

## Hartford Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

### MEMORIAL MINUTE FOR CYNTHIA WEST REIK

January 23, 1930 – September 14, 2024

*Cynthia truly walked cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in everyone*

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Cynthia was a dedicated teacher who never stopped learning and readily shared her knowledge from a long and happy life with all whom she encountered.

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Cynthia Marjorie West was born in Evanston, Illinois, the younger sister of two brothers. Her father worked for the *Chicago Daily News*. When she was seven, her father's job took the family to the East Coast, where they settled in Bronxville, New York, chosen for the quality of its public schools. Cynthia's education in Bronxville established her commitment throughout her life to public school education. Following high school graduation, Cynthia attended Radcliffe College, before taking a leave to care for her dying mother. Back in Bronxville, she continued her college education at near-by Sarah Lawrence College. In 1950 just before her senior year at Sarah Lawrence, Cynthia married James (Jim) Reik. She and Jim had known each other since their childhoods in Bronxville when Jim and her brother, Richard, became best friends.

After several moves and the birth of her first three children, Deborah, Jonathan and David, Cynthia graduated from Sarah Lawrence in 1955 with a degree in English. That same year Cynthia, Jim and their family moved to the Hartford area where she and Jim continued to live the rest of their lives. Their fourth child, Conny, was born in 1956.

Quaker Meeting was central to Cynthia's life and values. She and Jim found Hartford Friends Meeting shortly after they moved to the Hartford area and continued as active Meeting members throughout their lives. The Reik children were brought up in the Meeting's First Day School and attended Quaker Lane Cooperative Nursery School. The friends that Cynthia and Jim made through the Meeting and the Nursery School remained their closest friends. Cynthia continued attending Meeting for Worship, Meeting for Business and the Meeting's 11<sup>th</sup> Hours and other programs, as well as Quarterly Meeting until several months before her death.

Cynthia's commitment to Friends included serving on a number of Hartford Meeting committees and initiatives over the years, including her long service as an Alternative to Violence Project (AVP) facilitator in Connecticut prisons, participating in the Meeting's Court Monitoring project, and serving as Meeting Clerk. She also joined in many Friends activities in New England and elsewhere. She loved attending weekend retreats at Woolman Hill, the annual gatherings of New England Yearly Meeting, Connecticut Valley Quarterly Meetings, and the former biennial FGC conferences in Cape May. She served for a number of years on the Board of Trustees of the Obadiah Brown Benevolent Fund, as well as a Trustee of the Moses Brown School. Cynthia actively expressed her Quaker values through joining in demonstrations for peace and human rights in Connecticut, around New England and on occasion in New York.

She was in her element publicly standing up for social justice, frequently in the company of other Quakers.

Cynthia began what became a twenty-nine-year commitment to teaching English at Hartford High School after receiving a master's degree in Education from Trinity College in 1962. She adored the school and the students, about whose successes she loved to tell friends, even for years after she retired. She was honored to be chosen to teach in the School's Talented and Gifted program for which she devoted her love of educating and supporting students' learning. Cynthia expressed her dedication to sharing her interests and knowledge by co-authoring *On Common Ground: A Selection of Hartford Writers*, and editing another book, *The Harriet Beecher Stowe Reader*. She and fellow Hartford public school teacher and Meeting member, Brad Noel, created a guidance booklet for high school girls entitled *Sex: Female*. After retirement Cynthia maintained her enthusiasm for educating through teaching classes at the University of Connecticut, University of Hartford, and Saint Joseph College. And for many years she graded essays for the National College Board. Cynthia's pursuit of knowledge included learning more about other places in the world. She and Jim traveled widely, often with other Hartford Meeting friends, visiting 57 different countries.

In addition to her many years of teaching, Cynthia contributed to the community in a number of ways. She served on the Hockanum River Commission, the Board of the Hartford Public Library and subsequently of the East Hartford Public Library, the East Hartford Board of Education, and was a devoted supporter of the Stowe Day Foundation. In addition, she enthusiastically participated in a memoir writing group at UConn for a number of years. She was a voracious reader throughout her life and began each morning reading *The New York Times*. She was a founding member of a long time Meeting book club and belonged to four other book groups. Even during her last years, she regularly participated in discussion groups on *The New Yorker* and *The Atlantic* magazines at the West Hartford Library.

Cynthia had a wonderful enthusiasm for life which she conveyed to all with whom she was in contact, even making difficult situations an adventure. As her daughter Debbie reflected, "my mother was irrepressible. When we were planning her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday party, I asked her if she had 90 people she wanted to invite and she replied, 'Am I limited to 90?'"

Respectfully and lovingly submitted,

Liesa Stamm, Karen Will, and Palma Vaccaro

October 2025

Accepted by Connecticut Valley Quarterly Meeting on February 1, 2026, noting that during her long life Cynthia provided serving as co-recording clerk for Connecticut Valley Quarterly Meeting.