

Earth Justice Committee report  
to SAYMA 2024 Sessions  
Berea KY  
6/22/2024

Earlier this year, the Earth Justice Committee distributed among SAYMA Meetings a proposed Minute on Climate Change, asking Friends to consider what was being said, to discern whether they could unite with it or in what ways they would seek to change it in order to express the sense of their Meeting. The proposed Minute was read into the account of the Spring 2024 Representative Meeting in Atlanta, along with the Committee's request. The Minute identified the Climate Crisis as existential, a crisis that called for a radical response. Approval of the Minute as proposed would have led to a public statement by the Yearly Meeting clerk(s) on behalf of SAYMA Friends, calling on the UN's 2024 Conference on Climate to advocate for an end to the use of fossil fuels by 2030, and to allocate funds to address the climate damage to the least developed nations caused by the most developed nations. The Minute also asked for Friends to make a personal commitment to take immediate and practical steps to reverse our dependence on fossil fuels.

In the course of the following months we received feedback from several SAYMA Meetings, ranging from simple approval of the Minute as proposed to rejection of the Minute entirely. But there was one current that flowed through all of the feedback that we heard, that carried the tension between making an outward statement that seemed rooted in temporal ethics and expressing our communal leadings, rooted in our spiritual foundations.

In proposing this Minute, it was the Committee's intention, and expectation, to open a space for discernment and conversation, the raising of concerns and expression of leadings, in regard to the injustices manifested in human-caused climate change. We did not hope that these conversations would be over once the body of Friends present approved a Minute. "Our lives begin to end," Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. pointed out, "when we stop talking about things that matter." The Committee is mindful of a tendency to relegate the approval of a Minute to the checking off of a box, providing the opportunity to set our concern aside and get on with our ordinary lives. But does this not run counter to our aspirations? Do we not aspire to live extraordinary lives? Living into our testimonies of integrity, of justice, of simplicity, of stewardship, calls us to be extraordinary people, to live extraordinary lives.

The Committee recognizes with gratitude that many Friends among us have been and continue to be led to encourage and participate in these conversations. The Committee also acknowledges and accepts the responsibilities embodied in the first directive of our mission statement as posted on the SAYMA website: "to act as a catalyst for action on healing the environment in a just and equitable manner, and to encourage Friends to understand and undertake this work as a spiritual leading." In that spirit we are led not to bring to you Friends today a Minute for your consideration, but to share what we felt moved to offer as a way to open space for discernment and conversation at the Yearly Meeting level, the raising of concerns and expression of leadings, and ask you Friends, "What canst thou say?"

Respectfully submitted,  
Steve Livingston  
clerk, Earth Justice Committee