

**Sierra-Cascades Yearly Meeting of Friends
Fall Gathering on October 5, 2024
Eugene Friends Church and Online**

Approval pending

Pre-Business Meeting Activities

1. Friends offered four morning workshops prior to the business meeting.
 - a. *The FWCC World Plenary: Living the Spirit of Ubuntu*, Gil George
 - b. *Foot-washing Fun with Derek*, Derek Lamson
 - c. *Jesus, the Roman Empire, and the State of Israel*, Paul Parker
 - d. *Let's Talk About Death and Dying (No, Really!)*, Laura Simmons
2. Neil Isaacson led the meeting in worship through music.

Minutes of the Business Meeting 11:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

1. The business meeting began with recentering through silent worship led by Erin Craig.
2. The SCYMF co-clerks (Erin Craig and Norma Silliman) and recording co-clerks (Keith Barton and Paul Parker) introduced themselves.
3. Erin reviewed the business meeting guidelines and procedures for good order including a Land Acknowledgement that today's meeting is on the unceded lands of many indigenous peoples and an acknowledgement that justice requires additional actions.
4. Visitors were invited to identify and introduce themselves, but none were present.
5. Erin introduced two new direct members of SCYMF who briefly addressed the meeting.
 - a. Daniel Leán was present via Zoom because he lives in Honduras. He has attended many Quaker meetings where he has found support, affirmation, and inclusion. He offered himself to SCYMF in "warm embrace."
 - b. Lisa Smith is from the state of Washington and was present. She expressed her admiration for the way SCYMF is committed to those who have suffered exclusion such as indigenous peoples and LGBTQIA+ individuals. She attends Gathering Friends Meeting and may in the future shift her membership from direct to indirect.
6. Clerks' Business
 - a. Approval of the minutes of April 20 and the Annual Session in June was tabled until the next SCYMF gathering in February 2025.
 - b. Erin asked today's meeting to revisit the minutes of SCYMF for October 28, 2023 in which a harmful phrase was used, viz., "sexual minorities." She said:

“The short version is that "sexual minorities," (even as a shorthand or place holder for "LGBTQIA+") is harmful language. It's important to give some context to understand why it's harmful.

First, “sexual” as the placeholder excludes transgender and non-binary folks, whose belonging to the LGBTQIA+ community does not have to do with their sexual orientation. Especially in the current political climate, trans and non-binary folks are at greater risk than many of the other portions of the LGBTQIA+ community. We cannot leave them out of our work.

Second, "sexual" in relationship to who/how people love sexualizes their identities unnecessarily. This is a popular tactic in our politics where anti-LGBTQIA+ folks create a sense of fear/danger about LGBTQIA+ people and anything they are involved in because it becomes "inherently sexual," when just being part of the LGBTQIA+ folks aren't really more sexual beings than those who are not part of the LGBTQIA+ community. This can also exclude asexual folks, whose identity has more to do with being the opposite of sexual.

Third, referring to any group as "_____ minority" is a stark reminder that they are not the "norm." It is painful to repeatedly be told you are strange or unusual. While it may be true that LGBTQIA+ folks are a smaller percentage of the community, using "minority" to describe the collective group feels like a reminder that we don't belong, when at least within SCYMF I believe we are trying to communicate the opposite.

I would appreciate it if that phrase, “sexual minority,” could be removed from your vocabulary—for my sake, for other LGBTQIA+ folks within SCYMF, and also for LGBTQIA+ folks in any other circles you are in. I completely understand the difficulty that comes with that—changing how we perceive things, how we speak about things, etc. all takes time. Please be mindful of how your words fall on the ears (or in this case eyes) of others, especially those you are speaking of.”

Friends were affirming, empathetic, and apologetic. The meeting discussed alternative responses. The sense of the meeting was that rather than remove the harmful phrase, it should be retained, but an additional minute should be inserted to historically document SCYMF's acknowledgement of harm, apology, and a commitment to change. The meeting asked the co-recording clerks to generate a new minute during the lunch break that could be proposed during the afternoon session which would be inserted into the minutes of October 28, 2023.

Erin thanked the meeting for its responses. Norma expressed appreciation to Erin for setting an example for other Friends and appreciation to the meeting for its response to Erin.

7. Nominating Committee (clerk Matt Boswell)
 - a. Robert Wade was nominated and APPROVED for an open-end term to the Structures and Processes Working Group.
 - b. Paul Parker was nominated and APPROVED for a one-year term as a Recording co-clerk.
8. Gathering Committee (clerk Meg Rice)
 - a. The Spring Gathering is scheduled for February 8, 2025 at West Hills Friends Church, Portland.
 - b. The Annual Session is scheduled for June 27-29, 2025 at Reedwood Friends Church in southeast Portland. Since Reedwood is not a conference center, Friends are asked to make overnight arrangements with family, local Friends, AirB&Bs, or hotels. Lunch and dinner will be offered at Reedwood, but not breakfast. Although the per person cost is not yet available, the Gathering Committee has chosen this venue because it meets our needs and will be much less expensive for participants and the Yearly Meeting than a conference center.
9. Announcements and lunch break (Norma)
 - a. Sarah Katreen Hoggatt offered to sign her new books which are available for purchase in the building's foyer: *When the Ink Runs Dry* and *When the Questions Come*.
 - b. Amos Smith's new book, *Holistic Mysticism*, is also available on the book table in the foyer.
 - c. Norma offered table grace.
 - d. Lunch.
10. When the Business Meeting resumed after lunch, Norma reminded Friends of the guidelines and procedures for good order.
11. Finance Committee (clerk Dave Cundiff and treasurer Diane Beebe)

Attached to these minutes and in the Advance Documents, see "SCYMF 2024-25 Sep 29 Spending Plan up-date.pdf."

Dave and Diane reviewed the first quarter's spending plan. Both income and expenditures are below what has been budgeted at this point in time, but this is part of the normal annual cycle of income and expenditures. However, income will need to pick-up as the fiscal year proceeds. The Annual Meeting in June 2024 intentionally passed an unbalanced budget to reflect the actual anticipated needs of SCYMF as well as the expected income. So far, no increase of income has been realized. The Annual Meeting also committed to revisiting the budget in February 2025 to assess income and expenses, and to determine if financial changes are necessary.

The following discussion included questions of: (1) how to most clearly represent SCYMF's financial picture whether as a pie chart, graph, or spreadsheet; (2) general discomfort with unbalanced budgets; and (3) historic patterns of income and expenditures. The Finance Committee explained that it does not take a position for or against a balanced budget, but tries to show as clearly as possible the financial status of the Meeting as it carries out its mission. Diane offered to provide in future reports the historic patterns of giving and expenditures.

Dave encouraged individuals and churches to increase their giving to SCYMF insofar as they are able. He explained that this can be done directly through one's bank or through Tithely. Dave offered his assistance to anyone who has difficulty setting up a regular giving plan to SCYMF. The Finance Committee concluded its report by passing a basket for contributions among Friends in attendance. Co-clerk Erin had created and shared a QR code with the meeting that would take Friends to the advanced documents and to different ways that people can donate to SCYMF.

12. Nurture of Ministry Committee (co-clerk Leann Williams)

- a. In response to the Coordinating Committee's request that all committees periodically review their description, the Nurture of Ministry Committee senses a deeper and broader call to nurturing ministry than originally understood. The Committee asks the Meeting to approve its revised description:

The mission of the Committee for Nurture of Ministry is to help Sierra-Cascades Yearly Meeting of Friends to grow in its ability to nurture public ministry in all its diverse forms, and to encourage the ministers among us. On behalf of the Yearly Meeting, the committee helps Friends through the processes of recording or licensing their gifts of public ministry. The committee also seeks to support and care for Friends who are already in public ministry roles, and to help our meetings and churches to have strong relationships of love and mutual accountability with the ministers serving among them. When invited, we stand ready to help meetings and churches with pastoral transitions and other situations that might require special care and sensitivity.

- b. The following discussion was affirming, noting that:
 - i. Pastors and churches in pastoral transitions sometimes need extra support.
 - ii. Also, the Bylaws do not need to be updated since they do not name or describe the Nurture of Ministry Committee.
- c. The Meeting "**APPROVED**" the Committee's new description.

13. Nurture of Ministry Committee (member, Laura Simmons)

The Yearly Meeting joined the Nurture of Ministry Committee in joyously celebrating and welcoming Leigh Tolton to SCYMF as a recorded minister and as the pastor of Klamath Falls Meeting. Since Friend Leigh was previously recorded

in another Yearly Meeting, this is a transfer of her recording as a minister, not a new recording.

14. New Meeting Recommendation (Norma)

- a. Norma reviewed the processes for accepting the application and the approval of new meetings to join the SCYMF. Both documents were included in the advanced documents and are attached to the minutes.
- b. The Yearly Meeting has received the Gathering Friends Meeting (GFM) request for membership.
- c. Norma introduced three members of GFM who were present and invited each to speak.
 - i. Rick Coate, the “servant clerk” of GFM, reported that GFM has a bank account, a website (which is a work in progress), and has been incorporated in the state of Washington as a nonprofit in good standing. He expressed appreciation for assistance along the way to this point in the process.
 - ii. Susan Davenport said that she was impressed with how well SCYMF has incorporated both silent worship and Christ-centeredness.
 - iii. Lisa Smith acknowledged that not every member of GFM is ready to use the language of Christ-centeredness, but that everyone accepts the importance of Christ-centeredness for SCYMF. She also expressed deep gratitude for the guidance of the Nurture of Ministry Committee.
- d. Norma asked for a time of silence and discernment after which she asked if there was a clear leading of the Spirit. The quarterly gathering of Friends enthusiastically called out, “**APPROVED!**”

15. The business meeting returned to the “Clerks’ Business,” minute 7b above. With the assistance from several Friends, the Recording co-clerks proposed the following addition to the October 28, 2023 minutes:

From our 10/28/2023 gathering, the minutes included the phrase “sexual minorities.” Erin Craig described the nature of the phrase “sexual minorities” as harmful by excluding and by minimizing the value of those whom it tries to identify. We decided to keep the language in our minutes because we want to preserve our awareness of the harm for the historical record. We acknowledge and apologize for the harm that this caused, and moving forward we commit to using the language of “LGBTQIA+.”

Following a brief and affirming discussion, the Meeting “**APPROVED**” the statement.

16. Structures and Processes Working Group (S&PWG)

Erin (as a member of the S&PWG and SCYMF’s co-clerk) reported that the S&PWG has been working with the Coordinating Committee to clarify its purpose and procedures. The ensuing discussion concluded by asking the S&PWG to focus on the following three tasks:

- a. Study the bylaws for guidance and consistency.

- b. Meet with a member(s) of each committee and working group to understand their tasks, processes, and issues.
 - i. The S&PWG is not to try to solve problems but to identify issues, processes, and committee tasks.
 - ii. The meeting recommended that the S&PWG develop a common set of questions for all the committees and working groups that can be used to produce comparable data points.
- c. Produce a report that summarizes the S&PWG's findings and make it available by mid January 2025 so that it can be reviewed at the Annual Meeting in February 2025.

Following more discussion, the Meeting thanked the S&PWG for its commitment and work, and **"APPROVED"** the three tasks.

17. Looking to the Future of SCYMF

Norma explained that the last item for today's quarterly gathering would be to listen to one another. "Direct" members would be in one group, and "Indirect" in another. All "direct" members were asked to enter the same Zoom breakout room and direct members who were in person joined them in the room with the Zoom host. All "indirect" members were asked to remain in the sanctuary and indirect members who were online were to choose the sanctuary as their breakout room in order to participate. Both groups were asked to discuss the same questions for thirty minutes, and then to re-gather in the sanctuary (and on Zoom) for general impressions from the 'listening exercise'. The queries were:

- How does your membership in SCYMF help you navigate these times as we determine what SCYMF is to be? What's important to us about being in the SCYMF? And how can our YM do better?
- What do we bring to SCYMF and how do we maximize what we have?

The general impressions of the quarterly gathering were:

- a. Direct member: My committee activity... has been one of the most spiritual experiences of my life, and it was fun.
- b. Direct member: I was amazed by our diversity. Membership has given us a sense of belonging.
- c. Direct member referred to C. S. Lewis who wrote, "To become a Christian is like walking into a mansion's magnificent hall. The hall is a place of waiting. But the warm fire, meals, and parties are happening in the rooms off the hall. You have to pick a room."
- d. Direct member: I can express my concerns directly to SCYMF co-clerks.
- e. Indirect member: We can bring concerns to our monthly meetings which can be discussed, and if merited, our concerns can go to the Yearly Meeting where they can be taken-up for discernment.

- f. Indirect member: Relationships! Local meetings, Quarterly gatherings, and Annual Meetings facilitate interpersonal relationships and community-building relationships, e.g. SCYMF committees, local meeting's committees, book discussion groups, and advocacy issues.
18. Final announcements and benediction
- a. Dave, clerk of the Finance Committee, reported that we collected \$229 in donations today as well as \$170 through Tithely. Several recurring donations were also established through Tithely but the amount is unknown. He encouraged congregations and individuals to remember to financially support SCYMF as one is able.
 - b. Lisa, Gathering Friends Meeting, encouraged everyone to be faithful to their Quaker values during this especially fraught election period.
 - c. Norma concluded the meeting with a benediction of gratitude to God, Father, Mother, Creator, Comforter, Spirit.

The quarterly gathering concluded at 5:00 p.m.