

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

1101 DeKalb Pike

Gwynedd, PA 19454

(215) 699-3055

**Minute of Appreciation to Recognize the 75th Anniversary of
The Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL)**

Gwynedd Monthly Meeting would like to express its heartfelt appreciation for the 75 years of prayerful attention the Friends Committee on National Legislation has given to furthering Friends testimonies in national policy concerns. Since the beginning, staff and supporters around the country have lobbied Congress to advance the causes of peace and justice.

The organization was formed to advocate for legislation to provide constructive alternatives to military conscription and aid for the victims of war. Over the years, FCNL has been instrumental in the movements to prevent genocide and atrocities against individuals, to stand against the threat and use of nuclear weapons and other forms of militarization, to offer a moral basis for federal budget decisions, and to build consensus on climate change.

We support the organization's future plans to widen the participation of young adults in its work and to offer space and time for people with differing viewpoints to discuss a way forward. As we all work to build "the world we seek," we will continue to look to our friends at FCNL to provide leadership, initiative and love for our neighbors, without exception.

Gwynedd Friends Meeting [Quaker] approved the above Minute on July 15, 2018.

Neil Trueblood, Clerk of the Meeting

Judy Inskeep, Clerk of Peace and Social Action Committee

office@gwyneddmeeting.org

**From minutes of monthly meeting for worship to attend to business at Abington
Monthly Meeting on September 9, 2018:**

Loretta Fox advised that although PYM endorsed AMM's minute for Benjamin Lay, PYM and the Quaker Life Council had a couple of suggestions for changes to the minute; specifically, they suggested changing the words "slave owners" to "enslavers" and further suggested AMM may like to include a request for forgiveness within the minute; Loretta sought the opinions of Marcus Rediker and Kelly Tillery regarding the suggested wording changes in the minute and their responses are included in Attachment 7 along with all of the aforementioned details; clerk George Schaefer and Friends at AMM were appreciative of the thoughtful suggestions provided by PYM and Quaker Life Council; after discussion and discernment, Friends stood in unity and Approved the original version of the minute with no further changes.

Attachment 7

Minute regarding former Abington Meeting member, Benjamin Lay

(showing PYM's suggested changes in red)

Abington Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends recognizes Benjamin Lay's dedication to equality, and his willingness to repeatedly speak his messages of Truth to a society that was in denial about the evils of slavery. We acknowledge that Benjamin Lay used radical activism in his attempts to teach his peers to recognize the equality before God of all people, regardless of race or gender. He lived his life with integrity according to his Quaker beliefs, and he called others, especially **enslavers**, to accountability.

Benjamin Lay was written out of membership at Abington Monthly Meeting on the thirtieth day, eleventh month, 1737 (which by the Quaker calendar, while the Julian calendar was in use, would have been January 30, 1738), because his zealous actions were considered disruptive. It is now known that at least two of the Friends who led the discernment about writing Benjamin Lay out of membership in the Society of Friends were **enslavers** and were likely targeted by Benjamin Lay's anti-slavery activism. Benjamin Lay was disowned decades before Quakers were disowned for being **enslavers**. **Abington Monthly Meeting asks forgiveness for that action.**

We now recognize the truth behind Benjamin Lay's abolitionist efforts. Although we may not reinstate membership for someone who is deceased, we recognize Benjamin Lay as a Friend of the Truth and as being in unity with the spirit of our Abington Monthly Meeting.

Brought forth and Approved by Abington Monthly Meeting on November 12, 2017

Endorsed by Abington Quarterly Meeting on February 4, 2018

Philadelphia Yearly Meeting on July 14, 2018: “Benjamin Lay: After communicating further with Abington Monthly Meeting regarding their minute, Quaker Life Council endorses Abington Monthly Meeting’s minute on Benjamin Lay. QLC recognizes Benjamin Lay as a Friend of the Truth and being in unity with the spirit of our Philadelphia Yearly Meeting.”

Philadelphia Yearly Meeting on July 27, 2018, read this minute of unity into record as originally written. However, PYM recommended revisions to the above minute (changes indicated above in red) and asked that these revisions be taken back to Abington Monthly Meeting for consideration. The recommendations are to avoid use of the word “slave-owners” which can be seen as dehumanizing, and for the monthly meeting to ask forgiveness for actions taken in the past.

(In light of the PYM recommendation that Abington Meeting revise the minute of unity, Loretta Fox mentioned the recommendation regarding language to Marcus Rediker and Kelly Tillery for consideration as we approach and prepare for the installation of the historical marker for Benjamin Lay. Their responses were as follows:

Loretta,

While I appreciate the thoughts about the use of the word “slave”, it is what they were called under law, custom and common usage at the time. I am uncomfortable using 21st century politically correct language to describe historical facts. Perhaps, Professor Rediker can weigh in here.

Best regards. Kelly

Dear Kelly and Loretta,

My understanding is that the African American community has objected to the use of the word "slave" and prefers the phrase "enslaved African." I respect that choice.

But it is a different matter when it comes to those who "owned" enslaved people. Even if it is not possible in some ultimate moral sense for one person to own another, it was, in historical terms, a reality, both legally, as Kelly says, and existentially. There is no getting around the word "slave" in our discussion of the past, nor should there be, for it is the root word of "slavery." Slave-owners DID define themselves by "owning" enslaved people.

Benjamin Lay used "slave-keeper," "slave-owner," and "slave trader," and so do I, as you will note, throughout my book. Never before, until the PYM directive, have I heard anyone suggest that to call someone a "slave-owner" is to demean the people who were enslaved. It is, in my view, quite the contrary, as Benjamin Lay showed: to call someone a "slave-keeper" was to issue a moral indictment -- and a necessary one.

This issue is complex and admits many different views. I respect the concerns behind the PYM request for different language and I will be curious to hear how the brothers and sisters of Abington Meeting respond.

Very best,
Marcus