

State of the Monthly Meetings

Report Prepared June 2024

The Meetings that make up Southern Appalachian Yearly Meeting and Association carried many heavy burdens this past year. There are the continued concerns about upkeep of Meeting houses and property, conflicts and how we transform them or fail to do so, and worries about numbers and ages of attenders and other internal issues. Looming over these concerns are the conflicts around the world, especially in Gaza and Ukraine, the escalating climate catastrophe, and the seeking of racial healing in the US. Almost every meeting in our SAYMA community is holding these concerns in the Light and either already doing what they feel called to do or are discerning the way forward. As one Meeting put it, “principled engagement” keeps us responding, and sharing these burdens enables us all to cope. Worshiping together helps us to hold the center when it feels like the world is falling apart.

Continuing concern was expressed by some about the relationships of our monthly meetings to SAYMA as a whole. Some meetings have decided to take a step back from involvement with the yearly meeting.

We experienced the ebb and flow of either new growth in numbers, younger attenders, or the shrinking of numbers for various reasons. Some meetings felt a deeper renewal and enjoyed a return to potlucks and other community events that the pandemic made almost impossible. There are many different and varied ways that we are creating community together other than our first day meetings for worship. Taking retreats together, engaging with our younger members, inviting guests to speak to the meeting, and meetings for healing are just a few examples. A few meetings lost members due to death, and are still doing the extensive work of grieving those ongoing losses. The aging of members and how many roles we each take on in our meetings and communities was of concern to many.

Despite the challenges of living in today’s world while continuing to witness to the Light, our meetings are staying true to the reality and heartbreak of being seekers of Truth. We are finding joy where we can and recognizing what is ours to do. Listening to the Light and being faithful allows us to be changed.

Sincerely,

The members of the Ministry and Nurture Committee

Joan Barnette, West Knoxville FM
Brenda Barrington, Columbia FM
Daryl Bergquist, SAYMA co-clerk, Birmingham FM
Annie Black, Cookeville FM

Wood Bouldin, Charleston FM Greenbrier WG
Rob Collins, Birmingham FM
Maggie Davies, Birmingham FM
Barbara Esther, clerk M&N, Asheville FM
Margaret Farmer, SAYMA co-clerk, Asheville FM
Diana Masso, Charleston FM
Adrian Mehr, Memphis FM
Lissa Place, Atlanta FM
Melissa Preast, West Knoxville FM