

**SAYMA Ministry and Nurture Committee**  
**Report on Request from Representative Meeting 149**

The Ministry and Nurture Committee was asked by the Co-Clerks of Southern Appalachian Yearly Meeting and Association (SAYMA) at Representative Meeting 149 (Fall 2022) to address four proposed minutes on the relationship between SAYMA and the Uplifting Racial Justice Committee (URJ), and on building right relationships with Friends of Color. The original proposed minutes are included at the end of this report. In addition to our committee meetings, we held two listening sessions at the 2023 Yearly Meeting Retreat and Sessions to gain wider feedback.

While the committee members have a strong desire to undo systemic institutional racism, the committee is trying to find ways that are both honest and useful to share with the body of SAYMA. The difficulties experienced in SAYMA were present within the Ministry & Nurture Committee. We found ourselves word-smithing when we should have been looking for the root causes of the issues and sometimes got bogged down in seeking perfectionism. Through perseverance, a sense of the committee was found in some areas, and opportunities for growth and reflection in other areas.

Firstly, the Ministry and Nurture Committee brings before SAYMA the following recommendations to be tested at a SAYMA business session.

**Addressing Proposed Minute 1.**

SAYMA Uplifting Racial Justice Committee is operating as a self-selecting standing committee because that is the choice of Friends of Color active in the committee.

We recommend SAYMA approves this process. We take this to mean the Nominating Committee is neither choosing its clerk and members nor deciding their term limits.

**Addressing Proposed Minute 2.**

We recommend SAYMA recognize and welcome the Paul Cuffee Worship Group as affiliated with SAYMA without its being under the care of a SAYMA Monthly Meeting.

Our committee achieved a sense of the committee that these recommendations should come before SAYMA for discernment and hopes the SAYMA body will come to a sense of the Meeting on these issues in a timely manner, preferably at Yearly Sessions 2024.

Secondly, the Ministry and Nurture Committee acknowledges its limitations in reaching a sense of the committee. Many of the patterns and blockages that hampered the committee's work

exist throughout SAYMA and wider society. These patterns harm our Yearly Meeting, particularly Friends of Color, and impede the work of undoing racist practices.

This committee is not unique within SAYMA. We are a reflection of the SAYMA community. Our conversations are filled with Spirit. We remain committed to uplifting racial justice although our pace is slower than we like. We find unity in some things and other areas where we are still searching for a sense of the committee. Having developed a set of agreements for the committee, we continue to work toward being vulnerable and evolving, no easy or quick task, but a necessary one.

Regarding minute 149-13-03, the committee did not reach unity. We ask SAYMA to release the Ministry and Nurture Committee from making a recommendation. The Finance Committee offered a minute in 2022, the minutes of RM149-13 pg 9 reflect this, and an apology by the Finance Committee was delivered at Yearly Meeting sessions in 2023, upholding that URJ did not mismanage their finances.

In regard to proposed minute 140-13-04 relating to guiding White Friends in acknowledging harms done to Friends of Color. Although the work we have before us is challenging and slow, there is a way forward. Spirituality and anti-racism work are not polar opposites. They can be woven together and our Quaker testimonies point to the way forward. Integrity focuses on seeking truth, no matter how difficult that path may seem. Community is about building and restoring caring relationships. It involves being faithful and willing to humbly admit our shortcomings and repair damage done. Stewardship is about sharing the responsibility of addressing racism and supporting Friends of Color. To foster peace is to promote an atmosphere of nonviolence and reconciliation in all interactions, actively working to dismantle the systems of oppression that create discord within our community. Equity leads us toward living into the reality of loving one another as we love ourselves.

The Ministry and Nurture Committee recognizes that the unusual scrutiny placed on SAYMA URJ's affairs in comparison to other groups shows that SAYMA does not have a community that is loving and supportive to all. We hope Friends will accept the presented recommendations as the minimum commitment of trust and intention towards building a multicultural anti-racist, inclusive organization. We ask Friends to further contribute feedback, discernment, and their own leading in helping us dismantle racism in SAYMA. We offer our deepest gratitude to all Friends already working on this issue, especially those willing to engage the committee in difficult conversations and hold us accountable.

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

**Footnote:**

**Original Proposed Minutes from Representatives Meeting 149:**

149-13-01: We acknowledge SAYMA-URJ's right to exist as a self-selecting standing committee of SAYMA – which means the Nominating Committee will not choose its members or decide their term limits.

149-13-02: We acknowledge that the Paul Cuffee Worship Group has a right to exist as a program of SAYMA-URJ without being under the care of a SAYMA Monthly Meeting.

149-13-03: We acknowledge that SAYMA-URJ has never engaged in any kind of financial mismanagement and that every dollar of URJ's budget has been spent in accordance with URJ's mission and goals.

149-13-04: This body charges Ministry and Nurture with guiding white Friends in acknowledging their part and the part of their predecessors in racial harms to Friends of Color so that we may take responsibility and enter into right relationship with Friends of Color.