



Philadelphia Yearly Meeting
of the Religious Society of Friends

Bucks Quarter: State of the Meeting Reports Received

Written on: JULY 27, 2021

Doylestown Monthly Meeting

2020 was a year of adaptation for Doylestown Friends Meeting as a result of the COVID 19 pandemic. Three months into the year, it became evident that we had to alter our operations, rethink our roles and responsibilities, and maintain hope in light of the obstacles that had to be overcome. The physical closure of the meetinghouse required us to embrace technology as the means to remain connected. We were led to question our existence and our future relevancy became a major focus. Major highlights from the year include:

Engaging Our Children

Technology was the key to our First Day School program, with each month focusing on a different type of stewardship: environment, our democracy, our community, our family, ourselves, etc. The teacher for each month mailed an envelope to each student, with instructions and materials for fun lessons each week around the monthly topic. Lessons included watching YouTube links, making music, creating

posters or craft items, cooking/baking, or interviewing family members. We met monthly via Zoom, to share projects done the previous month and talk about the stewardship focus of the next month.

Providing Meaningful Programs

A collaboration with the Pastoral Concerns, Worship and Ministry, and Peace and Social Concerns Committees led to the designation of the fourth Sunday of every month at the rise of Meeting for the “Fourth Sunday Forum”. Each committee agreed to be responsible for a program every three months in 2020. A TV screen was mounted in anticipation of the forum series, but with the closing of the meetinghouse, we utilized Zoom technology. During the year the forums included:

- A discussion of the book “White Fragility” by Robin DiAngelo
- Frequently Asked Questions about Quakerism (using a QuakerSpeak video of the same name)
- Quakers and War
- Comfort and Pleasure through art: literature, music, visual arts, yoga, and other creative endeavors in coping with the challenges of isolation and separation
- Quaker Activism: a responsibility or a spiritual experience; and
- Losses suffered during the pandemic, a reckoning with racism, bitter political divisions, and their impacts on our faith and spiritual journeys.

The meeting’s Christmas Eve program consisted of candle lighting, readings, Christmas songs, and moments of silence and was conducted flawlessly via Zoom. We had members and attenders from our Meeting community participating from far away; at one point there were 50 participants!

Planning for a New Worship Option

A 3-month long process of discussion and discernment, related to transitioning back from virtual to in-person worship when pandemic conditions permit, led to the approval of a hybrid form of worship providing audio-only access to individuals

who cannot attend in person as a temporary measure during our return to a full reopening.

Caring for our Members and Attenders

Our attention was directed to checking in with as many members and attenders as we could reach to talk to them about their situations and outlooks. We tried to stay in contact with Meeting community members during the year, particularly those who have not been participating in the zoom meetings for worship.

Stewardship of our Property

The year took a toll on the meetinghouse. The porch roof of the meetinghouse was damaged by a falling limb during the removal of a diseased tree. After considerable delays caused by insurance negotiations and finding an appropriate contractor, the roof has been repaired. Water leakage into the basement has been an ongoing problem for some time, but a permanent solution has been elusive. A waterproofing firm has been selected to make necessary repairs, and the installation of a sump pump will begin shortly. The Property Committee investigated the reconstruction of the brick sidewalk and curb along East Oakland Avenue, and this work will proceed in Spring 2021.

Increasing Peace and Social Concerns Programs and Awareness: Friends Committee on National Legislation remains our primary focus, and the Peace and Social Concerns Committee's efforts included the submission of suggestions for legislative advocacy to FCNL. Issues of concern were wide-ranging, and included:

- Legislation for a more Independent Media
- Criminal Justice Reform (focusing on redemption rather than retribution) • Immigration Legislation (seeking civil, rather than criminal, law approaches) • Climate Change Legislation (targeted to helping the most vulnerable) • National Data Legislation
- Repeal of 2002 Authorization of Military Force

- Legislation to mandate the establishment of Public Banking in all fifty states and funds to start them
- Repeal or replacement of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) to rein in Executive foreign policy overreach by use of sanctions

In response to the national unrest caused by police brutality and the systemic racism in American society that has resulted in numerous racial injustices, we achieved a corporate response. We acknowledged, on our website and through a minute, that we are a largely Euro-American white community but are committed to interrupting the pattern of white privilege we inherited. We stood in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement and embraced the diversity of all peoples and committed to breaking down institutional racism.

Lehigh Valley Monthly Meeting

Query 1: How have we sustained our commitment to be a covenant spiritual community during this past year?

LVMM closed its meetinghouse doors in March 2020. All activity in the building was suspended and we soon established the use of the Zoom platform for Worship. Although this virtual way of corporate worship was unfamiliar we soon found “our way”. The new way of being connected clearly sustained our commitment to Spirit and to one another. The oneness of spirit was palpable. Contemplative worship is possible via Zoom. While we all respected the pandemic’s need for quarantine/distance we were not distanced in relationship. News of individuals and their families was shared following worship and through a weekly newsletter named the “Light Board” Committee work continued allowing our Meeting to function effectively thus sustaining the life of our community.

Query 2: What have been the joys and learnings of this past year and where have we encountered challenges?

Joys: The primary joy was the experience of being in a thriving community while being physically separated. Actually, Zoom itself was a joy by enabling us to be virtually connected for worship, committee meetings, business meetings our Christmas Eve program, educational programs, queries, social events, a memorial service, a wedding. All this could not have happened without the technical resource of Zoom. Further people from afar (Ireland, Mexico, Bolivia, distance Friends) were able to join us for Worship. Learnings: We learned some new expressions of Quaker Testimonies most notably, Community. This self-assessment was used for a query and individual responses resonated for many f/Friends: learning to slow down, more meditative/contemplative time, greater awareness and increase of gratitude, sense of others' suffering, and sharing in the suffering. Challenges: The primary challenge was experiencing the absence of f/Friends who for various reasons did not use the Zoom platform. It was difficult to foster and maintain these relationships; for some our weather permitting outdoor worship was a resource for community and worship. Many families were not joining for virtual worship and this was/is a significant loss.

Query 3: How has our faith supported our social witness?

Although some of our programs of social concerns were suspended many continued. There was an increase in attention to the Black Lives Matter movement and on Juneteenth we started a Black Lives Matter vigil; it is held weekly and continues to this day. It is held on our meetinghouse grounds which is an ideal location as it borders a major road. It has been a viable witness evidenced by the response from motorists.

Submitted by Louise H Young, Clerk

Makefield Monthly Meeting

While 2020 has been a trying year for the Country, Makefield Friends Meeting feels blessed being able to meet in person at the meetinghouse while providing a Zoom link for those who preferred to join us from home. Some members have had health

issues but are doing well. For this, we are very grateful. We currently have 22 members and 2 active attenders.

We completed the exterior renovations to the meetinghouse with the addition of storm windows and painting the exterior trim. We also replaced the windows in the caretaker's house. These changes improve the comfort of everyone in both buildings and will save us money on heating costs going forward.

We lost two old ash trees, one of which was a focal point, being in the circle next to the meetinghouse. In search for a replacement tree, we found that Haverford College was propagating the legendary Penn Treaty Elm. Haverford donated a 4-foot-tall fourth-generation scion that we planted in November. We plan to have a dedication this spring and Bucks Quarterly Meeting is invited to attend.

One of our attenders moved to New York State and announced her engagement. During this pandemic, our members at the Friends Village Campus visited with their neighbors outdoors at appropriate social distance when the weather was fine. They are also involved in a big project to move the vegetable garden out of the shade and install raised beds as well as a real deer fence.

Most importantly, we have had a deeply spiritual year. We relish our silent worship and enriching afterthoughts. The quotes posted on our message board, unique to Makefield Meeting, have prompted enlightening discussions. Our Adult First Day program held every Sunday (except business), has discussed issues of social justice, our beliefs, and experiences. We held an unusual program listening to YouTube videos of inspirational music. Some sang along with their microphones muted as a courtesy. Music included "Walk in the Light" and a flash mob rendition of Finlandia in Finnish. Adult Program topics included "Did ego or knowledge drive Adam and Eve from the Garden", "Holy Spirit, not Scriptures is authority" (George Fox), and the "Earth doesn't belong to us, we belong to the Earth".

In deepening our worship, the Worship and Ministry committee initiated a Spiritual Sharing group that meets every three weeks. Before the pandemic, they would meet outdoors or in the library at Friends Village. Now they meet on Zoom and find it works very well. There are four or five participants who gather for 90 minutes of worship and sharing. They check in with each other and then discern a topic to discuss. There has been clearness about topics every time based on the experience that one or more of them have shared. This is a treasured time; it fosters a deep sense of connection and support – more valuable than ever in the isolation created by the pandemic.

We are a vitally alive, deeply connected, group of Quakers seeking the Light within in each other and every person we encounter. Our spiritual condition and connections are as strong as they have ever been.

Middletown Monthly Meeting

Query 1: How have we sustained our commitment to be a covenant spiritual community during this past year?

We have sustained our commitment to be a covenantal spiritual community most basically by facilitating meeting for worship for as many as will participate via Zoom while also allowing safe attendance at the meetinghouse. Throughout the pandemic, we have been challenged to be faithful to God's leadings in our lives. The Worship and Care Committee has recognized that Zoom worship is difficult for some and has been concerned to deepen our worship. In the fall we held a two-session series on Vocal Ministry. Also contributing to our sense of community have been bi-monthly opportunities for socializing via Zoom and meetings of the Men's Group. The Men's Group led a workshop for 2020 sessions of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting on Sharing Our Faith with Others as a contribution to our broader spiritual community.

Query 2: What have been the joys and the learnings of this past year and where have we encountered challenges?

Among the joys, we've experienced was our Christmas Social, held in 2020 via Zoom but with many of the usual components, including an original Christmas play and sharing of talents. Our learnings have included developing our minutes of response to systemic racism and the Young Adult Friends; concern regarding membership. We also acknowledge the challenges of gathering via Zoom for being knit as one in the Spirit. Included is the challenge of responding to ministry experienced as inappropriate at a time when the pandemic has meant social isolation and a lack of sufficient settings for sharing outside of meeting for worship.

Query 3: How has our faith supported our social witness?

Our faith has supported our social witness through the work of our two regular committees (Worship and Care and Property) and through our ad-hoc Committee on Systemic Racism, which is planning two sessions tentatively scheduled for this summer. Our clerk arranged a well-received Zoom program for the October 2020 session of Concord Quarterly Meeting titled Covid-19, How Local Groups Are Helping.

Query 4: How have our community members supported one another?

Essential to our support for one another is holding each other, near and far, in prayer. Many meeting members have reached out through texts, emails, and phone calls to others connected with our community who may be isolated, hurting, and in need of support. Our schoolhouse project would not have progressed to near completion without the work of several members of our community, including from Lima Estates next door. Our meeting clean-up days have brought together a dedicated group for much-appreciated work indoors and out.

Newtown Monthly Meeting

This year brought high anxiety and upheaval in our daily lives. Meeting members found calm and connection in our virtual Meeting for Worship. Our community has proven to be resilient and supportive.

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, Newtown Meeting shifted to virtual Meeting for Worship on March 13th. While we sorely miss the handshakes and hugs of in-person gathering and the familiar surroundings of our beautiful Meetinghouse, Zoom has provided a surprisingly satisfactory substitute with some benefits of its own. We have welcomed Friends from afar and enjoyed glimpses into each other's homes. The mosaic of faces greeting us each Sunday reminds us of the love we share. During this time of political discord and widespread recognition of historic injustices, we came together in our discernment on issues of climate change and racial justice. As a body, we seek to ensure that our words translate into actions that will lead to meaningful change.

We have worked to carry on traditions. Although they were delivered in advance, Bibles and Faith & Practice were given to Fourth and Eighth graders, respectively, and acknowledged at the rise of Meeting. We will hold a virtual Candlelight Christmas Eve worship and homecoming and Hicks prints will be given to those turning 21 years old.

Our Adult Religious Education program is remarkable. During the fall and spring of 2019-'20 (pre-Covid), we enjoyed 22 programs (16 in-person followed by 6 via Zoom). This fall, programs have continued on Zoom. We have heard a wide range of topics from expert views of COVID-19 to members' Spiritual Journeys. We have grown more adept at programming for virtual presentations starting with a special Mother's Day program.

Children's Religious Education has also adapted. Approximately 14 children are involved. Approximately 6-8 younger children attend regularly and 5-6 middle schoolers attend sporadically. Several others have been more involved in the past, but are now less engaged. Given that many schools are meeting virtually, there has been little appetite for virtual children's programs on Sundays. Accordingly, the program shifted to an activity packet sent to each family and one in-person, socially distanced gathering every month. A take-home, zoom-in Simple Supper, and game night are being arranged to support a charity of the children's choice.

Membership

Our membership grew:

- Total Members: 2019 – 340; 2020 – 346
- Full Members: 2019 – 328, 2020 – 336
- Adult: 2019 – 291, 2020 – 298
- Minor: 2019 – 37, 2020 – 38
- Associate: 2019 – 12, 2020 – 10

In 2020, we welcomed: 1 new member and 5 transfers into the meeting (3 adults and 2 minor members). 1 minor member and 2 associate members turned 21.

Committees

Worship & Ministry has worked to ensure that worship continued to be deep and satisfying in spite of the changed circumstances. It organized a zoom Easter service with Bible readings and music. The committee also hosted a worship sharing on the quality of Meeting for Worship during the lockdown. The committee is making arrangements to create a greater sense of the season during the Christmas Eve worship even though it will also be virtual. A memorial service was held for Bob Appelbaum, a beloved part of our community.

Care & Counsel Committee has worked to maintain connections with members who cannot or choose to not participate via zoom. They have continued their efforts to connect with distant Friends and provide quilts to those who are ill. The committee led the discussions around the meaning of membership.

With the murder of George Floyd and the Black Lives Matter protests this summer, our Peace and Justice Committee has been extremely active. A silent vigil has been held every other Friday since June 19th on State Street in Newtown. The Committee led the Meeting's discernment on PYM's query regarding racial justice and organized Newtown's program for Quarterly Meeting, soliciting young adult Friends to share videos of their perspectives on racial justice. Earlier in the year, the

Committee had organized a regular postcard writing campaign to legislators along with readings and discussions on race. The Committee supported members' involvement in a local building project of Habitat for Humanity which was named the beneficiary of the children's Simple Supper fundraiser. The Meeting supported the interfaith initiatives of Heeding God's Call to end Gun Violence and joined the Bucks County chapter of POWER.

Our meetinghouse remains closed. We have chosen to continue to pay our cleaning help. As ever, the Building & Grounds Committee is busy managing care for our trees, ongoing regular maintenance, and larger capital projects. Ceiling fans and LED lights have been installed. The wood floors were refinished and the carpets cleaned. Utility service has been switched to a provider of 100% renewable energy. The graveyard subcommittee continues its research and organization of our burial ground. They have entered 514 names into the public database of cemetery records, Find-A-Grave.com.

The ad hoc parking committee continues to work on potential parking strategies for the meeting. The developer of the adjacent lot where we will no longer be allowed to park has received regulatory approvals and development is expected to proceed.

Prior to the COVID lockdown, the Inreach/Outreach Committee had organized Friendly 8's dinners, a spiritual exploration retreat, and newcomer potlucks. A major initiative was a survey of meeting members to learn more about who we are and what members are interested in. The committee has been successful at welcoming visitors and nurturing their interest in the Meeting. Over the last three years, 20 adults have become members along with 8 children.

The Communications Committee has been remarkably effective at rationalizing and improving our communications. The website has been revamped, and the committee has created clear guidelines on what goes where and who is responsible. As a result, it is a valuable resource and reference for both those inquiring about

Quakerism as well as our Meeting community. Announcements, email blasts, the newsletter, and our Facebook page have consistent information and have defined roles in our communications strategy.

Newtown Friends School

Newtown Friends School is under the care of Newtown Monthly Meeting. It was able to quickly pivot to robust online learning in the spring. Due to COVID, the school paused its exploration of the International Baccalaureate. The school was able to open this fall in person for its younger students and with a hybrid model for the older students. This has proven to be attractive to area families given the disarray of the public schools' response to the pandemic. As a result, NFS is fully enrolled with 270 students. 12% of the student body is Quaker. The Meeting is exploring supporting the installation of the solar energy system at the school as an expression of our concern for the global climate.

Plumstead Monthly Meeting

And what a year it has been.

After an uneventful summer and fall and winter, punctuated by our usual gatherings for Workday, Thanksgiving Brunch and Christmas Eve, everything stopped for us, as it did for everyone else.

We had to cancel our Easter celebration, First Day School, and Meeting for Worship. One child going to Camp Onas was disappointed. Fortunately, because of our space, with a large lawn between the meetinghouse and the burial ground, we were able to meet outside again – with our own chairs, masks and well-distanced – as soon as the weather was good. We have also resumed holding Wednesday morning worship. The response and involvement have been positive. One teenage member said, “Why can’t we do this all the time?”

While individual members have responded not just to COVID-19, but to other disturbing events in our country, and often share with others their efforts, we came together on Juneteenth with about 30 participants along Point Pleasant Pike. We continue to collect food for the Bucks County Housing Group Food Pantry. Members Carol Ann and Alan Gray are proud grandparents. We continue to follow safe practices as this virus continues to flourish. Come cold weather, we can continue to meet safely inside, with windows at least partly open, and good distancing. There are times when not having good insulation is a bonus! We will still have Thanksgiving worship, but without brunch. Our Christmas Eve Caroling is cancelled for the first time since 1966.

Our prayers are that everyone remains well and safe.

We remain the small, quiet meeting.

Beth Taylor, Clerk

Quakertown Monthly Meeting

Quakertown Monthly Meeting met for worship at 10:30 every First Day until March when the Federal Government shut down every gathering of people in closed buildings including Houses of Worship because of the increasing number of cases of the deadly coronavirus 19. Quakertown had no WIFI connections, so Quakertown Monthly Meeting could not ZOOM. After exploring all options, we settled on e-mailing, texting, phone calls and Gerry Kirwan's Newsletter to communicate. By April he had been reduced to "little notes" because there was so little news to put in his "newsletter." In June the ban on large gatherings was lifted and Quakertown Monthly Meeting members and attenders after much discussion decided to open the meetinghouse for in-person worship. According to the rules, we could accommodate 25 individuals, properly distanced (we set 10 feet) and masked with meetinghouse windows open. Meeting members and attenders who could not join those meeting for worship in person were kept in touch via phone calls and messaging. It was pure joy for those of us who could worship together again.

Meanwhile, a huge task awaited us. Back in January, Wendy Kane, Buck's coordinator, told our Meeting that we had not sent any minutes of our meetings for business to the Friends Historical Library at Swarthmore College since 1957! QM was extremely fortunate to have attendee, Marty Campanelli who knew how to convert paper minutes to PDF and was willing to do ours! All minutes in file cabinets in our First Day building were rescued and members scoured their files at home to look for the minutes in the "missing minutes list" that Marty compiled for us. That job is completed and was aided by members supplying Marty with lost or misplaced minutes. It was an amazing effort

On Saturday, June 6th three people from Meeting attended the Black Lives Matter rally in downtown Flemington, where it was estimated about one thousand people gathered to hear local ministers, our Congressman, Tom Malinowski, and many High School Students spoke.

Also, every Saturday since autumn three individuals (one member and two attenders) gather in Milford, NJ to join a Peace and Social Justice vigil. People driving by frequently honk in support. A few drivers make negative comments and are ignored.

In June Quakertown Meeting received a check for \$5,000 forwarded through PYM from an anonymous donor from Richland Meeting in Pennsylvania. It was to be designated for charitable giving. After a lengthy discussion at a meeting for business, we decided to divide the check into reasonable amounts and add them to our already existing list of 15 yearly contributions. A larger portion was given to the Flemington Food Pantry because, during our monthly drop-offs at the site, it was noticed that there was a huge increase of cars lined up outside with people inside them desperately requiring food donations.

In the past before Covid, our Quaker Meeting had been lax in our efforts to provide our own donations to the Pantry. When we noticed the increase in numbers of families at the Food Pantry, we stepped up to the plate and now have a full carload of groceries to deliver every month.

Over the summer Gerry Kirwan hired Nancy Sponholtz to weed and beautify the grounds around the Meetinghouse and First Day School. Members and attenders noticed the improvements right away. Nancy then began attending Meeting and, from that point on, decided to give her weeding time to the Meeting as a donation.

Quakertown Meeting was scheduled to host Bucks Quarterly Meeting in November. Again, we were fortunate to have Karen Tibbals, a co-Clerk at Plainfield Meeting sojourning with us. Karen had written a wonderful book, *Persuade Don't Preach*, and was willing to Zoom an hour-long program based on the contents of the book for the Quarterly Meeting. Her presentation was very informative and interesting and well-received.

As our annual tradition, in December QM asked Mercer Street Friends Preschool to send us a list of fifty boys and girls between 3 to 6 years of age so our members and attenders could sign up to purchase presents to bring to them before Christmas. Additionally, Ramona Kirwan and Marty Campanelli were busy knitting colorful hats and scarves to accompany the presents. A two-car caravan was needed to ferry the gifts to Trenton, NJ to the Preschool. Unfortunately, Mercer Street was not able to have children in the building because of the pandemic, so the deliverers missed seeing their happy faces this time. This was the twentieth year that QM has provided children's gifts to Mercer Street Friends.

QM has also been in the news this past year. The Meeting provided Wendy Kane with a short article and photos regarding QM's activities for the newly designed Bucks Quarter website. And, PYM's website featured a three-part article linking a historic stone house in the village to the Meeting from as early as the 1770s, and most importantly to a wonderful, kind man who took care of the Meetinghouse from the 1920s to the 1940s. Today that house is home to one of our attenders, bringing the house's history full circle back to the Meeting.

Solebury Monthly Meeting

We would like to thank our outgoing Clerk, David Smith, for his 3 years of service in that position, and his continuing involvement in Quarter and Yearly Meeting Committees. Solebury also has active members on many Boards of Directors: George School (2), Buckingham Friends School (2), Camp Onas (1), Chandler Hall (1), Friends Home and Village (1), and Mercer Street Friends (1).

Solebury Friends Meeting is saddened by the loss of three-valued members: Kyle Tinsman 7/19/2019, Bruce Shankin, 12/19/2019, who had waited long and patiently for a heart and kidney transplant, but could not take advantage of them, and Marliyn Lanctot, who lost a battle with cancer this past week.

We celebrated Irene Fisher's 99th birthday this spring by sending birthday cards and calls, and are grateful for her continued involvement via Zoom with her son Phillip. Speaking of Zoom, there are only about a dozen of us who find the platform useful for Meeting for Worship. Some Friends have been meeting outside on the meetinghouse grounds this summer (2020) with safe physical distance. We continue to delay opening the Meetinghouse itself, out of caution about Covid-19. Our Oversight and Counsel committee and Trustees are carefully writing and amending safety guidelines as the pandemic progresses. Zoom meetings for business are proving to be a useful tool now, and we suspect many committee meetings may continue this way even after we can worship together, as it makes evening meetings easier on far-flung participants, by eliminating a lot of driving. We are concerned about our lack of connection during the virus and are trying to come up with ways to connect meaningfully with Friends when worship is not available.

Our Meeting is trying to become more mindful of racial, gender, and class injustice, and challenge ourselves and each other to participate in meaningful and hopefully useful ways to right ancient and ongoing wrongs. Our Worship and Ministry committee has been recommending books and websites for our continuing study, including our member Valerie Brown's five-day online course called "How to Fight Injustice Without Hating." It can be found here:

https://insighttimer.com/meditation-courses/course_valerie-brown-how-to-fight-injustice-without-hating

The first day is free and there is a modest fee to sign-up for the rest of the sessions. Our Religious Education Committee currently has fewer children to instruct, and our Religious Education Coordinator Betsy Cotton has asked to step down from that position. She has worked for many years creating a curriculum and lesson plans for different age groups, coordinating and guiding our volunteer class leaders, and we are grateful for her help for so long. Volunteers continue to teach classes as best they can remotely.

Respectfully Submitted,

Marian Hepburn, Clerk

Southampton Monthly Meeting

Worship

We hold Meeting for Worship on Sunday mornings at 10 am and on Tuesdays at 7:30 pm. Alternate Tuesdays are a guided meditation Experiment with Light.

We have about 5-9 people attend meeting on Sunday and 3-16 on Tuesdays, more for Experiment With Light than other Tuesdays. We often have a full half-hour of discussion following Meeting For Worship, recently on ways to provide racial justice

A continuing tradition for us has been a special Tuesday meeting just before Christmas. This year that December meeting found us gathering for a wonderful Christmas Celebration with Bible readings, carols, and a story. About forty people attended.

Southampton Meeting has two buildings: a Meetinghouse and a three-story elderly building we call the House on the Hill (HoH). Sometimes in the winter, rather than heating the meetinghouse to a comfortable temperature, we worship in the living room of the HoH. Also, one Sunday a month throughout the year after worship, we will adjourn to the HoH for a snack and social time, taking advantage of the kitchen and dining room on the first floor of that building.

And then there are the Covid-19 effects: Since mid-March, we have been having Meeting for Worship via Zoom. Although we regret the physical absence, we celebrate the ability to include attenders from the other side of Philadelphia or even from Massachusetts.

Activism

Continuing from past years:

- In September of 2019, just as in the preceding five Septembers, nearly all the members and attenders turned out to help with pick up and clean up after the Annual Peace Fair at Buckingham Friends Meeting.
- Several members have been active in the Earth Quaker Action Team's 5-year Power Local Green Jobs campaign. The campaign uses nonviolent direct action to demand that PECO make a major shift to locally generated solar power that benefits low-income communities and communities of color.
- Meeting members have helped with call-ins to PECO when requested
- Support for Narcotics Anonymous – For years, local NA groups have taken advantage of meeting space that we make available to them at a low price. With the pandemic, these groups have had to stay away from our buildings and meet via Zoom. However, we allow them to use our parking lot so that one person using Zoom on a cell phone can support those few who do not have internet access.
- The Welcoming the Stranger English as Second Language classes met last fall. They were canceled because of the pandemic this spring and they may not start-up in the fall, either.

Novel Projects This Year: Vigils

Starting June 7, 2020, we have had Vigils for Racial Justice every Sunday from 4-6 pm (5:30 in hot weather) at our busy corner on PA 132. The events have included as many as 35 participants. Although we practice mask-wearing and physical distancing, the vigils provide an opportunity for us not only to meet others, including acquaintances from other meetings but also strangers from around the area.

In the face of a report of a possible “counter-vigil”, fears were aroused and discussed. A determination was voiced to welcome and accept the validity of seriously held opinions different from one’s own. The discussion helped reduce anxiety before the vigil. (As it turned out, the “counter-vigil” did not eventuate.)

A neighbor who has been attending our vigils regularly put together a list of resources (books for children and for adults, documentaries, articles) which we have distributed by email and in paper form to those attending. The list is included at the end of this report.

Novel Projects This Year: Neighboring with Police Chief

Two of our Meeting members met with the Upper Southampton Chief of Police to discuss racial harassment occurrences, body cameras, de-escalation tactics. They learned that Chief McPherson is the head of the Bucks County Association of Police Chiefs. Our members felt the meeting was productive. We plan to continue to have these conversations.

Members and attenders (Lose some, win some)

During the fall of 2019, we had a family with young children attending so we purchased some quiet toys for during Meeting and planned some First Day School activities. Unfortunately, the family has not continued to attend, and they said they were house hunting elsewhere.

We added two new members this spring, Stephen Moyer, who moved to Southampton in 2019 and requested a membership transfer from Richland Meeting in Quakertown PA, and Jim Michener, who attended Southampton Meeting while growing up and moved back to Bucks County in 2013.

We are thankful for John Cuorato's regular attendance.

A spark of joy happened with the wedding of Jim Michener and Carolyn Peters-Eckel on June 26, 2020, under care of Southampton MM. The original plan was to have the wedding at Southampton Friends Meeting, the afternoon before the annual Michener-family reunion so Jim's relatives could attend both. With the pandemic, it was impossible to gather in person, but they stuck to the original date. So with the help of Friends where they live at Pennswood Village, they had a self-uniting Quaker wedding via Zoom with about eighty people from ten states attending.

A serious loss to us is the departure of Bob Dockhorn, a Southampton resident, but a member of Green Street Meeting. Bob not only has been our treasurer for the past eight years but also has been actively participating in many other ways. It took us quite a while to figure out the page-long list of things Bob has been doing. We much appreciate his service and counsel as he and Roma move to Sandy Springs, MD.

Administrative changes

Stephen Moyer has accepted the role of Assistant Clerk of Southampton Monthly Meeting. Stephen has been working on development of our new website, as well.

John Magee volunteered to take over the Clerk of Trustees from Hans Peters, who had been in that position for quite a while.

Jim Michener has taken over the job of treasurer from Bob Dockhorn.

Jim and Stephen form our Financial Committee.

Physical plant and Works

Projects have included getting roots cleared from septic system lines, gutter and squirrel-damage work, and other repairs on our buildings. Starting mid-winter, regular weekly work parties occurred which made a big difference by clearing and chipping brush. These continued until mid-March when the Covid-19 pandemic hit.

Our House on the Hill, which is nearly 100 years old, needs its (original) slate roof replaced. We applied to Phila. Yearly Meeting for a grant. It was denied as apparently others needed help more. The work will go forward and we have chosen a contractor for the roof project.

We have also chosen a contractor for repainting the Meetinghouse (including lead paint removal).

Hopes for the future

- Attendance at vigils has brought new acquaintances who may become attenders.
- May racial justice increase.
- We are looking forward to being in the BQM loop again as host of the Quarterly Meeting in May of 2021, hopefully in person by that time.
- Resumption of in-person meetings for worship, but including a capability for electronic-supported remote attendance.

Carolyn Michener, Clerk, adds

I wish to end with several thoughts. One is from John Lewis, who lived his life through his faith, spreading love. “The Civil Rights movement was based on faith. Many of us who were participants in this movement saw our involvement as an extension of our faith. We saw ourselves doing the work of the Almighty. Segregation and racial discrimination were not in keeping with our faith, so we had to do something.” Nearly fifty years later, we still need to work for equality. Let us step up.

The other, as Friends believe in the Light within each of us, this speaks to me:
Matthew: 6, 22 “...thy whole body shall be full of light.”

May we be full of love and light as we walk through this world.

Peace and Love,

Carolyn A Peters Michener, Clerk and James C Michener, Treasurer

Wrightstown Monthly Meeting

Overview

The spiritual development activities described in previous reports continue to grow and thrive. Last year we began an outreach program that included coffeehouses featuring local musicians and poets and a stargazing event narrated by our resident amateur astronomer, Linc Merwin. We also tackled two issues that challenged long-held practices and beliefs. This year’s annual report describes our journey.

Making a difficult but needed change: For many years our meeting has maintained an Overseers Committee which considers the spiritual and material health of the Meeting and its members. The term Overseers is grounded in Quaker history where “Overseers” were responsible for looking after children and other dependents whose parents or guardians were in prison or otherwise incapacitated. The term overseer also came into use in the antebellum South to describe a manager of slave laborers. Many Quaker meetings recognized the hurtful connotation of the overseer term and renamed their committees. Other meetings, including Wrightstown, noted the different history and maintained the overseer term. Wrightstown considered changing the name twenty-five years ago and decided to continue with the traditional term.

This year, however, a group of Friends brought the idea of changing the name to Business Meeting. The group felt that in the current era of undoing racism, terms that could be interpreted as hurtful should be laid aside. Other Friends noting the historic Quaker use of the term, felt it should remain. Some Friends felt strongly enough to state they would not stand aside if the majority of Friends wanted to change the name. The Meeting was firmly divided.

We began our process by documenting the history of the two meanings of “overseer” so that we would start with a common understanding of the facts. Over the next three or four business meetings, our thinking gradually evolved. First, we realized that there was no reason to feel the need to hold on to the past. WE did not create a hurtful connotation. Yet, the hurtful connotation was driving the conversation both inside and outside Quakerism.

A second step for us was to internalize just how much pain the term overseer causes for others. Despite the fact that we did not intend to cause pain, the word did cause pain. As we shifted the focus from ourselves to others, the answer became clear. We laid the term overseer aside. We formed a group to establish a new name based on our now heightened understanding of the essence of what the committee does. This discernment resulted in the name Care and Counsel.

Responding to the pandemic: When the state closed down large public gatherings in mid-March, we established a virtual meeting venue through Zoom. The virtual meeting includes time for greeting one another before worship, an hour of worship, and time for socializing and catching up after meeting. Members who live at a distance have joined the virtual meeting much to the joy of all.

As the weather got warmer, we added outdoor worship on our campus. People bring a chair or blanket, a mask, and a water bottle. Bathrooms which open to the outside are available for use. Antiseptic wipes and hand sanitizer are available. The bathrooms are thoroughly cleaned before and after worship. People who attend maintain six-foot social distancing.

Some people found keeping a mask up for an hour plus uncomfortable and distracting from the experience of worship. Some pulled their masks down during worship when they were fully distanced from others. Differences of opinion arose out of people's diverse individual perspectives. Like many meetings in our Quarter, a large proportion of our membership is over 65 and therefore considered high risk; many have medical conditions which increase their risk further. As people's thinking regarding masking has evolved, some reject masks as unnecessary; many of our members consider masks essential. Discussion and justification of one position or other have spilled over into worship.

The problem becomes more intense when we consider moving worship indoors. Unmasking in an outdoor, socially distanced setting meets CDC requirements. Indoors, masks are required. Many members have made their opinions known. Mask proponents say they will not attend indoor worship unless all are masked. Non-mask proponents state, if masks are required, they will stay home. Clearly, we are nowhere near unity at this time. We have asked everyone to prayerfully consider the issue, placing the safety of our community at the center. We have identified a working group that will recommend protocols for opening the meetinghouse and social hall.

The next few weeks will be very difficult as we try to reach common ground. Please hold us in the Light.

Looking Forward

We approach next year cautiously, knowing we must listen to each other deeply and put our community at our center.

Yardley Monthly Meeting

In the past year, the members and attenders of Yardley Monthly Meeting have continued their collective search for truth, a spiritual endeavor this community has been undertaking for the past sixty-five years.

Worship is what draws us together and focuses our attention on the subtle work of the Spirit. Our regular Meeting for Worship every First Day invites members and attenders alike to enjoy spiritual and personal connection. We often find ourselves steeped in the Light, seeking a measure of truth in our worship. Our Meeting is of a size that most everyone knows each other. Visitors are welcomed with friendly openness. Following most meetings for worship on Sundays, our “elevenses” fellowship time is when food is enjoyed, and time is spent socializing and strengthening our personal relationships.

Yardley Meeting was significantly challenged in mid-March of 2020 as the Covid-19 pandemic quarantine prevented in-person gathering in our meetinghouse. Using Zoom videoconferencing technology, a virtual meetinghouse was quickly established, and by the end of March, a weekly First Day Meeting for Worship and a mid-week (Thursday evening) worship sharing was well attended (included far-away Friends). In recent weeks we have allowed for a hybrid worship experience on First Days, with several Friends meeting in the Meeting’s back yard, connected to the rest of the community worshipping in the Zoom meeting space. We have experienced physical distance but not social distance during this time of public health crisis.

Membership Information

Transfer In 1 Transfer Out 1; Death 1 Total Members 126

Committee Work & Community

As most Quaker communities do, we find that our weekly worship sustains us as we live out the Testimonies that speak to the Truth we discover. The efforts of our various committees help organize us in our outward ministries that draw from our spiritual core.

The Worship & Ministry Committee attends to the spiritual growth and nurture of our community as a whole. To do this they organized weekly (First Day) and special worship opportunities, including mid-week summer worship, sharing in our back

lawn, and our annual Christmas Candlelight worship (moved this year to the Friday before Christmas). Members of this committee also continue to organize adult education sessions once or twice monthly, choosing speakers and topics ranging from Quaker testimonies, queries, and practice to individuals' spiritual journeys. These sessions were often well attended.

Our Pastoral Care Committee supports and nurtures those individuals and families who claim us as their spiritual home. The committee encourages the use of clearness committees, not just for the process of incorporating new members but in supporting Friends who face personal challenges.

Illnesses, deaths, and other losses are held in healing Light by the community as part of our weekly Meeting for Worship; the Pastoral Care Committee ensures a variety of ongoing supports are available. A growing source of support nurtured by this committee is a men's and women's discussion group. Both meet regularly and have proved to be a source of added support for those who participate. Finally, the committee sponsored our annual holiday decorating party and catered dinner at the beginning of December. It was a fun event that continues to bring all generations together.

The Peace & Social Action committee continues to help the meeting bear a social witness for peace and justice in our local and wider community. During the fall of 2019 suicide awareness flags were displayed on the front yard of the Meetinghouse as an ongoing work of our Memorial to the Lost – an effort to raise awareness of the devastating effects of gun violence. Early this spring, as the Covid-19 crisis quickly affected our economy, the committee led efforts for the meeting to increase its financial donations to area food and housing charities. A renewed focus on racial and social justice issues was supported by Yardley Friends as we participated in the celebration of Juneteenth this year. Many Friends gathered at the front of the meetinghouse with signs and presence to honor this day of emancipation.

As our meetinghouse property nears the age of sixty-five the Property Committee has been busy in the upkeep and renovation of our unique building. Lighting in the worship room was updated, as were the ceilings in our childcare and First Day School rooms, thanks to the hours of effort of key committee members. Plans for the coming year are extensive, and include replacement of all of the meetinghouse windows, repairing or replacing the eaves, gutters, and roof; and replacement of several aging entry doors. A key factor in each of these projects is energy efficiency and right use of our entrusted resources. Landscaping projects and driveway repair are also on the list. A long-awaited project that is also planned in the coming months: installation of a new accessible (and gender-neutral) restroom – this will extend our meeting’s hospitality to those who have previously not had access or have felt unwelcome.

The Outreach Committee continues to make sure our local Yardley community is aware of our Friendly presence. A popular lecture and concert series has continued periodically, though a planned program in March was canceled due to the pandemic. The committee worked with a consultant to update the meeting website, increasing our accessibility to those seeking information about us with mobile devices. We continue to use a Google Groups listserv and publish a monthly newsletter as means of internal and external communication.

As our meeting’s demographics quickly change, and our meeting continues to age, our Religious Education committee has faced the challenge of serving a smaller number of children in our First Day School. The Covid-19 pandemic added to the challenge. Thankfully our FDS teacher was able to continue providing a program for our children through the end of July.

The work of the meeting’s Finance Committee has been in transition this year, as our long-time treasurer moved into the role of co-clerk, and new co-treasurers learned the different aspects of the meeting’s finances. The meeting’s financial base remains very strong, supported by a multitude of designated funds and a healthy general, unrestricted endowment. The meeting continues to focus its financial support on area charities (as designated by our Peace & Social Action Committee)

but also to our meeting's students. Both our annual operating budget and special funds support meeting campers at Camp Onus, students at Quaker schools, and scholars in higher education with scholarships and no-interest loans. A very generous gift from estate of a Friend now allows us to engage in our property improvement plans and our growing commitments to local hunger and housing issues without undue burden. Just recently the meeting decided to cancel our signature annual fund-raising event, our Yardley Flea Market for this September. The 2019 Yardley Friends annual Flea Market was a resounding success, with many vendors and many visitors. We hope for September 2021 to be a time when our Yardley meeting can once again come together in this annual show of comradery and purpose.

There are other ways that our meeting has lived out the Truth as it is revealed to us. Notably, we continue to host periodic Red Cross blood drives at the meeting house. Two of those blood drives were held during the pandemic. We worked with the Red Cross to make our Meeting space safe for staff and blood donors and following our first drive during the pandemic a generous community donor sponsored a deep clean of the building. Each drive has been filled with a full schedule of blood donor at the drives.

The hospital chaplaincy and clinical pastoral supervision ministry of our recorded minister Ted Taylor continues to be spiritually supported by the meeting. During the pandemic, the meeting has held this released ministry in tender Light, with an awareness of the emotional toll the crisis has taken on all healthcare workers and other essential personnel.

As noted above, Yardley Monthly Meeting, despite the challenges of a global pandemic, continues to seek to deepen the life of our Friendly community in the Light of Love, Justice, Service, and Peace. We live in hope and gratitude as a new way opens through these challenges – a Way that will offer new opportunities to seek Truth together in Love.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ted Taylor & Peg Smedley, Co-Clerks