop covenants with each other – to establish right relationships among and within the diverse communities within FGC. This is not a competition for primacy. Instead, we are called to create a commitment to walk together with Spirit in supporting one another.

What are the goals of an institutional assessment on racism?

- Build institutional capacity for FGC to recognize and overcome structural racism. FGC wants to develop the skills to continue this work on its own after the assessment without further help from outside consultants.
- Name the barriers to full participation in FGC at all of its levels. FGC wants to be thorough in examining all levels and aspects of the institution and its activities.
- Develop a vision for inclusion and articulate change goals that are broadly owned by staff, governance, and our member bodies. FGC wants clear goals to which we can hold ourselves accountable in the next 3 to 5 years.
- Provide clear next steps – both content and direction towards goals.
- Share our experience and learnings with yearly and monthly meetings, with the hopes of strengthening the will and capacity for change throughout the Religious Society of Friends.

- That FGC as an institution and, we pray, Quaker communities in general become more meaningful and inviting environments for People of Color.

What are the issues to be addressed? Why the focus on racism?

At the 2016 FGC Gathering, Friends of Color experienced racial wounding and called once again for change within FGC. Learn more about this by reading **Issues of Race at the 2016 Gathering: Steps Taken & Additional Considerations (August 2016)**, available at www.FGCquaker.org/why-inst-assess

We recognize race is not the only area in which FGC falls short of full inclusion. We are concerned about marginalization of our youth, Friends who are trans* and gender nonconforming, Friends with physical and other disabilities, and Friends both working class and upper class who experience exclusionary bias among Friends. While we acknowledge the need to address all these concerns, there are several reasons why we believe the focus at this time needs to be on racism. Some of the reasons include:

- A race-focused plan is likely to generate insights and concrete changes about how FGC can become more inclusive of others who currently experience marginalization.
- A growing urgency among Friends, energized by the Black Lives Movement, that we must address the inequities of racial power and privilege in Quaker institutions as well as in the secular society as a whole.
- Many Friends of Color engaged with FGC have asked that we undertake an institutional assessment focused on race and racism. After 15 years of anti-racism work, FGC needs to focus more sharply on structural racism within FGC as an organization. We hope this will illuminate similar issues throughout the Religious Society of Friends.
- Several of FGC's member yearly meetings and a few monthly meetings have sent formal communications endorsing the request for an institutional assessment. (See [Attachment Two](#) for minutes from New England, Northern and Lake Erie Yearly Meetings, and from five monthly meetings and one monthly meeting peace and social action committee.)

Costs of an Assessment

The current estimate is \$60,000. This includes conventional consulting fees and travel costs, a large initial training workshop (including room and board costs for everyone and some travel assistance), and meal and travel costs for the rest of the work of the Assessment Committee. It also includes the costs for a half a day a week for a year for the (FGC staff) Assessment Coordinator, Vanessa Julye.

We are not hiring consultants to undertake the Assessment. We are hiring consultants to train the Assessment Team to undertake the Assessment. In this way it will more fully be our Assessment, and we will build Quaker capacity to undertake future similar Assessments.

Likely Timing of an Assessment

- Co-Clerks of Assessment Team approved February 2017
- Fundraising goal reached by April
- Contract with consulting firm signed May
- Initial training for Assessment Team, FGC leadership, and other stakeholders, September 2017
- Assessment undertaken by Assessment Team with collaboration by staff, governance, and others
- Report with recommendations comes to FGC Central Committee, October 2018.
- Report shared with yearly and monthly meetings, November 2018
- Central Committee authorizes implementation of some or all recommendations, October 2018
- Ongoing reports to yearly and monthly meetings about implementation of Assessment, 2019 and beyond

Conclusion

We are seeking the beloved community, where every person is valued and that of God in every person is respected and cherished. Removing barriers to inclusion for all who would be part of the Quaker way is fundamental to nurturing that beloved community.

See also these documents

The can be downloaded at www.fgcquaker.org/why-institutional-assessment

- 2016 Minutes Supporting an FGC Institutional Assessment
- Yearly Meetings with 2016 Statements concerning Racism and Inclusivity in the Religious Society of Friends
- Racial Issues at 2016 Gathering

Minutes Supporting an FGC Institutional Assessment

Minutes of Support

10 Monthly Meetings: Ann Arbor Friends Meeting, Birmingham Monthly Meeting, Cambridge Friends Meeting, Cannon Valley Friends Meeting, Central Philadelphia Monthly Meeting, Chena Ridge Friends Meeting, Fort Wayne Friends Meeting, Fox Valley Friends Meeting, Mountain View Friends Meeting, Oberlin Monthly Meeting

3 Yearly Meetings: Lake Erie Yearly Meeting, New England Yearly Meeting, Northern Yearly Meeting

Ann Arbor Friends Meeting

July 17th, 2016: The AAFM supports the request by Friends of FGC/Spiritual and Institutional Accountability Working Group for an institutional audit of FGC to identify and provide recommendations to correct any structural racism and/or implicit bias within the organization.

Why an Audit for FGC? Friends of Color say they have long experienced bias within FGC, where their concerns and participation have been routinely marginalized or excluded. A few examples:

- FGC's decision-making body has historically been predominantly white, with a few Friends of Color.
- Friends' committees responsible for populating FGC's decision-making body—yearly meetings' Nominating Committees—are largely white. This includes FGC's own Nominating Committee.
- For a Quaker organization, FGC's structure is overly hierarchical. Key bodies that deal with issues important to Friends of Color are locked inside subcommittees of committees within the governing body, which can result in gatekeeping.
- While white members can, and sometimes do bring up concerns of Friends of Color, white decision-makers often seem unaware of the importance of those issues.

For example: In order for Quakers to serve on FGC's governing body—Central Committee—Friends must be available for a 4-day business session once a year and serve on a subcommittee, which usually holds one or more face-to-face meetings as well. Given the significant overlap of people experiencing economic barriers and racial barriers, that's a lot of time away from family and work/school -- all to be immersed in a predominantly white & professional middle-class body that corporately isn't very far along in its racial awareness journey.

Another example: at the 2016 FGC meeting, Friends of Color felt unsafe at the location that had been selected (College of St. Benedict, St. Joseph, MN). Some individuals were singled out for surveillance by law enforcement during ordinary activities such as photographing flowers and setting up a sleeping tent, resulting in mistrust, weariness, and spiritual and emotional

drain. If Friends of Color had been part of the decision on the location of the gathering, they might have chosen one that was more hospitable to all.

A third example: At the 2016 FGC meeting a white Friend asked FGC staff to cancel afternoon and evening activities in order to organize a trip to the Twin Cities (just 90 mins away) in support of Black Lives Matter protests after the killing of Philando Castile. Ultimately, administrators said no. Friends of Color and white allies ask, “Was Black pain not strong enough? Was white comfort and predictability around schedules prioritized over time-sensitive action around solidarity?”

Birmingham Monthly Meeting

August 2016 Some folks at the 2015 and 2016 FGC gatherings experienced serious issues related to race and it appeared that FGC did not listen. A group has formed to deal with these issues in FGC. American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) has already gone through an institutional audit on racism issues with productive results. Over 300 signers (some individuals, some meetings) are currently on this petition. Donations are helpful to fund this effort at FGC. People can sign this petition online and Marvin will send a link by email. We can only go forward and we need road maps for what can be done. Quakerism ought to appeal to a lot of people – but most meetings are not diverse. Even in Detroit, we don’t have a huge amount of racial diversity

Terminology in this petition about “our white supremacist culture” troubles some of us. White privilege could be substituted and seems to be less inflammatory language. This petition seems to have been written in the heat of a moment and is going in the right direction. The Clerk can sign this petition in the name of Birmingham Friends Meeting (BFM) with a note that some are troubled by the phrase “our white supremacist culture” and prefer the term “white privilege”. A donation of \$500 to FGC earmarked for the institutional audit on racism is suggested. This audit by a professional consultant might cost \$25,000 or more. This donation by BFM would be made after the FGC Central Committee has approved the audit.

Cambridge Friends Meeting

September 11, 2016: Tom Sander, co-Presiding Clerk, read the following statement: “This past year we’ve seen a continuation of the racial violence, anger and protests that marked 2015. Unarmed black men, women and children are the target of some police officers, protests are overturning cities and police are being fired upon. These actions stem from deep-rooted racism found across our country. All of this violence and hatred threatens the core values and beliefs of Quakerism – that there is that of God in everyone and that they should be treated accordingly. These continuing affronts to our values demand that we consider how we can respond in love and in social justice.

For many of us such violence is not part of our day-to-day lives (either as perpetrator or victim) and discussions of how our actions connect to these outbreaks of violence may feel foreign or a reach. In addition, it is profoundly difficult to acknowledge that actions by others contrary to our beliefs could somehow be our responsibility. Yet we must start with our privileged and thoughtless language, the inhospitality of our institutions, and our refusal to be uncomfortable if we are to change the racist fabric of our country. The mythologist Joseph Campbell reminds us, ‘Dig where you stumble, for that’s where the gold is.’

The harder and more uncomfortable this task, the more necessary it is.

We must acknowledge that our refusal to actively fight racial inequity in our own lives, in our own privilege, and in our own institutions, may seem harmless but allows the culture of racism and white Supremacy to grow both in our institutions and beyond day by day.

Polly Attwood, clerk of FORJ (Friends for Racial Justice), presented the Minute as passed by New England Yearly Meeting for approval along with previously distributed background information. Polly described the process by which FORJ had come to support the Minute and described some of what is meant by a cultural audit, including that often organizations need to hire a consultant in order to begin the process. Friends then read the Minute and settled into worship.

Friends then discussed their thoughts on the Minute and FORJ's queries. A Friend discussed her experience at Friends General Conference and her request that we respond in a vigorous and total way to this request. She acknowledged the length of time that it takes to come to one's own realization of this topic. Another Friend spoke about his long history of racial justice work along with his discomfort with some of the language of the Minute and also the process by which it was developed. He remarked that the language of "white supremacy" is a good thing to "sit with" but not a good thing to "start with." A Friend described her own recent experience in which she demonstrated her own "white supremacy" and how the subsequent conversation had been powerful for her. A Friend questioned the use of the phrase "white supremacy" and suggested that she did not think it accurately fit the individuals present at FMC. A Friend commented that while the Minute might not be perfect, the intention and spirit was central and an important action for the Society of Friends to carry forward. It was also remarked upon that while this Minute was hard it was also an opportunity for opening. A Friend acknowledged the difference between "disparate treatment" and "disparate impact" and that this conversation will raise individuals' awareness. It was acknowledged that this might not be the best way of doing things but this is a way of doing it.

The Clerk acknowledged that there is not yet unity to approve the Minute and asked whether we are willing to minute our encouragement to FGC as they consider commencing a cultural audit.

Friends approved our encouragement to FGC for a cultural audit and the clerk encouraged FORJ to think about what the next steps might be at FMC.

Cannon Valley Friends Meeting

August 14th, 2016: CVFM supports that FGC undergo an institutional audit to identify and eradicate any policies, structures or culture that inhibit full participation of People of Color and other marginalized groups."

Central Philadelphia Monthly Meeting

October 9, 2016: Central Philadelphia Monthly Meeting minutes its support for Friends General Conference undertaking a multicultural institutional audit to assess its culture, process and practices, and the structures which create barriers to full participation by Friends of Color.

We support an institutional audit of FGC because without assessing our systems we will not achieve the real change required to right historic wrongs. Though necessary, it is not sufficient to address problems as they arise. An audit will be a proactive effort to address systemic concerns.

We believe the audit will provide a way to understand FGC's culture, practices and policies and how these affect everyone the organization deals with. We feel that as a meeting we will benefit as well from FGC's efforts, as the audit and the sharing of its findings will lift up practices which occur in Quaker organizations and which may occur in our monthly meeting as well.

We affirm the step which FGC has taken of enlarging and changing the composition of the Gathering site-selection committee and including four Friends of Color. We support as well the step of re-examining FGC Gathering site-selection with consideration of racial concerns as a factor. For example, if FGC could select an historic black college or university as the Gathering site, Quakers could learn a great deal.

If FGC does engage in a multicultural institutional audit, CPMM is prepared to provide additional financial support for this effort.

Chena Ridge Friends Meeting

October 2nd, 2016: CRF support FGC examining the expressed concern of institutional racism within the organization, its programs and practices, through a self-audit. We encourage the designation of funds toward this effort and are willing to add our financial support.

The CRF FY 2017 budget doubled the FY2016 financial donation to FGC.

Fort Wayne Friends Meeting

September 11, 2016: Believing the Spirit shows no partiality, racism has led to discrimination, oppression, injustice, and violence. Fort Wayne Friends Meeting commits ourselves to be doers of the Word (James 1:22) by pursuing racial justice and reconciliation. Supporting an institutional audit of our denominational body, Friends General Conference, to identify and provide recommendations to correct any structural racism and/or implicit bias within the organization we feel is one step in that direction.

Fox Valley Friends Meeting

September 11, 2016: Fox Valley Friends Monthly Meeting supports a request forwarded to us by a representative of Friends of FGC/Spiritual and Institutional Accountability Working Group for an exploration of the decision-making mechanisms and practices of Friends General Conference to provide recommendations for the establishment of administrative practices that will help identify and address any implicit racial bias that may be present within the organization.

Lake Erie Yearly Meeting

2016 Annual Sessions: Lake Erie Yearly Meeting supports the request by Friends of FGC/Spiritual and Institutional Accountability Working Group for an institutional audit of Friends General Conference to identify and provide recommendations to correct any structural racism and/or implicit bias within the organization.” LEYM committed \$1,400 to FGC for an Institutional Assessment.

Mountain View Friends Meeting

August 14, 2016: In a demonstrative show of support, Mountain View Friends Meeting stands fully behind Friend Regina Renee Ward and endorses the petition of Friends of Color: “*We unite with Friends of Color in their call for a majority representation on FGC's Annual Gathering site selection committee as an immediate first step. We call on FGC to undergo an institutional audit. Our aim is not just to add People of Color to decision making structures but to understand and change the structure so that they better serve People of Color, which in truth serves all of us.*” Our concern extends beyond the issues within our beloved FGC community and reaches out in compassionate support of all people of color worldwide, to all victims of violent policing, and in remorse for all the blindness inherent in our culture of white supremacy. Recognizing that Mountain View Friends Meeting reflects the same attitudes and cultures found in FGC, we commit to beginning a process of self-examination for ourselves and our Meeting so that we can make changes to begin to act to dismantle this systemic wrong.

New England Yearly Meeting

2016 Annual Sessions: Our hearts were touched when we heard the pain and honesty in the reports of the experiences of People of Color and other attenders at FGC Gathering. We felt the spirit move us to affirmation and action.

We are complicit in white supremacy. We at New England Yearly Meeting have been “colonized” by our white supremacist culture and fall short of our full potential as a gathered body of Quaker Meetings because of this colonization.

We commit to engaging in interrupting white supremacy in ourselves:

- within individuals
- interpersonally
- in our meetings
- and at all system levels of NEYM

To start this, we ask Permanent Board to explore an external cultural competency audit of New England Yearly Meeting.

We support Friends General Conference, an organization of which we are a part, in its efforts to interrupt white supremacy in its organization.

We commit to support fundraising by the New England Yearly Meeting FGC committee to raise \$4,000 from our membership and our monthly meetings by the end of 2016. These funds will be available to FGC towards the cost of an external cultural competency audit if FGC decides to

have one conducted. If more than \$4,000 is raised, we direct the Permanent Board of NEYM to find use for the additional funds to support the work of interrupting white supremacy.

(Read more about NEYM's laboring with the words "supremacy" and "colonized" here <https://neym.org/minutes/year/2016-sessions minute 2016-64>)

Northern Yearly Meeting

October 15, 2016: We are witnessing a time of deep pain in the body of Friends and we wish to speak to this brokenness with clarity, honesty and love. We acknowledge the lived experience of this pain and harm as expressed by Friends of Color in our midst.

We, the Friends of Northern Yearly Meeting, have come to understand that many do not experience our Quaker institutions and Friends General Conference and its Gathering as a truly welcoming, loving, and safe community. We grieve the many ways in which this has closed all of us off the rich tapestry of human diversity and mutuality that is the gift of the Spirit among us.

We believe that many Friends have earnestly labored to hear and be moved by the Spirit on this issue. Friends have a long history of asking queries, of shining a fierce light, in search of truth and right action. It is this process of individual and corporate self-examination that has, at times, led Friends to the forefront of the struggle for justice.

It is in this spirit of honest, humble, and bold self-examination that we call on FGC to undertake a race equity institutional audit with the assistance of outside professionals. We hope that this audit will help us all to recognize the unintended consequences of our attitudes and practices, and to close the gap between our intentions and our impact.

What we hope to achieve through this work is nothing less than the co-creation of the beloved community to which we believe we are called. We believe this audit will help make visible the obstacles that our current structures and practices place in the way of full and safe participation of Friends of Color. Further we believe that Friends are called to change those structures and practices to be those that create and support a dynamic, transformative, beloved community. We anticipate that the assessment and recommendations can and will be used to enliven Yearly and Monthly Meetings as well.

This audit, and implementation of its recommendations, will require financial resources. We believe that FGC needs to redirect existing resources and obtain additional support for the work. We commit to making a meaningful financial contribution specifically for this work when FGC commits to undertake the audit.

We, as members of FGC, hold all of us in the light as we undertake this urgent work on behalf of, and in the name of, all of us.

Oberlin Monthly Meeting

September 20, 2016: Oberlin Friends Meeting, Oberlin, Ohio supports the recommendations of Friends of FGC/Spiritual and Institutional Accountability Working Group for an institutional audit of Friends General Conference to identify and provide recommendations to correct any structural racism and/or implicit bias within the organization. Furthermore, OFM supports this

year's member assessment by Lake Erie Yearly Meeting (LEYM) which will include a donation to be held in escrow by FGC which will help cover the cost of an institutional audit and the assessment for LEYM members. Furthermore, Oberlin Friends Meeting will continue to actively reflect on our own strengths and limitations in terms of internalized bias, institutional racism, and inclusion of Friends of Color in our Meeting and community.

Original draft presented by Vicky Carlie, April 9 2017. It is included here for comparison to the adopted minute 2017.04.03

OMM proposed letter/minute on Climate Change & Environmental Protection

We call on all our members of Congress, members of the Florida Legislature, the Governor of Florida, and local governments to preserve and enact laws, regulations, and policies to protect our natural environment from pollution, habitat loss, and climate change.

We ask you to uphold the integrity of our environmental agencies and protect public lands. The environment belongs to all of us; it is the role of government to preserve it for future generations and defend it against exploitation by private economic interests.

Urgent Action is needed if we are to avoid the catastrophic impacts of climate change. All reputable scientists agree that Climate Change is real, and is caused by increased carbon emission mostly from burning of fossil fuels. This threatens all life on Earth. Our glaciers are melting, our seas are rising, and our ecosystems are suffering disruption from a warming climate, seasonal weather changes, and more pests and diseases. Climate change is already threatening our economy, impacting our food supply, and causing flooding of coastal cities.

We ask our government to support society's transition to clean energy sources, and discontinue subsidies for fossil fuel industries. Clean energy is the energy of the future. Countries and communities around the world are proving that alternative energy and sustainable practices are not only viable, but can be a boon to economies. Clean and sustainable sources of energy are now readily available and comparable or cheaper in cost than fossil fuels. Solar and wind power create more jobs than fossil fuel industries.



Faith statement on Care for the Earth

It is our experience and testimony that the Light, Life, Love, and Wisdom of God calls us to live in a holy relationship with creation. It is contrary to the Spirit of God to waste or exploit nature on human greed or vanity. We are called to be good stewards of the earth, to live simply and sustainably, with care and reverence for all creation, preserving earth's biodiversity and abundance for future generations.

"It would go a long way to caution and direct people in their use of the world, that they were better studied and knowing in the Creation of it. For how could [they] find the confidence to abuse it, while they should see the great Creator stare them in the face, in all and every part of it?"

---William Penn, 1693

Orlando Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)