



Philadelphia Yearly Meeting
of the Religious Society of Friends

Philadelphia Quarter: State of the Meeting Reports Received

Written on: JULY 28, 2021

Central Philadelphia Monthly Meeting (CPMM)

Central Philadelphia Monthly Meeting sends greetings to fellow worshippers throughout Philadelphia Yearly Meeting and offers prayers for their safety and well-being as we all confront the dreadful scourge of the Covid-19 pandemic. Our meeting has safeguarded its own membership throughout the current year by conducting all gatherings virtually. This practice has enabled us to maintain our normal level of activity as well as to draw in Friends from afar for togetherness. Still, online participation by young families and children is reduced from former times, when we were meeting in person.

Meeting virtually has perhaps improved the quality of our worship for some, even as, for others, virtual gathering is an interruption to the physical sharing of our beautiful worship space to which all hope to return. We are offering Quakerism 101 this year. Our ongoing Bible Study now meets weekly with increased attendance. An evening midweek meeting sponsored by CPMM draws Friends from around the region.

Our Meeting's continuing priority is to become an antiracist faith community. We support a Ministry of Helping the Religious Society of Friends to Become More Welcoming to People of Color. We support a ministry called Love and Respect Transform: Alternatives to Violence which is working in a southwestern neighborhood of Philadelphia. We offer financial support to the Ujima Friends Peace Center in North Philadelphia.

Friends Southwestern Burial Ground, under the care of Central Philadelphia Monthly Meeting and the Monthly Meeting of Friends of Philadelphia (Arch Street), has been able to serve the Muslim population by providing green burials which conform to Islamic practice. We have also broadened our communal concern about racism to include offering a land acknowledgment at the start of our Meeting for Business, a formal acknowledgment that the land on which Friends Center stands has been lived on and cared for by generations of Lenni Lenape people in the past, some of whose descendants are still here. We are open to further actions that Spirit may be calling us to take.

A major challenge for our meeting this year arose from the presidential election and the accompanying public divisiveness, including evidence of racism; some members saw an opportunity to serve as guardians of the peace and protectors of democracy. In the same vein, Central Philadelphia serves as a committed supporter of the POWER Philadelphia coalition, which nurtures multiracial, interfaith community connection. The meeting is active as well in environmental matters, with many members undertaking personal ministries supporting Earth Quaker Action Team (EQAT) and engaging with Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's Eco-justice Collaborative; similarly, our Peace and Social Concerns Committee supports the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI).

Central Philadelphia is a large and long-established meeting, yet, as the world changes, members' capacity to support the Meeting through volunteerism is stretched. This year our Nominating Committee developed a new, more broad-based leadership team approach that the meeting recently adopted. Also this year, the meeting, acting carefully and under the guidance of expert advice, has approved

the transfer of ownership of a building on our campus from Friends Center to Friends Select School, and in the process, reaffirmed and strengthened our long-standing relationship with that institution.

All this we report with humility, knowing that we must continue to learn and grow in our communal witness. In the words of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's own Faith and Practice: "Careful listening to the Inward Teacher can lead to fresh openings: an inpouring of love, insight, and interdependence."

Chestnut Hill Monthly Meeting

A Time to Love, a Time to Refrain from Embracing

This has been a challenging year for Chestnut Hill Friends Meeting, as we struggled to respond faithfully to the global pandemic, ongoing murders of Black citizens by the police, and an increasingly polarized political climate. With the outside world changing so rapidly, many of us found it difficult at times to stay grounded enough to discern how Spirit was leading us. Fortunately, we were able to lean on one of our biggest strengths: each other. When things are going well, it can be easy to think of community as a nice thing to have: pleasant, not too onerous, a background hum in our busy lives. This year has awakened us to the fact that community is not just pleasant, it is essential. In hard times, we turn to Spirit and to each other. By this measure, we can say that Spirit has been at work among us this year and that even as we grieve our losses, we also celebrate the precious ways the pandemic has knitted us together. When we look around at our community, we see the many ways that Love has manifested among us. What follows are just a few examples.

Our Pandemic Response

When the pandemic began, we immediately closed the meetinghouse and moved all meeting activities online. Our Worship & Ministry Committee worked quickly to figure out how best to recreate and support our worship online. A number of Friends brought their knowledge and gifts to the technical aspects of worship over Zoom; others helped technology-challenged Friends access our virtual meetings. As

the demand for technical help continued month after month, it placed a strain on this small group of volunteers, and we are realizing that we will need additional support to meet our ongoing need for technical services in 2021.

Our Office and Property Committees kept on top of conflicting and ever-changing safety guidance and restrictions from all levels of government. Our tireless newsletter editors ramped up our communications significantly to circulate timely information and Zoom links. The Meeting's clerk convened an Ad Hoc COVID Response Committee, consisting of committee clerks as well as individuals with relevant expertise. This group met biweekly and then on an as-needed basis to make decisions about safety and pandemic response that couldn't wait until business meeting. This group was guided by the principle of an organic response, with individuals and committees being attentive to Spirit and to our community to discern what felt safe and what felt necessary as the situation evolved.

Our Worship

To the surprise of some among us, we found that online worship, though not the same as in-person worship does work and can even be gathered. We were delighted to have members and attenders return to worship whom we had not seen in many years because they now live at a distance or were physically unable to join us at the meetinghouse. From our computer screens, we were able to welcome Friends from overseas, at home with a new baby, or confined to a hospice bed. One Friend from Germany with a past connection to our Meeting felt such a connection with us online that she was moved to apply for membership. Having had these Friends in our midst this year, we are unwilling to lose them when we move our worship back into the meetinghouse in 2021. Thus, we have made a commitment to have hybrid worship once it is possible to gather in person again. Discerning how to make that hybrid experience seamless and inclusive without placing unsustainable burdens on the community will be a primary challenge for 2021.

In terms of our vocal ministry, while we continue to yearn for deeper grounding for some messages, our experience of online communal worship is in some ways richer than before as we have been blessed by vocal ministry from Friends who have joined

us online. Our Worship & Ministry Committee has sought to deepen our collective understanding of Spirit-led vocal ministry by sponsoring Adult Classes and engaging with individual ministers. When the lockdown restrictions eased, several Friends followed a leading to hold a socially distanced meeting for worship outdoors at the meetinghouse when weather permits. Tuesday morning worship continues on Zoom, with half an hour of worship and half an hour of reading from Faith & Practice, as does our semimonthly Bible Study group.

Support of Our Community

Some of our deepest concerns during this challenging time have been to maintain a sense of connection among us and to care for those who have been isolated. As well as handling membership issues, our Care & Counsel Committee offered other support to many members and attenders, including offering outdoor childcare so that young parents can attend outdoor worship. In partnership with Care & Counsel, Hospitality Committee members brought meals to those with medical issues and new parents. We hope this brought love and attention and sustenance to those of our community who are in need. At a time when so many are struggling, this has been an enormous undertaking. We lost several beloved members of our community this year and gathered online to honor the lives of members we loved even when the ugliness of a racist Zoom bombing tried to get in the way. Our Care & Counsel and Worship & Ministry Committees jointly formed an Ad Hoc Committee on End-of-Life Issues to formalize committee responsibilities after a death so that this ministry is shared more equitably across committees and no essential tasks are missed.

Although we closed the meetinghouse in March, we made the decision to honor our commitment to our paid employees and continue to do so. With nearly all rental income and Skyspace contributions lost, our Finance Committee guided us through difficult budgetary decisions, including whether to apply for paycheck protection (we did not), accept a government loan, or delay our mortgage payments (both of which we did). Despite the financial challenges posed by the pandemic, appeals from our Stewardship Committee prompted great generosity from community members to ensure we met our budgetary goals. These and other financial decisions

have highlighted our need for a more grounded process for discernment around financial questions that are beyond the purview of any single committee. An Ad Hoc Committee on Financial Discernment was formed to bring needed clarity and grounding to our financial decision-making.

Our Nominating Committee seeks to help match Friends' gifts and the movement of Spirit in their own spiritual journeys to the movement of the Spirit in the life and work of the Meeting. With a new standing committee (Addressing Racism) and the proliferation of Ad Hoc Committees (Refugee Support, End-of-Life Issues, COVID Response, and Financial Discernment), we have a lot of openings to fill in a community whose members already feel stretched thin. We find that a small group of very active people wear many different hats, which means that (as we have learned to our sorrow) the loss of one of these essential people can have a devastating effect on the operations of the Meeting in addition to its emotional impact.

Nominating Committee works hard to fill open committee slots, and this year met the additional challenge of identifying a new Clerk, Treasurer, and Recording Clerk. Caring for one another, building community, welcoming visitors, and creating a peaceful place in which people can be with others, are some of the ways that Spirit moves in the work of our committees. We have sorely missed aspects of our community life that have been difficult to recreate online, including the wonderful food and conviviality provided by our Hospitality Committee and the warm welcome of guests by our Outreach Committee. Our Skyspace Committee has missed providing the world with a meditative 50-minute slow-art experience where many of our guests find an element of the Divine as they contemplate the heavens through our open roof. Our monthly hymn sing has also proved impossible to undertake safely. When these activities are possible again, we will cherish them all the more for this time of absence.

Education and Enrichment

Our bimonthly Adult Class offerings this year have helped to keep us connected to our Quaker practice, to our various leadings in the wider world, to the arts, and to big questions of life and death. With a robust schedule of diverse programming, attendance at Adult Class has grown over the past few years, with typically 25 to 30 people joining. The Zoom format has made it possible to have presenters and guests join us from afar, broadening the scope of our programming. Adult Classes have allowed various committees to lift up their concerns, to educate, and to provide a forum for conversations about difficult topics such as racism and reparations.

The Religious Education Committee has been faithful in creating online programming for our children since the start of the pandemic, though we are saddened that attendance has been low. The online experience is just not the same as in person, especially for young people who are already fatigued by online schooling. It has been difficult for young families to stay connected with the Meeting during this time, and we have looked for creative solutions to reach them. Our Zoom Christmas pageant was well-attended, and on December 21st we all enjoyed Winter Solstice Bedtime Stories from around the world. We know that many families are struggling, and we miss having them with us.

Our Witness in the World

Our witness in the wider world also looked different this year. We were unable to host homeless families through the Philadelphia Interfaith Hospitality Network this summer as we usually do, and instead, our PIHN Committee collected food, personal care items, furniture, and Christmas presents for PIHN families.

Our Refugee Support Working Group has continued to raise funds for Syrian refugees, led by Spirit in compassion and empathy for those around the world who are struggling with basic needs. Thanksgiving pie-baking was both a logistical challenge and also a great success in terms of fundraising and community building in the midst of a difficult holiday. Our Peace & Social Concerns Committee focused on educating the Meeting about the faith-based community organization POWER, an effort which culminated in our joining POWER this year. A goal for

2021 will be to involve the wider meeting community in POWER in a deeper and more consistent way. As usual, the committee accepted grant applications from community members and distributed \$5,000 to local service organizations.

We continue to grapple with racial justice issues, both within the Society of Friends and in the wider society. After the brutal murder of George Floyd, we organized a socially distanced silent vigil for racial justice at the meetinghouse. This year we became clear that our Ad Hoc Antiracism Working Group needed to become a standing committee, now called the Addressing Racism Committee. At a called meeting for worship with attention to business in July, that committee presented the results of their 2019 survey to assess the racial climate of the meeting.

More than 60 responses were collected, and the analysis and presentation of those results were monumental tasks. To quote that report:

“With approximately 87.5% of the meeting community identifying as white, white perspectives, sensibilities and biases pervade the culture of Chestnut Hill Monthly Meeting. The voices of People of Color (POC) and their perspectives are so underrepresented as not to be representational at all. In a spiritual community that prides itself on searching for ‘Truth,’ this is a serious deficit.”

Overall, the survey results demonstrated that the meeting community sees spiritual value in addressing racism and has a good understanding of some issues, yet many of us have very little racial diversity in our lives. This analysis gives us a clearer picture of where to focus our energies going forward. Thirty Friends came to hear the report and join in the worship sharing that followed. We continue to look to each other for support and accountability in this work, for example through a book group organized by our Library Committee to read *Me and White Supremacy*.

In a time when many local polling places were closed for safety concerns, we opened our meetinghouse to three different divisions on election day, welcoming hundreds of voters. We were thankful to have this opportunity to support the democratic process.

In all of the challenges this year has brought—the pandemic, the racial justice crisis, the climate crisis, and political polarization—we sense that Spirit is asking us to become braver, more grounded, and more faithful. It is easy be discouraged by overwhelming crises, but it has been heartening to see how, when some among us keep the faith, it invigorates all of us to continue on. As we grapple with the spiritual challenges of our time, we expect to see changes within ourselves and within the Meeting.

Conclusion

In the midst of an incredibly stressful and unprecedented year, we have held onto each other well. The pandemic could easily have been a period of hibernation or a slow falling away, but relationships have continued to grow. We are asking deep questions together, and we are taking on new and challenging work. We have found ways to stay open to the promptings of the Guide within our Meeting and out in the world.

At the same time, we know that this has not been true for everyone. Our online meetings for worship have shrunk in size over time, and younger people are not as present. Online worship does not work for everyone, and some Friends feel isolated. We have had to lay down so many things that we did before COVID. We don't know when it will be safe to physically gather again, and we don't know how much we will have changed when we finally do gather.

Love required us to stay physically distant this year. Love required us to be stronger than perhaps we would have preferred; to plant ourselves deeply in faith to withstand the gales of turbulent times; to reach out to each other and lean on each other and support each other; to be a true community. Much is still uncertain, but we take heart from the ongoing work of our Property and Landscape Committees, who maintain our meetinghouse and its grounds, keeping things clean and orderly, cutting the grass, tending the plants: holding the faith that someday we will at last embrace each other again.

Frankford Monthly Meeting

This report presents the compiled views of those members who responded to a survey on the Spiritual State of FMM. Respectfully submitted by Jesse White, Clerk

We are a healthy, beloved community.

We have weathered a long storm and arrived, together, to a time of Light.

We are cradled in Love—

Strong, and getting stronger.

Steady.

Deeply Spiritual.

Our worship connects us, even virtually—

With Members.

With Attenders.

With Spirit.

We feel the invitation to be together—

We gather in enveloping Light.

We feel painted in warmth.

We feel fresh and good and nurtured.

We celebrate our gradual return to worship in our beloved Meetinghouse—

A thin place of spiritual empathy.

A supportive place where we feel able.

A nurturing place where Spirit's Love messaging rises and blooms.

We have remained spiritually faithful through:

- Worship.
- Prayer.
- Appreciating time together, no matter the physical distance between us.
- Prioritizing growth and practicing Spirit-led practices.
- Meditating on what it means to be a Beloved Community- Supporting each other's ministries and journeys with understanding, discernment, care.

Reading and educating ourselves into anti-racism and eagerly embracing this continued work.

- Growing into our unified vision of a deepened and creative energy that moves through any discord to each other.

We experienced joy!

- We welcomed a new member!
- We gradually began to see one another in person.
- Welcoming a Young Friend and a Young Adult Friend to worship with us regularly.
- We felt connected to the wider Quaker world, beyond our Meeting.
- We are happy to have a spiritually grounded and organized clerk with strong leadership.
- We finally formalized separate incorporation of our Meeting from Frankford Friends School's incorporation.
- We saw the Meetinghouse become lead remediated, repaired in various ways, and painted inside and out.
- We are so happy that Frankford Friends School children can now safely worship in our historic meetinghouse.
- We loved and cared for each other through our worship, through our Spirit-led business, and through social (virtual) gatherings.

Our challenges in the past year where:

- FINANCIAL.
 - Losing elders who passed on.
 - Bearing the burdens of a pandemic physically apart.
 - Working through a lengthy and arduous process of separately incorporating from Frankford Friends School.
 - Managing the complicated care of an ailing meetinghouse remotely.

We are small. We have been frightened, and sad. Yet, we are feeling Spirit's healing. We are repairing the meetinghouse, and our Meeting.

We learned that gathered worship can happen virtually when:

- We are committed to building our growing community.
- We envision and follow a strategic plan.
- We get in tune with what is important to one another and participate, even virtually, in giving enough time to our Meeting family.

Our Social Witnesses:

- We witnessed and supported issues related to low socioeconomic people in our Meeting, our neighborhoods, and our country.
- We gathered resources and avidly read, discussing our learnings with one another.
- We witnessed, learned, and developed good understandings of transgender/non-binary experiences for members and attenders of our Meeting, and the wider world.
- We witnessed our growth towards strong support and allyship for oppressed people, especially black people, other people of color, un-documented people, and LGBTQI people.
- We witnessed historical political events unfold that inspired deep conversations and actions by Meeting members.
- We witnessed our own changing approaches to moving through anger and discord toward a mended Meeting.
- We deepened our corporate center and our faith, to better address issues within our Meeting and beyond.

Monthly Meeting of Friends of Philadelphia

State of the Meeting Report to Philadelphia Yearly Meeting for the calendar year 2020. In preparing this report, various approaches were taken. Some of the queries from last year were addressed as well as the current ones. 2020 was a difficult year to navigate, but Friends came together to find solutions to the challenges we faced. Our worship practice and other activities were interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic in mid-March. We held our last in-person meeting for business on March 15, 2020. Our meeting community continues to age in population, and we have lost elder members to death or inactivity. However, the presence (now at a distance) of our members with children gives us hope for the future.

What practices and strategies are employed by Meeting to help members and attenders of all ages prepare for worship –whether Meeting for Worship or in Meeting for Business?

One or more from Worship and Ministry Committee try to enter the room in which worship takes place well in advance of meeting assuming a worshipful countenance. This is intended to discourage socializing and greeting until rise of meeting and adjourning for coffee and tea. This calm and quiet atmosphere allows those gathering to settle into worship more readily. Mid-week worship on Wednesday is lightly attended and more informal. There is no greeter at the meeting house door and the member closing meeting tends to welcome members, attenders and visitors as they enter the room for worship and asks them to settle into worship.

Similarly, it is the practice of MMFP to begin meeting for worship without the children of meeting who have more difficulty settling into silence. Children join worship after First Day School which may help them recognize why Friends are gathered and what is expected of them. While their arrival for the last fifteen minutes of worship is a small disruption, the exposure of the children to the community in silent worship or in sharing a message well outweighs that disruption.

On the first Sunday of each month, the member of Worship and Ministry on the facing bench with the duty of closing worship will read a passage of their choosing from Faith and Practice soon after all are gathered in silent worship.

Likewise, it is the practice of the Clerk of MMFP to read a query from Faith and Practice at the beginning of meeting for business, after a sustained period of centering worshipful silence. During the business meeting, the clerk attends to all equally, and minds the contributions of those present.

In March 2020, following the guidance of state and local authorities, MMFP and Arch Street Meeting House Preservation Trust (ASMHPT) closed the meeting house to in-person worship and visitors. Soon thereafter, meeting for worship and meeting for business were held via Zoom. The practices outlined above for centering and settling into worship were somewhat more relaxed with Zoom. Worship and Ministry viewed Zoom as a necessary expedient measure but also as an unsatisfying substitute for gathering in person and began to plan for in-person worship in the meeting house. With ASMHPT staff, Worship and Ministry Committee adopted guidelines in July for worship in-person at the meeting house on the second and fourth Sundays. Worship was again suspended in November through the end of the year with the intention to reassess the circumstances in January. Friends should know that the ability to open and close the building, once we were supplied with keys and alarm codes in January 2020 (and not ever before), allowed members of the meeting to take the responsibility for this without involvement of PYM staff.

What are the challenges to and opportunities for enhancing the worship of members and attenders?

The general challenge of enhancing the experience of worship in Friends meeting is knowing in the absence of a creed or liturgy what those attending are seeking from worship. Are they worshipping the Divine? Are those gathering in silence waiting on the Divine to break that silence with them personally? Are they eager to hear messages from others that might strengthen their faith? Are they content to give witness to their faith by gathering in worship with others and contributing silence? These are deeply personal and probing questions. In the manner of Friends, members and attenders are not asked these questions directly.

Nonetheless, the Worship and Ministry Committee organizes, and with the aid of others, delivers a day-long annual retreat. The 2020 program developed by Worship and Ministry, following consultation with members and attenders on the format and content, was to be “On the Path to Inner Peace.” The program plan provided time for reflection and meditation outside of the material focused on Inner Peace. Regrettably, the retreat had to be postponed to the fall of 2021 due to the pandemic. Nonetheless, the annual retreat is a genuine opportunity to understand and further respond to what members and attenders want from worship.

What is MMFP doing to address these challenges and opportunities?

Worship and Ministry focuses on listening to the ministry in meeting for worship in order to understand better the worship experience of members and attenders. Prompted by a message in meeting for worship, it has considered the quality and quantity of message during worship. While that assessment did not provoke any immediate response, the Committee recognizes the need to regularly assess the worship experience in the absence of a prompting message in meeting for worship.

What opportunities are provided to address topics important to deepening both personal spiritual journeys of members and the spiritual life of the Meeting?

Foremost among opportunities to deepen personal spiritual journeys and the collective spiritual life of the meeting is the annual retreat discussed above. Indeed, retreat topics tend to address individual spiritual journeys and indirectly the spiritual life of the monthly meeting more than worship in meeting as such.

In addition, the Worship and Ministry Committee members at the close of meeting for worship ask those either present or participating remotely to share joys or concerns that are not announcements but may very much touch upon personal spiritual matters or contribute to the spiritual life of the meeting. Sometimes, these expressions of joy or concern may prompt Care Committee to check in with the member or attender and see if support of some kind is needed and welcome.

At the time of this writing (April / May 2021), a newly reconstituted Adult Education committee has been formed, with strong spiritual monthly programming. During early 2020, a semi-regular program was led by one person. It had trouble attracting attendees and petered out with the difficulties of distanced worship and the uncertainties wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic, along with the disinterest of the then-leader.

What is most needed to strengthen the communal witness of the Meeting to the local community and beyond?

We believe our meeting should be a spiritual refuge for those who seek, a warm welcoming place to build relationships and grow deep sustaining friendships. We should be a beacon of Light in the community to serve and assist individuals and organizations spiritually and financially in order to help the repressed, the poor and struggling, the underserved, and the unrepresented. We should honor our heritage and commitment of Peace, Love, and Justice. (Peace and Social Concerns Committee) The Educational Scholarship Committee engaged in discernment of the right sharing of a bequest given to MMFP for “the benefit of impecunious scholars at the African School” started by meeting member Anthony Benezet in the eighteenth century. The Committee found a beneficiary, St. James School, who precisely matched the donor intent and then made a five-year commitment of funds with the approval of the Meeting. Members of the Meeting have regularly contributed time and other resources to feeding and socializing with men experiencing homelessness at Old First Reformed Church, a nearby neighbor at 4th and Race Streets. This program was reduced with the pandemic, but MMFP made in-kind donations of food from our pantry when it was clear we would not be returning for our coffee hour social time.

Members of the Meeting support Friends Select School with financial and human resources (we appoint six meeting members as trustees to the board of the school). Our current monthly meeting clerk is the immediate past clerk of the board of trustees of the school, roles that were held concurrently for three years.

Similarly, the members of the Meeting support ASMHPT with individual contributions of time and money.

To what priorities does God call the Meeting? How do our annual budget, the Meeting standing committees and other aspects of meeting life reflect those priorities?

In 2020 MMFP went through a transition of meeting secretaries. This vital role, which solidifies communication throughout our community and outward, has now been filled very ably. An ad hoc communications group was formed to assess our use of mail, email, list serve and Mail Chimp in order to streamline the flow of information to our members and attenders. A weekly bulletin is now being produced and has been very well received.

The Meeting, acting on the recommendations of the Finance Committee, in order to provide sound stewardship and reflect the priorities of MMFP, simplified meeting investments by returning to investing the bulk of the Meeting's general and trust funds in Friends Fiduciary Corporation's (FFC) highly diversified pooled growth and income fund. The Finance Committee reaffirmed the meeting's commitment to abide by Friends' testimonies in the prudent management of investment through reliance on FFC's screening of equities and bonds to avoid:

- Weapons manufacture /national defense
- Gambling/casinos
- Coal production (to mitigate climate change)
- Tobacco
- Real estate investment trusts that own private prisons

The meeting continues to invest up to 10 percent of funds in social impact investments including The Reinvestment Fund and private equity funds researched and approved by Finance committee members.

Focusing on stewardship of meeting funds, the committee maintains oversight of an experienced bookkeeper; retains a certified public accountant to prepare an annual review on an accrual basis conforming to generally accepted accounting principles; prepares and monitors an annual budget for use of trust and general funds; and migrated accounting records from a desktop version of QuickBooks to the cloud based/ online version to better safeguard our data from risk of data loss and improve communication with our CPA.

Standing committees such as Relief and the John Martin Distribution Committee receive and discern applications for relief from members of MMFP and PYM, respectively. Following customary guidelines and by holding applicants in the Light, the committees strive to be equitable, fair and as generous as possible to alleviate the circumstances of needy Friends. Peace and Social Concerns Committee designated our donations in 2020 towards organizations that serve communities of color primarily, and those that provide food (a demonstrated need during the pandemic).

What specific issues of concern has your community experienced in the past year?

Late 2019 to mid-2020 saw the transition from one meeting house director to another, with an interim appointed in between, in August 2019. With the involvement of our clerk and alternate clerk, the relationship with the leadership of the meeting house and of the ASMHPT pivoted from one of uncertainty and lack of clarity of intention to a relationship of mutual understanding and trust. As Philadelphia Friends should know, the monthly meeting no longer owns the physical meeting house. Since 1960, we have operated under many assumptions which could change at the whim of the then-director. Clarity of operation was not always forthcoming from PYM. However, much work has been accomplished over the course of the last several years towards being in right relationship. A Roles and Responsibilities document, approved by PYM, MMFP and ASMHPT in late 2020, lays out guidelines and lines of communication between the three parties. MMFP was included in space planning meetings and exhibit design threshing.

There is now, in 2021, a very competent director of the meeting house (Sean Connelly) who has been helpful, understanding and knowledgeable in a myriad of ways. The difference is remarkable. MMFP is a stakeholder in the Arch Street property, as we consider ourselves the spiritual stewards there. We consider this position to be inviolable, and our presence to be perpetual. To be recognized and honored for our history and legacy at Arch Street is rightly ordered. Affirming our use of space has been a primary issue for the monthly meeting for the last several years.

What work has MMFP engaged in or explored in the past year that reflects our testimonies?

The testimony of John Woolman: “Our gracious Creator cares and provides for all his creatures. His tender mercies are over all his works; and, so far as his love influences our minds, so far we become interested in his workmanship and feel a desire to take hold of every opportunity to lessen the distresses of the afflicted and increase the happiness of the creation” is reflected in the members’ work with men experiencing homelessness discussed above and in providing funds for shoes and clothing for the scholars at St. James School, a school in poverty-stricken north Philadelphia. An important session was held in October 2020 on the history of the John Martin Trust, a large restricted fund dedicated to alleviating the needs of the most needy among Friends. Friends had expressed frustration at their lack of knowledge and understanding of this legacy trust. Much clarity was gained after this session. The meeting also labored for many months over a request for financial aid for Quaker students brought by Friends Select School. A sense of the meeting was finally reached in late June 2020 to make a five-year commitment to this effort, recognizing that several of our families have children enrolled at the school who benefit from generous aid.

How has God led MMFP to face and address conflict and/or misunderstanding among its members and attenders when they have arisen?

The Meeting uses clearness committees to assist those in conflict or under a misunderstanding. Those invited to serve on the clearness committee help guide the members in discord to a peaceful resolution of the conflict. A guiding principle for those on the clearness committee is that the members in conflict know inside themselves what needs to happen for the conflict to be resolved.

The pandemic has softened some conflicts, and possibly hidden away others. The absence of direct in person conversation has hampered our ability to be present for each other. More effort and consistent activity are required to maintain our relationships with each other and the Divine. The work is ongoing. This is our truth.

Contributions from Worship and Ministry (Steve Lewis and Paul Laskow); Educational Scholarships (Paul Laskow, Hazele Goodridge); Finance (Tom Williams); Peace and Social Concerns (David Swift, Andrew Anderson)
Sandra Williams, clerk
Nancy Love, alternate clerk (rising clerk, July 1, 2021)
Mignon Adams, treasurer (rising treasurer—Tom Williams 2021)
Joanne Lahner and Jarrett Smith, co-recording clerks



ABOUT ROMA NARKHEDE

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Roma is PYM's *Advancement, Marketing, and Communications Coordinator* committed to creating and sharing impactful stories (<https://www.pym.org/author/rnarkhede/>) in the yearly meeting. She enjoys connecting with people and believes that stories are the building blocks of forming a connected community.

