



Philadelphia Yearly Meeting
of the Religious Society of Friends

Abington Quarter: State of the Meeting Reports Received

Written on: JULY 28, 2021

Abington Quarterly Meeting Report

The year 2020 brought us to a new threshold. Our Quarter's reliance on in-house community and hands-on care quickly shifted to Zoom meetings and alternative outreach. We girded against the pandemic and opened our gates to virtual reality.

Each Meeting in our Quarter discerned a path. Friends guarded personal safety in considering the space of their meetinghouse and the extent of their membership. We all weighed in with our embrace of virtual media. Variations in meetings for worship included: Zoom only (Abington, Byberry, Unami), in-house only (Horsham), Zoom and outdoor (Gwynedd, Norristown using Bluetooth), Zoom and in-house convened separately (Richland), Zoom and/or outdoor connected by Owl (Plymouth, Upper Dublin). Discernment remains fluid and continues still. At year-end, hybrid meetings, an approach familiar to our schools, became a consideration.

Moving with media and venue, our meetings for worship have faithfully held us together on First Days, during midweek sessions, at junior worship, at women's worship and, pointedly, on Election Day, Thanksgiving Day and Christmas week.

Interconnected media have also carried all our Meetings through meetings for worship with concern for business, First Day school, and committee work. Appropriate distancing, telephone contacts, and the ingenious use of Zoom options have served us all in music and song, worship sharing, pastoral care and holiday cheer. While some events were necessarily suspended, our Care of Members and Worship & Ministry committees supplemented with sessions for comfort, consolation and healing (Abington, Gwynedd, Plymouth, Unami). Our sense is that virtual media are enhancements to be further explored as we serve our Meetings in growing community.

A force in binding our conversations has been our Quarter's Communications Committee led by Susan Vorwerk. Set up in late 2019, the committee goal is a readily shared website, accessible to all within our Quarter, holding an open door to our wider Quarter community and inviting new membership in from public media. To date, four Meetings (Byberry, Upper Dublin, Norristown, Plymouth) have individually begun building websites based on a common format offered by the committee – securely sharing the life of their membership.

All our modes of conversation reflect the primacy of our worship together. Our Abington Quarter (AQ) Worship & Ministry Committee has been the venue for drawing together the motions of spirit in each of our Monthly Meetings. Around our table, committee members share plans and events, highpoints and uncertainties. Friends notice thoughts that sow leadings.

Early in April, spirits rose in responding to Covid-19 hardships. Working together, our AQ Home & Care Committee and our Abington Quarter Fund Committee designed an assistance program, making it possible for both attenders and members to request financial aid for physical or financial set-backs caused by the pandemic. AQ Fund committee's capital is being used and AQ Home & Care committee's process is being followed. This option remains in effect into 2021.

Equally, these two Quarterly committees have continued in the good works of their call. AQ Home & Care Committee is easing life care concerns through financial support of members. Our administrator encourages conversation on available services, community facilities and end-of-life care. AQ Fund Committee has given us timely responses to our monthly meeting requests.

The work of AQ Trustees has well supported our Quarter's funding needs. Trustees Treasurer reported that portfolio performance is rebounding from the Covid-19 down-turn. Balances on letters of intent (members' agreements to payback funding) are up slightly – a sign of the times. Abington Quarter Treasurer indicated a positive cash flow.

This cash flow is the result of Junior Friends and Middle School Friends conferences being suspended this year. The pandemic precluded young folks' camp activities. Our Youth Programs Support Committee did organize a one-day virtual gathering for everyone to share and discuss circumstances. Plans for next year's conferences may include virtual, or may include live, participation. We lauded Karen Shanoski for her many years' service as Director of Youth Programs.

Facing the pandemic, Abington Quarter's meetings for worship with concern for business were held as scheduled. Program items for social justice have been a mainstay at Quarterly Meetings. This year, voices became more lyrical. We refocused a 2019 call to end cash bail in Montgomery Co. Now we were warmed by an initiative, under Reality Speaking Inc., that raised cash bail to reunite families on Valentine's Day. Our circle drew closer as we listened to Friends' personal experiences in national and global issues: distributing daily-use items to immigrant detainees at our southern border, bringing medical aide and gifts to 5 villages in Honduras, adopting two children from San Salvador and Vietnam.

We continued with broad range presentations as well. A comprehensive view of Immigrant Rights Action/Grupo de Accion led us through funding, legal action, mental health and historic perspective. A well-pointed Carbon Forest Project helped us respond to climate crisis through the planting of trees. Early in the year, our

Quarter endorsed a Minute, from the Eco-Justice Collaborative and through Gwynedd MM, prioritizing climate crisis as a PYM concern. Toward year's end, we reflected on a Minute of Reconciliation presented by Abington MM on behalf of indigenous peoples. We are currently enriching our perspective.

We have been delighted that both distant and new Friends now joined us on-line. We recognized that many of us were lacking closer conversation. We needed to open more gates.

We aligned three of our Quarter's four meetings for business to include extended worship and sharing in plenary. We opened an extended worship with sharing as led, to pull in our Fifth Month. We followed with queries for focus: responding to electronic media and speaking to systemic racism on Eighth Month; then, pursuing antiracism and voicing concern for education (school and family under Covid) to close Tenth Month. Our AQ Representatives' Committee, alert to Monthly and Yearly Meeting updates, chose Quaker membership as the focus for plenary sharing in Second Month 2021.

Reaching further, we met a threshold in local communities. We welcomed a lead from Abington MM to hold a Quarter-wide vigil in response to the George Floyd killing. Our Meetings shared their day's experience in words and photos. These we collected into our AQ Newsletter. Several meetings have held successive vigils (Abington, Gwynedd, Plymouth, Unami).

Each of our Meetings continues to support neighborhood needs through local agency. Food insecurity and housing limitations have become urgent priorities. We donated food to Interfaith Food Cupboard, Germantown Avenue Crisis Center, St John's Soup Kitchen, Food for Friends. Customized care was offered in Thanksgiving Gratitude and Holiday Meal Gift deliveries. We gave monetary gifts to Face to Face, Interfaith Housing Alliance, Volunteers for the Indigent, Project Home, Open Link.

In continuing support, we contributed to John B. Kelly School, Historic Fair Hill, Forniters Club. We shared active engagement with Better Angels, Courageous Conversations, Mothers in Charge, Carbon Forest Project, UNHCR Refugee Fund and our local ministeriums.

We spoke our truth in Meetinghouse banners and signage, heightening our spiritual presence as we raised voice for equality. Early in the year, we participated in the Women's March. In the Fall, we held sites for voter registration.

Our witness encompassed young people's growth. We rest in admiration and continuing prayer for our Quaker Schools – Abington Friends School, Gwynedd Friends School, Plymouth Friends School, Quaker School at Horsham, United Friends School. For our teachers, the stress of mounting a double environment, classroom and home, has been further impacted by the shifts and insecurities of the pandemic itself. Measure is taken for our students against virtual fatigue and the diminishment of peer group engagement. Familial and collegial support coupled with the strength of our community become the beacons toward well-being and advancement.

We hold in our hearts our Foulkeways and Pottstown Worship Groups, as they deftly weather the pandemic. We celebrate the lives of dear Friends who passed in 2020, sensing their presence in our Meetings, noticing their continuance through our newly welcomed members. We are led by the living force of commitment as it shines in the light of renewal.

Our year together has been demanding. We thank our many Friends for the spiritual gifts and steadfast devotion that have carried us through. At times, it seems that "strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life..." (Matthew 7:14-KJV). May we hold this image as a challenge in overcoming the appearance of obstacles. We pray that with love and mercy the gate continually opens. And divine presence enters.

In faith, Amelia Diamond *Clerk*, Abington Quarter

Abington Monthly Meeting

Due to Covid, in March 2020 we shut down our meetinghouse and transferred to Zoom. This was a new platform to many and there was a learning curve with some bumps along the way, but most of our community eventually embraced the new technology after some guidance was offered as needed and joyfully, we got to see Friends who hadn't been able to join us in person for a while, Friends from other Meetings, and new attenders. Besides Meeting for Worship, we held Women's Meeting for Worship, Adult Classes, Workshops for education on the Lenape with guest speakers from around the country, our Christmas Program and Martin Luther King Celebration, hymn singing, a Thanksgiving Meal Time, and Coffee Breaks after Meeting for Worship to talk and catch up with each other, all on Zoom. Our Spiritual Nurture Groups continued to meet on Zoom. Our Meeting began a 9-month Spiritual Formation Program in September with 25 participants on Zoom. Our committees met on Zoom to do their business. Our Care of Members Committee was busy throughout the year, keeping in touch with members to check on their well-being and aiding members as needed. They supported members with cards, emails, phone calls, food, financial needs, and holding in the Light.

During this year we experienced tragedy as a meeting when a beloved Young Adult Friend who grew up in our meeting passed away. All of us felt pain at his passing. We rallied around the family as best we could and the family held a Memorial Service at which over 600 people attended on Zoom. A tribute celebration for Pride Month dedicated to his memory is being planned for June 6, 2021 by a fellow Young Adult Friend and sponsored by the Peace & Social Justice Committee. While times like these are tragedies, they also provide a way of seeing how much we care for and are committed to each other.

As mentioned earlier, Zoom was a challenge for some in the beginning. As time moved on it became a challenge for some who had been attending. They complained of being "Zoomed Out". Because so many were on Zoom or some other platform like it for work all week long, they grew tired of so much screen time and stopped attending MfW. Some complained that they couldn't feel connected in MfW on

Zoom. Many parents felt their children had too much screen time and Religious Education was not provided, but rather PYM's programs for children were encouraged. For these reasons and because the meeting was closed, some members and attenders chose to gather outside each other's homes for MfW.

The Clerk's Advisory Group for Re-Opening planned out the protocols for hybrid meetings and held a hybrid meeting of the group in March. Thanks to our Worship & Ministry Committee and Abington Friends School, we were able to purchase the necessary equipment for hybrid meetings. Our Property Committee readied our meeting house, such as installing screen doors for ventilation and tying ribbons on benches for proper social distancing for single and group seating. Our Hospitality Committee found and trained greeters in our protocol. We held our first MfW as a hybrid on Easter, April 4, 2021. There was great joy in the meeting house and on Zoom. As we continue to gather in the hybrid form, we look forward to the day we can all be together again.

Guided by our Peace & Social Justice Committee's mission of being "dedicated to the pursuit of peace and nonviolent efforts to advance social justice", we continued many of our efforts during this Covid time. We began a vigil in support of the BLM Movement last year and continue to hold it weekly. While we had to stop our sandwich making and distribution at Face-to-Face, we continue to donate food to Interfaith Food Cupboard and began donating food, coats, and books to Germantown Avenue Crisis Ministry. We had a voter registration drive and provided letters about Selective Service to families with children aged 17-18 years of age. A Sustainability subcommittee is being formed to look at the Meeting's impact on the Earth. Some members take part in the Reading Buddies program at the John B. Kelly School, reading to children once a week on Zoom. Three organizations/programs received donations from our Right Sharing Fund and we are readying an ad hoc committee to distribute the income from the Bothwell Reparations Fund to organizations to benefit those of African American and Indigenous descent. At our last Meeting for Worship to Attend to Business, we enthusiastically approved the Ujima Friends Peace Center's Freedom School 2021 to

use our grounds this summer. We are working on the wording of a Minute of Reconciliation to acknowledge, apologize, and atone for past wrongs to Indigenous peoples and African Americans.

Wanda Wyffels, Clerk

Byberry Monthly Meeting

Byberry Meeting has not met for worship since about February last year due to the virus. We have met on Zoom since then every Sunday as well as Tuesdays and Thursdays along with Upper Dublin Meeting and earlier Horsham and Norristown. This, while not the same as meeting together in person, has had the benefit of reaching members and attenders who are at a distance or unable to attend formerly in person.

We have been planning and meeting in person or virtually toward the construction of an addition, including a kitchen and toilets, to our meetinghouse for about 3 years now. We have chosen a contractor for the work after interviewing and receiving estimates from several. We learned that we need to be frugal in order to meet a reasonable budget. We looked forward to having composting toilets in the addition but discovered that the cost would be considerably higher. Philadelphia also would not permit that. We are about to connect to the existing sewer from the school house in preparation. New water and electric has already been brought to the location underground. Grant toward a future green roof structure has recently been applied. We expect that the addition construction will begin this year.

Byberry was glad to have received a Keystone Grant last year from the state of Pennsylvania that will pay for half of costs toward estimating repairs required to our 3 buildings and the only remaining carriage shed in the city of Philadelphia. Byberry Hall, one or only two abolition debate halls remaining in the state, is of great interest to maintain. The Keystone Grant will enable future grants to help with the repairs. Much thanks is due to our Friend consultant. She has also assisted greatly in setting up the Zoom meetings and the connection with Upper Dublin.

Byberry Meeting looks forward to meeting in person again, hopefully later this year. With the near future completion of the addition now, we expect to have more community functions and growth to attendance and membership.

David Nepley, Clerk

Gwynedd Monthly Meeting

In late December of 2020, as clerk of Meeting, I began to think about writing the annual report. It's more fun to do than other lists, such as New Year's resolutions. It's the story of our accomplishments rather than a "to-do" list.

This year, the story of our accomplishments is strong despite the challenge of protecting our community against the COVID-19 virus. I am profoundly grateful that our work continued almost unabated. I am also grateful to our community members. I never felt alone as clerk nor did our community ever lack individuals, or groups, to accept the call and do whatever needed to be done.

We started 2020 with 302 members and ended with 299. While we had seven deaths of dear older Friends, we are also dealing with the tragic loss of a young member. I suspect our healing and grieving will continue for quite a while. We also rejoice about adding five additional members from transfer or request.

The year began normally enough with a well-attended Spiritual Retreat. We enjoyed our ever-spiritual Sunday worship. Our active committees worked diligently for the good of our Meeting community and for the larger world, with social justice and sustainability projects. Yet, within a few months, because of the pandemic very little was the same.

In March, clerks of Gwynedd worked together by phone and made the drastic decision to close the Meetinghouse buildings for the health and safety of all. Consequently, three pandemic-related ad hoc committees were developed: Meetinghouse Closure, Building Use, and Technology. They ensured that only the

necessary closures were made and, closures continued no longer than needed. Two other ad hoc committees were also formed. Our Site committee planned to engage a professional service to design and manage our grounds. The professionals and committee members designed a sustainable master plan to build, renew or replace our natural and other outdoor features. Another ad hoc committee was formed to update our plan of organization. This plan provides us with the necessary guidance we need as a continuing faith community.

Fortunately, the technology was available allowing us to reopen for virtual worship, continued committee work, and other social action projects. Almost all of this activity took place over the Internet using Zoom technology and email blasts, now familiar to most of us. So, while our buildings were shut down for most uses, the worship, social concerns, and the business of our Meeting community continued.

Initially, a great effort was made to communicate with our community members through personal phone calls and emails. Then, we got our Zoom connection working and continued our email blasts. Our response to the unique needs of the community during the pandemic continues successfully due to the extraordinary efforts and cooperation of our standing committees, our three ad hoc committees, and our small number of employees. Members of standing committees continued their work in different ways. Regretfully, both the American Friends Service Committee Sale and our Coffeehouse entertainment, were unable to continue for lack of viable ways to work around health and safety issues. Both groups look forward to resuming.

A few meetings were held, mostly outside with safety precautions, including a youth project and fall work day. Our decades long Vigil for social justice continued on Saturday afternoons. A special event, coordinated by the Abington Quarterly Meeting, was held to demonstrate after the George Floyd killing. This attracted about 90 protestors on both sides of Route 202.

Our office manager and bookkeeper returned to the Meetinghouse to perform necessary tasks but, often work from home too. Our youth coordinator worked mostly online with our children. The Gwynedd Friends School (GFS) re-opened in the late summer under the guidance of our Building Use Committee. They voluntarily enrolled fewer students and made many adjustments to allow for good hygiene and safe distancing. GFS continued successfully until the Christmas/New Year holidays with only one short closure under the orders pertaining to all Montgomery County schools.

Most of Gwynedd's activities are conducted successfully on Zoom technology including a special fundraising event for refugees. Our regular offerings include: online worship on Sunday mornings at 9:30 am; an online worship group at 8 pm on Wednesday evenings; and a small group in-person Meeting for Worship held out-of-doors on Saturdays when weather permits. Our First Day School programs have continued virtually, both for adults and youth. A special Facebook page, Gwynedd Quaker Fellowship, emerged for sharing, and other formal and informal ways of keeping contact. We even had our traditional Christmas Tea with entertainment on a Sunday before Christmas, a Christmas carol sing on a Sunday morning, and Christmas Eve Meeting for Worship.

Worship continues in a deeply spiritual manner and serves us well by connecting our community during this time of isolation. In Meetings for Worship, we typically have 50 to 60 friends join us on Sunday mornings. We are working on hybrid technology for worship when it is safe for some of us to return to the Meetinghouse and, when others will continue to join us by Zoom technology. This will allow the homebound and those living at a distance to continue to worship with us. I am most grateful for the modern technologies that allow us to worship and to continue our work despite the cautions needed to protect the health and safety of our community. These accomplishments were only possible because of the hard work and dedication of our community members. I look with profound gratitude at the individuals and groups who have worked so diligently for the benefit of our blessed community and for the larger world.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Shields Ritting, Clerk

Horsham Monthly Meeting

We continue to be blessed with members who share their gifts both spiritually and physically in the work of keeping our small Meeting in a huge old building running. As with all our old buildings, there is always something needing to be repaired or replaced. Our last recorder report was that we have 62 adults and 10 children. But the most attending on a Sunday is 14. We have felt comfortable meeting in person with masks and socially distanced since June.

Work was begun early in the year on a new directory of members and attenders which was a huge undertaking since it had not been done in quite a few years, so of course there were many changes. It is still a work in progress but almost completed.

A minute was prepared for members to consider regarding the content, quality and tone of several queries in the new Faith and Practice. Meeting approved the minute the following month but unfortunately it was unsupported by the Quarter and the following months our Meeting was closed for the pandemic until June and the minute was overlooked for more months. For the next years, we decided to consider queries outside of PYM in order to expand our relationship and understanding of other Friends. For 2020 we used Pacific Yearly Meeting's queries. It has been interesting and refreshing.

Our usual soup Sundays and Christmas Tea were not held for safety reasons and the inclement weather Christmas Eve affected our candlelight service.

We donated a bible to Horsham Township for their new building. And bibles were purchased for our grade school children but we have been unable to present them to the children as they have been at zoom Meetings at Gwynedd Meeting.

In March we agreed to sign a bank agreement for The Quaker School at Horsham 's loan for an addition to the school for the high school because they lease our ground. We also agreed to a large donation to help the school with their project. And we further gave permission for the schools staff and students to use part of our building while the addition was being completed so that they could be distanced during the pandemic and the school could be open.

Several of our members and our First Day School teacher visited Third Haven Friends in Easton, MD to learn how they successfully started a summer camp.

Two of our young Friends and their mother went to Honduras as volunteers for the Worm Project which distributes pills for deworming children in 3rd world countries usually around the equator. They gave a wonderful report at Abington Quarterly Meeting via zoom.

Our carriage shed was repaired according to specs for historical buildings, following an auto accident that destroyed the end closest to the highway. A new furnace has been installed and water softener was replaced as well as the alarm system and the flashing around the chimney plus cracks on cap were repaired and sealed to prevent another bad leak in the meeting house. And the lists go on!

We welcomed a long time attender into membership and another long time attender passed away as well as the wife of a member. A memorial for her was held in the meetinghouse – with masks and socially distanced.

This year our donations focused on local organizations addressing food and housing security, considering the ongoing pandemic.

And the last thing for this year, is that contacts are being made to make major and minor repairs to our old farmhouse which is rented.

It does seem like we are dealing with property more than spiritual matters but I feel we do have good Meeting's for Worship and it has been a blessing to be able to have in person worship rather than zoom. So being a small Meeting in a large building does have it's plusses.

Respectfully submitted,

Betsy Lukshides, Clerk

Norristown Monthly Meeting

This has been a challenging year for us. We have been guided by love and faith. We are blessed with the new attenders and active core of older members, for worship through out this year 2020. With the support of Abington Quarter & our Philadelphia Yearly meeting we have made good choices to make our meeting relatively safe, in this Covid-19 virus pandemic. Our meeting has joined the world of the internet, using virtual meeting platforms, to come together to support the life of our meeting. Some of us meet in person at the meetinghouse and some people attend virtually ,through the Zoom Internet application. We will be using it for the foreseeable future. This platform allows people at a distance to join us for worship, fellowship and to attend to our meeting business.

The two recovery groups, who have been meeting at our meetinghouse, have also been meeting totally virtually. The Little Treasures Daycare had to close for 3 months, (March, April, May). They are presently open, supporting the families, who depend on them for childcare. With local schools using a virtual platform, the daycare is typically set up with children using computers to get classwork done there and pre schoolers having activities in the other classroom. Carol Ashby and a group of faithful friends have been making lunches for the St. John's Soup Kitchen, the third Thursday of the month. Carol's dedication to this mission has been inspiration to all of us. She & her husband Rob Kuhlman, come down from Pottstown with the food to feed over a hundred each month. Typically there are 6 members & attenders of NMM, busy for a few hours preparing fresh food & soup.

Our thanks goes out to all of them. This past September we hosted the Forteniter's Club, for a picnic on the lawn of the meeting house. Mary Green organized members to help prepare the event for our friends, the Forteniter's. It has been a tradition for as long as I can remember. I am thankful we can still support this group, who looks to area churches for a opportunity to have a meal out of their homes with friends. We used careful guidelines to prepare food plates for our guests and encouraged social distancing and the use of face masks and hand sanitizer.

In November we held our annual leaf raking party, there were 8-10 people who shared the fellowship of gathering the leaves and putting them in our leaf composting bins. We did a great job and accomplished almost all of it within 3 hours. We were mindful of using social distancing and using face masks.

This past year Karen Shanoski stepped down from years of leading the Abington Quarter's Children's summer program, Junior Friends Conference, and Middle School Friends Conference. Karen has been the director of the program for 25 years. It's with great pleasure we congratulate her on her commitment to the next generation of leaders. Thank You!

I would encourage everyone to visit and register at our new website:

www.norristownfriends.org (<http://www.norristownfriends.org>). Marguerite Hayes has been working, with others in the Abington Quarter's Communication committee, to get the new web site established for us. The committee's thought of having the same website platform used by our sister meetings will give the website managers support. With this group effort we can do more networking and look for ways to raise our collective profile in our respective communities. The motto of the group's leader, Susan Vorwerk is, "Together we are stronger." Through this group we have been using banners to send a message out to the community in front of our collective meetinghouses with messages that portray ways to make a difference in our communities. Through this committee, Marguerite has been applying for grants to help us with our internet/virtual technology aspect of our meeting's new life. We hope to get more traffic on our websites (and through) our meetinghouse doors from this call to make ourselves more accessible on the Internet highway.

In our small meeting we feel blessed by visitors and returning attenders. We try to make everyone feel welcome and to understand our faith & practice. Before the pandemic quarantined us we had a seasoned attender ask to be a member. This brings us great joy. Through the last part of 2019 into early in the year, we experienced an attender who seemed to challenge us weekly. We spent time trying to keep this person from disrupting our normal process. After a few months of wrestling with this individual's contrary ways, we had to tell her, "That she was not welcome to come back". This was an unsettling experience for many, but for the good of the whole. We made this decision because we could not get through to her. Before the pandemic started we have had a request for a grant to help a small business startup in Norristown. This venture is called Jumpstart. It is an affiliate of Germantown's Jumpstart housing program. It is a program aimed at training people to become real estate developers in their own geographic area. It would benefit our local area with new opportunities to have local residents get the training to become home owners as well as real estate developers. We typically have not given grants out to business start ups, although we have helped the owner of the daycare that rents space from us. We met with the Jumpstart group in October and there was no clarity about a way to move forward with the request. The request was withdrawn after we expressed a need for further questions and time to sit with it.

From this situation it became clear that requests can sometimes take a while to discern a way forward. Typically our giving is through charitable, and non-profit agencies by the social concerns committee. As we move ahead it is important for the meeting to establish specific protocols for handling requests from agencies and individuals for funding requests and use of the meetinghouse.

We have been struggling with the global pandemic, a virus called Covid-19. It caused a shutdown of activities early March. Schools were shut down through early June. We stopped all activities at the Meeting House during this same time frame. We joined the other Quaker Meetings in Abington Quarter to get a sense of how to move forward. We advised our members and attenders to join other meetings for worship using the internet application called Zoom meetings. In early May we started to use Zoom for our own meetings for worship. We started to meet outdoors in June, using

social distancing and masks and hand hygiene. This continued through September. We were using a cell phone to try and zoom the meeting to those who were not comfortable coming to the meeting. Later we were using a blue tooth speaker phone. We will be using this type of technology for a while and are going to utilize other tech gadgets to improve the quality of the hybrid meetings that we share with the Zoom application.

We are grateful for all of our members & attenders! We are mindful of our faith & practice and open to answer what God wants us to do.

Kelly Green, clerk for NMM 2020

Plymouth Monthly Meeting

Plymouth Mouth Monthly Meeting looks back on the year 2020 with relief that it is behind us, as well as gratitude for the opportunities that it has brought to us during these difficult times. There are still many challenges ahead this year, but we have hope that we can meet them together.

At this time, the membership of Plymouth Monthly Meeting is 133. We have gained two new members this year from out of state who come to us via Zoom. Our meeting community has experienced Covid- 19 among several members and attenders, including the death of a member of one family. Unlike recent years, we have not experienced the death of any long time members or regular attenders of our Meeting community during 2020.

Our financial situation is stable but we are concerned about the loss of donations from the organizations that met in our Annie H. Wilson room before the pandemic. We appreciate the clear and accurate management of our funds provided by our Treasurer Linda White. Our Trustees have worked closely with Plymouth Meeting Friends School as they have struggled to meet the financial needs caused by the Covid crisis and will continue to remain supportive of their work.

Maintenance of the property continues to be a significant part of our budget. We began extensive tree work this year as well as continuing to pay for the mowing and upkeep of the grounds. Our commitment to our Green Minute moved forward with the installation of a dual port electric vehicle charger in our parking lot for the use of the Meeting and School communities, as well as the installation of a tankless hot water system which we will appreciate when we can be back in the building. We are grateful to the men of the Meeting who offer their labor to maintain our historic buildings year after year.

The Burial Ground Committee maintains the records for our burial ground. Tom Armstrong also provides caring assistance to families requesting a burial here. We also maintain the physical condition of the graves. Two new grave markers were installed this past year and diseased trees were removed.

The House Committee kept the Meeting House rooms clean for the brief period of time we were able to use them. They now work with the school to facilitate in-person instruction in the Annie. H. Wilson room to take place in a clean, safe environment.

Our First Day School is small and only met a few times before we closed in March. We do not have a virtual outreach for the few children currently in the Meeting community. Our Library Committee has been working during this time to digitize our catalogue of all the books in our Library. Chris Mrozinski, a young adult Meeting member, has been sharing his technical skills to facilitate this project, working with Sally Bishop.

The changes brought on by this pandemic have been challenging, but they also provided new opportunities for focusing on the spiritual growth and vitality of our Meeting community. We began the year with many projects and activities planned. We looked ahead to having retreats and other gatherings that would make use of our new outdoor facilities. The Sunday afternoon music circles and the Cornerstone Café coffee house organized by Bill Alberts continued to bring joy to us monthly as

we welcomed musicians from around the area and shared fellowship with them. We began an ongoing showing of Quaker Speak videos followed by interesting discussions and we planned to expand those experiences throughout the spring.

After years of concentrating on the necessary work needed on the physical structure, Plymouth was ready to put our energy into deepening and strengthening the spiritual and relational dimensions of our Meeting Community. Several Friends participated in the Women's March in Philadelphia in January, for the 4th. year, as political concerns loomed large in our hearts and minds. We were happy to host Abington Quarterly Meeting here in early February and to share ideas with other Friends about Quaker witness in the world.

Then came Friday, March 13th. and everything shut down. Our community was touched immediately by Covid concern as one of our members had just experienced a possible exposure. Fortunately, it did not result in his contracting the virus but it made us painfully aware how vulnerable we might be as a Meeting Community. Plymouth followed the directives from the State of PA and closed the Meeting House, as did the School. This also cancelled all the activities of the various organizations that regularly used our Annie H. Wilson room. We did not gather for worship for several weeks.

Worship resumed via a Zoom link in mid-April, with an average of around 12 people participating. In August through October, we experimented with blending onsite in person worship with those on Zoom using an Owl conferencing system. Attendance increased to an average total of 22 people (14 onsite, 8 on Zoom). The weather cooled in late October and those who preferred to be onsite moved into the Meeting House where we worshipped with the Friends on Zoom using the Owl. An increase in Covid cases in Montgomery County prompted us to close the Meeting House in early November. Since that time, all of our worship, First Day and mid-week, as well as all committee meetings, are being conducted on Zoom. In order to assist Plymouth Meeting Friends School spread the classes out across the campus for the safety of the students, we have allowed the 4th. grade to convert our Annie H. Wilson room into a classroom for as long as this health crisis continues.

Our Meeting House remains closed at this time. Worship on Zoom continues to be meaningful for those who participate regularly, although some Friends would prefer to be back in the Meeting House. Others are unable to consider returning to onsite worship due to serious health concerns until it is safe to be in close contact with people. Some Friends have begun to worship with us on Zoom from other states and will never be able to share onsite.

One great blessing of this new format is the return to our community of a member who grew up in our Meeting and moved out of state years ago. She now worships with us regularly and participates in other activities and committees. Two new members from out of state have joined Plymouth through this new opportunity and are also participating in the life of the Meeting and sharing their gifts with us. Others who live in the area but are not able to drive are able to come from time to time.

The technology is a serious drawback for several Friends who are unable to connect via Zoom. Other Friends do not find the use of this technology enables them to worship in a meaningful way and prefer not to use it. The blending of Zoom and onsite worship seems to work for those who use Zoom, but it does not meet the spiritual needs of everyone who might prefer to be in the Meeting House. Our Worship & Ministry committee hears all of these concerns and is trying to discern how to proceed in order to provide the opportunity for meaningful worship for each member and attender in our Plymouth community. We don't want to become separate groups. It is a challenge which is ongoing, but if we listen carefully and lovingly to each other, seeking God's guidance, we hope to discern the way forward this year.

A small group of Friends gathers on Wednesday evenings for a worship/sharing on Zoom. It is a quiet time of reflection and spiritual support and all are welcome to come. We did gather at the Meeting House wall in June to participate in the vigil after the death of George Floyd. We were so glad to see one another that it was difficult to maintain social distancing, but we tried. On Christmas Eve, we had a beautiful Zoom sharing of carols followed by fellowship with Friends who live at a

great distance and whose presence brought joy to our community. Plymouth intends to focus on how we worship, communicate, and include all members in the life of our Meeting community.

Plymouth Meeting Friends School has certainly struggled to meet the crisis created by Covid-19. Our new Head of School Brenda Crawley had a very challenging first year and has led the school through these troubled waters very well. The school staff has worked diligently to create a safe, creative learning environment for the students, using both onsite and virtual options throughout the pandemic. Plymouth Monthly Meeting have given our full support to their efforts with gratitude.

The burdens of our current political climate have been difficult for us to bear. Individual members of our Plymouth community have felt led to address certain social concerns through their own actions during this time when it is difficult to act corporately. However, our Peace & Social Concerns committee discerned that it was appropriate to offer our \$500 Alice Ambler Award to Historic Fair Hill in recognition of the work they do within the North Philadelphia community which is underserved. Some of our members regularly volunteered there before Covid.

Our Care & Concern committee turned its attention away from some of the hospitality it usually provided for events throughout the year, which could no longer take place. The focus of the committee turned to meeting the needs of everyone in our Meeting. One important project has been the updating of our Directory, which is now available for members and attenders registered on our website. We are grateful to Sally Bishop for her dedication to this ongoing project. Committee members also provided risk assessment for returning to the Meeting House property and will continue to fill that role later this year. The committee also provided outreach and concern for members of our Plymouth MM community affected by the pandemic, as well as those who are not able to be with us in person or virtually.

Our newly formed Website Committee has provided us with a portal to outreach into the larger world, as well as help our Monthly Meeting in-reach within our own worshipping community. This opens new opportunities for information, social concerns, vital communication within our Meeting, and many other functions that will enable Plymouth MM to learn and grow together in this changing world. David Miller and Carolee Duckworth have worked tirelessly to create an accessible website for us and are now trying to teach the Meeting how to navigate it easily. We are grateful to the leadership provided by Abington Quarter's Communication Committee, especially to Susan Vorwerk of Upper Dublin MM, whose knowledge and enthusiasm has opened this opportunity for all of us. Her patience and presence enabled members of our Meeting to learn how to use the Owl as well.

Plymouth Monthly Meeting recognizes the critical need for improving communication, one on one and within our Meeting community, so that we may grow together and not apart during this time of distance. We also embrace the opportunities now available to us through new technology to outreach into the wider community, in hopes of growing our numbers as well as expressing our Quaker witness in the world. Let us never forget that the most meaningful communication skill is listening with an open heart to one another. May we all move forward with renewed hope for a healthy, loving, peaceful future as we follow God's leadings in our hearts.

In Peace and Light,

Rebecca Cratin, Clerk

Richland Monthly Meeting

The year was overshadowed by the impact of COVID-19 and all responses related to this pandemic. In spite of this overwhelming tragedy, the life of the Meeting has been quite vital.

Until March, when wide spread quarantines were imposed, Richland held its regular First Day School, Meetings for Worship, and Meetings for Business at the Meeting house. With the imposition of quarantining, there were a couple weeks of confusion, but then, using the Zoom format, Adult First Day School continued along with Meeting for Worship. Our attendance at Zoom Meeting for Worship slowly built as Friends became accustomed to a creative means of sharing our Spiritual Lives. It was while becoming accustomed to this new means of worshipping that we discovered that there could be value in utilizing this format into the future. Several of our community found themselves at a distance that would have otherwise precluded their participation in either Adult First Day School or Meeting for Worship, but with Zoom they were able to be with us from Maine, Colorado and Florida. We are actively working on the details to allow the Zoom format into the future.

This year we were saddened by the passing of three long time members of our Meeting. Helen Dempsey died in October at 101 years of age. In November, Betsy Meridith died following a long illness and was followed in December by her husband Charlie in December. Due to the challenges of the quarantine, memorial services for our Friends have not yet been held.

Adult First Day School has been vibrant for many years, and with only a brief pause for the quarantine, continues to allow for in depth discussions via Zoom. We gather weekly and have largely organized around articles from Friends Journal. While the articles provide the initial focus for a gathering, the discussions range widely and have been valuable in deepening the Spirit of the Meeting.

The discussions at Adult First Day School have led to serious discussions of White Privilege and they developed into weekly public vigils on our property attesting to the Black Lives Matter movement. Our Meeting sits on a major roadway in Quakertown and our vigil has witnessed to our belief in the Equality of All. We have been encouraged by the wide support expressed by our surrounding community as

they drove by. And we have been saddened by the few that expressed their disdain for our vigil. Realizing that there is still much to do on matters of racial equality, we continue to discuss how we can be a supportive community in our locale.

With the beginning of the quarantine, our Youth First Day School has been on a hiatus as we have not worked out the details to have this part of the community via Zoom. We have only a few young people and there is a wide age distribution, so we struggle to find a way forward on this concern.

Our Meetings for Business have moved to the Zoom format and this has been effective. As a community, we are becoming more facile in utilizing the technologies that are available. Most of the Committees have also embraced Zoom and this has, in some ways, improved the functionality of our community. Since most of us live at a physical distance from the Meetinghouse, using Zoom has allowed for regular committee meetings at times that would not been considered previously.

Through the year, we have worked on our physical property. Our Property Committee has addressed many issues and taken on many projects through the year. Following years of study, it was decided to replace an aging heat system in our Schoolhouse/Social Hall with a more energy efficient unit. We have been grateful for the financial assistance that has been provided by several Friends organizations in the completion of these projects. In a continuation of a project started two years ago, we planted about a dozen more trees on our property. The tree planting not only improves our property but provided a means of social connections as Friends gathered regularly to water and maintain these plantings. In other matters, Property Committee addressed issues of maintenance such as roof and gutter repairs.

About two years ago, an informal Yoga class was started for the Meeting. As with other aspects of the Meeting, this was converted to the Zoom format and which has actually improved participation for our members. This groups gets together twice weekly for about an hour and is a further strengthening of our community.

For years Richland has provided space for “Food for Friends”, a dinner provided bi-weekly for those in need in our community. Coordinated with other socially conscious groups, we began the year feeding approximately 30 to 40 people at a sit-down meal in our Schoolhouse. This changed with the quarantine, and we began to provide “take-out” meals. As the economic stress of the quarantine increased, the number of meals provided also increased, reaching approximately 100 meals at each offering by the end of the year. For the year-end Holiday Meal, Richland Friends assembled and distributed over 100 gift bags which contained items such as knit hats, scarves, personal items, and small treats. We have been encouraged by the assistance of some of our Young Friends at several of the Food for Friends offerings.

As the year closed, we have found ourselves in a strange situation, but remarkably strong in our community. Since not everyone is comfortable with the Zoom format, we have opened our Meetinghouse for weekly worship for a small number of worshippers with protocols carefully followed. We are working to unite the Zoom Meeting with the In-Person worship electronically. We have been strengthened not only by our weekly First Day School and Meetings for Worship, but also by several Zoom Social events that have been intergenerational. Notably, our annual “Peace in Light” Meeting was held on Zoom with individuals lighting candles in their homes and a few Friends also lighting candles in the Meeting Room. We closed the year with a New Year’s Eve Zoom intergenerational gathering of stories, games and sharing. We are strong in our Spirit and are gladdened by the community we have.

Unami Monthly Meeting

While 2020 brought us a world of ZOOM and Lockdown, Unami Monthly Meeting members/attenders continued spiritual and personal journeys with renewed vigor and commitment, including:

- Helping our parents, children, grandchildren, and each other with challenges caused by COVID-19...Caring and supporting those in our community.
- Volunteering, donating, and participating in political, social justice, environmental, and pandemic related activities...Letting our voices be heard.

- Taking stock and finding gratitude for our individual circumstances and gifts.

Unami's Newsletter was truly a lifeline to all friends of Unami through the year, but especially since March, when most of our communication has been through ZOOM. The Newsletter includes Unami's calendar, business minutes, announcements, pictures of events and projects, and community outreach. We are thankful for Dan Hazelton's dedication and Marilyn's Tanka & photos. The spirit of our meeting presented itself with thoughtful pre-meeting events sponsored by Worship and Ministry and Peace and Social Concerns (see Worship and Ministry).

Last year's focus on Climate Change led to support for a Unami Carbon Forest Project and John Munro's follow-up with Abington Quarter (see Peace and Social Concern).

We updated our Plan of Organization in September, after significant research, writing, and numerous ZOOM meetings. Major changes include: a new position of Clerk in Waiting, a new Outreach Committee, and a minute related to dual membership. We also specified follow-through and documentation of child safety forms.

News of Ourselves and Membership Changes:

- In March, Unami was pleased to welcome Chuck and Leslie Erhardt as members, and their children, Liam and Donna, as associate members.
- Chris Fantozzi was married; congratulations were sent from Care and Membership.
- On other positive notes: Tom Peterson is grandfather of Charlotte Elizabeth Pod Mayer. Marietta and Randy Quinby are grandparents to Allison (Allie) Baunach.
- ZOOM has allowed us to reconnect with several friends on the west coast, including Bob and Kathy Leber, Bruce Grimes, and Geoffrey Kaiser.

Finances:

- Unami's budget for 2019-2020 was \$14,350. Our expenses were less than budgeted, ending the year at \$12,729. General Fund donations were \$12,311 with 16 contributors (down from 22 contributors in the previous year). We managed to increase our Reserve Fund by \$1,100 with a transfer from the General Fund. We contributed \$5,350 to Abington Quarter. The 2019 \$1,000 donation to Open Link was made in the Fall of 2019 as well as our 2020 \$1,000 contribution to Open Link made in April 2020.
- Unami's budget for 2020-2021 is \$14,600. Our largest expense will be to Abington Quarter (37% of our budget). Other expenses include property, insurance, a contribution to Unami's reserve, and a donation to Open Link (if affordable).
- The Audit of 2019-2020 was conducted in November by Joyce Moore and Mary Hanisch. The Audit found the Treasurer's books in good order and appreciation of the Treasurer's care and dedication noted. The Auditors and Treasurer obtained Meeting's agreement to use the services of Everence Foundation to process donations of stocks or bonds to Unami. Donations to the Carbon Forest Project will, for the time being, be handled as a separate fund account using Unami's non-profit designation. The Carbon Forest Project Manager and Clerk of Peace & Social Concerns will be informed of donations and donor information.

Worship and Ministry:

- Several Discussions included:
 - FCNL priorities: input from Unami Meeting to FCNL, led by Joyce Moore
 - Carbon Forest Project: presentation and discussion, led by John Munro
 - What Quakers Believe about God, led by Dan Hazelton
 - Reparations: information and discussion led by Joyce Munro
 - Allegiance to Gratitude, book discussion led by Cheryl Knight on a chapter in Braiding Sweetgrass by Robin Wall Kimmerer
 - Tanka Workshop with photographs, led by Marilyn Hazelton
 - Vocal Ministry in the Age of ZOOM, led by Nancy Donnelly
 - Post-Election discussion, led by Philip Donnelly

- A ZOOM Seasonal Celebration was held on December 20 at twilight, with candles, Christmas trees, and crèches in our observational windows. Messages from all ages were inspirational and welcomed. Our Seasonal Celebration monetary gift this year went to Project Home, an organization that provides services to homeless families and individuals in the Philadelphia area.

Care and Membership:

- In addition to membership changes, the Committee worked on updating the directory and has reached out to members in need.
- In lieu of a picnic or gathering, Friends met by ZOOM for an evening of social companionship in October.

Property Committee:

Since we were in Lockdown for most of the year, our workday activities were organized through sign-up genius. Tasks were performed on an individual basis. The Meetinghouse looks a little sad, as we see the results of at-home worship due to COVID-19.

Peace and Social Concerns:

- Carbon Forest Project Minute—In May, Meeting approved the following minute proposed by Peace and Social Concerns: Unami Monthly Meeting fully endorses the work of the Peace and Social Concerns Committee in its Carbon Forest Project in which the Committee proposes to provide a model for reforestation of a 5-10 acre sample plot. The committee will seek support from a variety of sources including Abington Quarter. The Peace and Social Concerns Committee and its individual members will be responsible for the fundraising and implementation of the project which will be done under the care of Unami Monthly Meeting.
- John Munro presented the Carbon Forest Project to Abington Quarter, where it was received with enthusiasm and general support.

- Members of Unami were actively involved in the 2020 primaries and elections, Courageous Conversations, Better Angels, Black Lives Matter demonstrations and other political and social organizations in this year of tumult.
- Members also focused on generous individual donations to local food pantries.

First Day School Committee

- Early in the Lockdown, friendly notes were sent to all children, providing cheer and support.
- Over the summer, parents were queried on how best to serve the needs of their children. This led to Thanksgiving Gratitude Pumpkin deliveries and other hands-on support and good cheer.
- Children were encouraged to participate in Seasonal Celebration on December 20.
- The Committee is in the process of reviewing child clearances. The Plan of Organization now specifies review of clearances on an annual basis.

Outreach

- The Duties of the Outreach Committee were approved in March, after a number of threshing sessions. The new Plan of Organization reflects the duties, including our new website.
- In June, Unami approved a minute to apply for a grant of \$500 to PYM's Membership Development Granting Group for outreach efforts. The grant will be used for Communications and Outreach, primarily the development of our website. The grant was approved by PYM over the summer. Unami will also contribute \$500 of its own funds for Communication and Outreach.
- The Committee has not met since the Spring.

United Friends School

- Nancy Donnelly retired at the end of the school year. The new UFS Head, Daena Berdougo, was Head of Gwynedd Friends School.

- Unami's close relationship with UFS will continue, as we look forward to meeting Daena.
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Upper Dublin Monthly Meeting

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

- Zoom calls to meet. Sunday worship, Tuesday evening shorter worship and 'worship sharing', Thursday evening worship.
- Upper Dublin MM and Byberry MM, both small meetings, gained synergies by having combined zoom calls.
- Quakerism 101 and Clearness 101 course/discussions held to inform attenders/new members and strengthen knowledge of existing members.
- Zoom calls have allowed physically distant members to reconnect with their heart centered Meetings.
- Increased participation at Quarterly Meetings.

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

Joys:

- Friends from physically distant places have joined worship (US West coast, NC, South America).
- Increased frequency of worship has allowed closer ties between members/attenders in a shorter period of time.
- Upper Dublin/Byberry Monthly Meetings have instituted a book club, with books based upon Quaker themes or values. Book club has participants from a number of additional Monthly Meetings that has deepened the friendships between Meetings and has allowed greater information sharing of events and sense of community.
- Abington Quarter Communications Committee meets at least weekly, which has occurred due to zoom conferencing. This increased communication has led

to enhanced web presence and sharing of ideas for in-reach/outreach for many Meetings in the Quarter.

- Using a headset has resulted in improved understanding and connection for some who are hearing impaired.

Challenges:

- Some Members/Attendees miss being in the meetinghouse
- Zoom is a challenge to some who do not have technological expertise and to others who do not feel as connected via technology vs face-to-face.
- The social side after Meeting is missing.
- Even for those with technological expertise and who are willing to join zoom calls, there can be faulty connection or audio issues.

How has our faith supported our social witness?

- Upper Dublin and Byberry Monthly Meetings have joined in preparing banners for outside the Meeting Houses regarding various social issues, eg, support of first responders, anniversary of women's suffrage, 'pray for peace, work for justice', 'let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me'.
- Members have assisted with the organization of the Philadelphia Interfaith Walk for Peace and Reconciliation and have participated in this annual event.
- How have our community members supported one another?
- We have struggled with a concern about privacy vs support when worship is in a larger virtual community vs face-to-face, where side conversations are easier.

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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/rmarkhede/>) in the yearly meeting. She enjoys connecting with people and believes that stories are the building blocks of forming a connected community.