

Concord Quarterly News

of the Religious Society of Friends

Concord Quarterly Meeting Newsletter Volume 21, Issue 1, January 2024

Committee Work (Ed. Note: Our next Quarterly Meeting at Willistown will highlight our joys and challenges of committee work.)

Toiling in the Garden: Our Committees' Need for Tender Care

My gardens are a collection of unfulfilled daydreams – from the living willow chairs we were inspired to build after visiting the Eden project in Cornwall, England, to the ferns I began propagating during the pandemic – a walk through our yard is a tour of three decades of inspirations. Seeing possibilities and experimenting with new ideas has been exciting, but reality always brings me back to a prescribed constellation of plants which naturally grow well in our wet, clay hollow, to a need to understand my micro-environment rather than attempt to amend it, and to the limitation of time.



Clerking Willistown Meeting is a parallel experience. I am captivated by our possibilities for serving the Meeting community, by our opportunity to welcome others to worship with us, and by the potential for magnifying the impact of Quakerism in the world by living our testimonies. Reality, though, reveals our need to re-learn the work of our Quaker meeting – and Friends' processes for shared work - before we can effectively fulfill any of these possibilities.

I first served as Clerk of Willistown Meeting a little more than a decade ago. Returning to this role two years ago, I was struck by how much institutional memory was lost over the course of time. Not only have transitions in our membership and committee service led to our need to relearn the purpose and function of individual committees, but also the degree to which communication habits changed during the pandemic has had a significant impact on how committees work.

Unlike my flower gardens, which do not need to nourish us and can, as a result, languish in years when my attention is called elsewhere, the Meeting needs both to function in the present moment and simultaneously to rebuild its committees for a healthy future. The primary function of Willistown Meeting is shared worship, and this continues to be rich, but to sustain this experience in the long term, we need the work of our community to be known and shared broadly.

The work we are doing to reinvigorate our committees is happening in a different environment than existed a decade ago - from existing in a hybrid (online/in-person) environment in which we do not bump into one another as often, and, therefore, do not have as many informal opportunities to discuss the work of the Meeting, to having a smaller population of regular attenders. Our committees need to find creative ways to meet their traditional goals, and they need to identify goals which have arisen in our post-pandemic community.

Quarterly Meeting in January, hosted by Willistown Meeting, will focus on bringing committee clerks and members together to share the roses and thorns of their work. What successes have you experienced that you can share with other Meetings in the Quarter, and what concerns do we face so that we can work together on solving creatively? Our Meetings are all trying

to do similar work, but we do not have to problem solve individually.

Current plans call for Pastoral Care/Care & Counsel, First Day School, Burial Grounds, Worship & Ministry, and Property Committee members to meet as groups, as well as Meeting Clerks. Please be in touch with your Meeting Clerk or with Betsy Swan (willistownfriendsmeeting@gmail.com) if you would like to ask for an additional committee group to meet. Please also begin thinking about the thorns and roses of your committee work; your questions will drive the conversation at Quarterly Meeting.
– Betsy Swan – Willistown Meeting

Excerpt from “Committees of the Meeting” in Faith & Practice

Meetings have found it useful to identify specific needs and assign them to committees. Committee responsibilities, as described below, include caring for the meeting's members (and their spiritual development), its meeting for worship, its property and other resources, and its religious education, outreach and social action. Meeting committees, or their clerks, may occasionally meet together to assess the meeting's programs and activities, recognizing both what has been done well and what needs to be completed or done better. (See Section VII. Guidelines for a Spiritual Self-assessment of the Meeting and the Meeting Checklist.)

In addition to fulfilling designated functions, committees also serve the



meeting by preparing for decisions to be made at the monthly meeting for business. They identify the issues, gather useful

information, and make seasoned recommendations. The meeting can then focus on the issues and, with divine assistance, discern what needs to be done.

Committees form the structure of the meeting and do the meeting's work. The committees most commonly established by meetings can be identified according to the work they do. Larger meetings may further divide these tasks and add more committees, while smaller meetings may combine tasks and assign them to fewer committees, or to a “committee of the whole.” ...

... Friends have been reluctant to deviate from the tradition of volunteer service that has marked the Religious Society of Friends from its beginnings. As they work together for the meeting, volunteers often find their religious lives mutually strengthened, their sense of community deepened, and their commitment to the meeting affirmed. These dividends of participation diminish when they find themselves overcommitted. Some meetings have found themselves strengthened when they have employed staff to perform a few essential functions, such as child care, coordination of First Day School programs, secretarial work, and maintenance of buildings and grounds. But Friends do not ordinarily receive compensation for their service to the meeting without express authorization by the meeting in advance. Compensated service remains a limited exception to the presumption of volunteer participation and service.

www.pym.org/faith-and-practice/faith-reflected-organization/friends-meetings/committees-of-the-meeting/

At the October Quarterly Meeting, the Climate Action Working Group was laid down as no one was able to step forward to lead the group. We encourage all CQ members and attenders to sign up to get climate related information from these two other Quaker organizations:

Eco-Justice Collaborative of PYM <https://www.pym.org/eco-justice-collaborative/> This collaborative hosts workshops and engages Meetings on climate, race and justice issues. **Quaker Action Mid-Atlantic Region** - Friends from Philadelphia Yearly Meeting have formed a new lobbying organization to advocate for tackling climate change at the state and regional levels. Quaker Action in the Mid-Atlantic Region (QAMAR) is a 501(c)(4) group that seeks to communicate to elected officials the urgency of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and funding conversion to clean energy. <https://www.quakeract.org/>

Concord Monthly Meeting Grows a Montessori School



Concord Monthly Meeting is fortunate to have formed an alliance with Spicebush Montessori School that offers a 3-6 yr.-old preschool program incorporating Quaker education into the Montessori curriculum. The School opened in January 2023 with nine students, and now has seventeen. The Meeting and the School cooperated in renovating the old nursery school rooms and added a sink and bathroom to the space to bring it up to current code, a necessity for school licensing in Pennsylvania. The renovation has brought new

life to the building, and we invite Friends to visit.

The school incorporates a co-op feature to help parents buy into their children's education while they assist the school without spending its money. This may translate to helping around the meetinghouse and possibly visiting a meeting for worship although only some families have shown interest. The following excerpt from the Spicebush Facebook Page is an example of how well Quaker education blends with Montessori philosophy.

Improving Burial Ground Recordkeeping

Willistown Meeting is investigating ways to improve burial ground recordkeeping, and it invites other Meetings in the Quarter to join the exploration if they have a similar desire to improve their own burial ground recordkeeping.

Until about 15 years ago, burial ground recordkeeping at Willistown was entirely paper-based. A large graphic map showed the locations of burial plots with associated names, reservations, payments and interments. This map helped people to visualize the burial ground. A separate ledger was headed by row location and listed the same information as the map. The handwriting on both of these records was sometimes hard to read and faded.

Willistown Meeting had a fire in their library some years ago. Fortunately, the paper burial ground records were kept in the basement, and they survived the fire, but their vulnerability was clear. Seeing this, the Meeting found a computer-adept person to enter the burial information into an Excel spreadsheet. One improvement of the spreadsheet was that now burial plots could be searched by a person's name as well as by their location. This was a major leap forward, but problems remained.

Today, the old paper plot map and ledger are still kept current by one member of the Burial Grounds Committee. Also, the Excel spreadsheet is kept current by the same member of the Burial Grounds Committee. Whenever a burial plot is reserved or an interment takes place, information is entered in 3 different places – the map, the ledger, and the spreadsheet.

The current method does not guarantee freedom from mistakes and omissions. It has never attempted to track and record accurately complete payment history. It does not allow for public access to any of the information for people doing genealogical research. But it does require a skilled person to enter, save and sort the data, and to share the latest data with the Meeting on a regular basis.

The Willistown Burial Grounds Committee is looking to update, improve and streamline its recordkeeping in ways that will benefit families, funeral directors, and volunteer members of the Burial Grounds Committee and the Meeting as a whole. A subscription-based, cloud-based solution could do all of this, and it would replace the paper map, the ledger, and the spreadsheet. Costs would be covered from Burial Grounds endowment income and burial fees.

“At Spicebush we consider the values of S.P.I.C.E.S. as often as we can: social justice, peace, inclusion, environment, and simplicity.

Today, September 21, 2023, Spicebush Montessori School observed International Day of Peace. We each had the opportunity to walk in our outdoor labyrinth (inspired by Dr. Montessori's red rods labyrinth) and be in nature. We also discussed the concept of being a kind human.

This year, [United Nations] Secretary-General António Guterres said: “Peace is needed today more than ever. War and conflict are unleashing devastation, poverty, and hunger, and driving tens of millions of people from their homes. Climate chaos is all around, and even peaceful countries are gripped by gaping inequalities and political polarization.”

Last year we reflected on how we can all be a part of ending racism, which was Guterres' call to action then. Now, we continue to reflect on social justice, but to achieve justice each of us must take actionable steps:

- Avoid being silent.
- Start conversations.
- Change the narratives.

Today we light a candle for peace. Today we create a world where “all” can thrive. “

– Elizabeth Varley – Concord Monthly Meeting

Requirements and desirable features identified so far include:

- On-line browser-based, password-protected access
- Burial site look-up 1) by name, 2) by plot
- Visual display / map of the entire burial ground (to replace the paper map)
- Ability to handle ashes of multiple people buried in one plot.
- Ability to reserve spots, including generating invoices in a standard format.
- Ability to record payments for reserved spots including name of payor, date, check number.
- An “undo reservation” function for people who have lost contact with the meeting.
- Ability to locate empty plots to assist with the reservation process (for example, someone who wants to be buried near other family members)
- Ability to record the burial method (e.g., full casket, cremation, etc.)
- Ability to record name of the deceased including former names (e.g., maiden name)
- Option to record cause of death.
- Ability to record funeral director and party responsible for interment.
- Ability to add notes.
- Automatic backup and restore of data by the software vendor.
- Ability to import data from Excel to initialize the system
- Ability to export data to Excel to allow us to change software vendors in the future.
- Nice to have – Ability to add photos of deceased.
- Nice to have – GPS coordinates for grave sites.
- Nice to have – Google Maps overlay to help find grave sites.
- Nice to have – limited, secured public access to help outside researchers find where people are buried.

There may be other requirements or desired features that have not yet been identified.

If your Meeting members would like to join in the investigation, please attend the upcoming Quarterly Meeting at Willistown or email the Clerk of the Willistown Burial Grounds Committee, Susan Ploeg at susan.m.ploeg@gmail.com or Ron Ploeg at rploeg@verizon.net. – Ron Ploeg – Willistown Monthly Meeting

Israel/Palestine: Conflict and Reason for Hope

The recent surge in violence in the Middle East is a stark reminder that the root causes of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have yet to be resolved. The brutal October 7 Hamas attack on Israeli communities and the devastating bombing and ground assault of Gaza by Israel make it challenging for people to feel empathy with the “opposite” side. People on all sides are grieving the loss of loved ones and feeling deeply the pains of war.

Several Quaker organizations quickly united around an [October 17 statement](#) addressing the situation and seeking a more productive way forward. As the Israel-Hamas war continued to rage, Westtown Monthly Meeting approved a [November 19 statement](#) joining [AFSC](#), [FCNL](#), [QUNO](#) and British and Canadian Friends in calling for an immediate ceasefire, release of hostages, and humanitarian access in Gaza, as well as actions to address the injustice of military occupation and the inequalities underlying the conflict.

We also encouraged individuals in the Meeting community, as led, to sign an October 12 [Palestinian-Jewish Solidarity Statement](#). Following the late November shooting in Vermont of three Ramallah Friends School graduates, the Meeting offered this [message](#) to the gun violence victims, their school communities, and our elected officials.

Westtown Meeting has prioritized Middle East peace work for years, and individuals within the Meeting community have personal experience with the Israeli-Palestine conflict going back decades. We are connected to the [Quaker Palestine-Israel Network \(OPIN\)](#), a group of Friends from across the country who suggested that monthly meetings join the October Quaker organizations statement. The Peace and Justice Committee at Westtown united around seeking the full Meeting-community’s approval, which was forthcoming at the November monthly meeting for business.

In making our stand known, we unite with American Quakers who have a long and rich history of involvement in Palestine and Israel, highlights of which are in a [timeline](#) compiled by the PYM Middle East Collaborative.

AFSC’s message since the 1940s has been there is no military solution to the conflict and that the focus must be on diplomacy leading to a political

solution. That wisdom is the catalyst behind [AFSC’s current guidance](#) to those of us who wish to deepen our understanding and take action.

Our spiritual grounding at Westtown Monthly Meeting with respect to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is centered in our testimonies on peace and equality, as well as on lifting up that only a future based on [shared security](#) and human rights for all people will bring peace and result in the beloved community we seek. We draw on [PYM’s guidance on Friends and Peace Witness in the World](#), which references the peace testimony of early English Friends made in their Declaration to King Charles II in 1660, including their desire that “*all people, out of all different judgments and professions might be brought into love and unity with God and one with another, and that they might all come to witness the prophet’s words, who said, ‘Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more’ (Is 2:4; Mic 4:3)*”

Ultimately, we find ourselves in unity with the lessons learned from 75 years of conflict: that war is not the answer, and that revenge and retaliation will only result in more violence and suffering. We celebrate the fact that there are Israelis and Palestinians who have chosen the path of working together, grounded in nonviolence and based in joint advocacy and activism to end the Israeli military occupation of the West Bank and blockade of Gaza. Such organizations include [Combatants for Peace](#) and [Parents Circle-Families Forum](#), among others. We also draw inspiration from organizations like [Community Peacemaker Teams](#) and [Nonviolence International](#).

Negotiating and implementing a political solution acceptable to Palestinians and Israelis will be extremely difficult. An essential first step is upholding international law and ending the Israeli military occupation that has been in effect since 1967. A way forward grounded in the principle of equality and based on freedom and restorative justice for both Palestinians and Israelis will help ensure that a resolution of the major outstanding issues of refugees, Jerusalem, political borders, and control of natural resources is ultimately successful and turns the darkness of war into the light of peace. – *Jonathon Evans & other members – Westtown Meeting*

West Chester Area Refugee Resettlement Project Update

Welcoming our newcomers - On November 7, 2023, WCARRP team members were delighted to welcome Roberto and Michel, a young Colombian couple, to our community.

After being greeted at Philadelphia International, the exhausted and hungry pair enjoyed a lovely meal that had been prepared by two team members at Roberto and Michel’s West Chester apartment. Donated furniture, household goods, and toiletries and a stocked pantry created a warm and welcoming space.

The following days were a blur of activity as Roberto and Michel were taken on several orientation walks around West Chester; introduced to stores; assisted in applying for SNAP and Medicaid; completed a refugee domestic medical exam at an authorized clinic; obtained phone and internet service; received donated clothing and shopped for a few necessary items; started ESL tutoring at home and registered for classes; and began in-person and online employment searches and submitted applications.

Not yet having full-time employment, Roberto and Michel were pleased to be contracted by a community member to do a yard-and-home maintenance job, which they completed, and thereby earned some income.

Not all was toil though. Accompanied by team members, Roberto and Michel very much enjoyed viewing the West Chester Christmas Parade and Longwood Gardens’ Christmas displays.

Already living with the trauma of having to flee one’s homeland and the grief of leaving family behind, refugees, upon arriving in their new country, are then faced with the disorientation of being thrust into a wholly unfamiliar environment—with different weather, different food, different cultural expectations, and a different language. Roberto and Michel have demonstrated remarkable resilience and grace in the face of these challenges.



The WCARRP team - The West Chester Area Refugee Resettlement Project began at Birmingham Meeting in 2015. Birmingham members were joined by other Christian, Jewish, and Muslim faith communities. WCARRP first partnered with Church World Service, a government-authorized agency, to resettle a seven-member Congolese family and, later, with the Asylum Seekers Sponsorship Project, to assist a Ugandan asylum seeker.

Beginning in April 2023, WCARRP members spent six months organizing and developing the detailed Welcome Plan that is a central requirement for obtaining certification as a Private Sponsor Group from Welcome Corps. Welcome Corps is a U.S. Department of State program that was launched in January 2023 to empower everyday Americans to help refugees rebuild their lives in the U.S. WCARRP was certified by Welcome Corps in September, and blessed with our newcomers’ arrival on November 7.

The team is divided into task groups that take responsibility for such things as housing, food acquisition, clothing, documentation, employment, health care, transportation, ESL instruction, interpretation, and fundraising. Currently there are 19 task group members, about half of whom are members of Birmingham Monthly Meeting. Others are members of Westminster Presbyterian Church and the Unitarian Congregation of West Chester or are not religiously affiliated. In addition, there is a larger support network of about 50 individuals who are members of Westminster Presbyterian Church, the Unitarian Congregation of West Chester, Calvary Lutheran Church, Kesher Isael Congregation, the Islamic Society of Chester County, Hopewell Methodist Church, and Westtown, West Chester, and Kendal Monthly Meetings.

Interested community members can join the WCARRP Facebook group for information and updates. Donations can be made by check to Birmingham Friends Meeting, PO Box 175, Pocopson, PA, 19366-9998, with “refugee resettlement” written on the memo line OR online through PayPal at <https://www.paypal.com/US/fundraiser/charity/1486101>.

– *Susan Brodesser – Birmingham Monthly Meeting*

Concord Quarter January 2024 Announcements & Calendar of Events

Announcements

The 2024-2025 Student Tuition Financial Assistance Application of Concord Quarterly Meeting - The deadline for application is February 29, 2024. The form is posted at: <https://concordquarter.org/documents/?category=Tuition>

The West Chester Area Refugee Resettlement Project update - The project has now welcomed a couple from Columbia, Roberto and Michel. They have settled into an apartment in West Chester. They are doing well. Financial assistance is welcome: <https://www.paypal.com/US/fundraiser/charity/1486101> Susan Brodesser at be_still@verizon.net for info.

Draft minutes of our October 2023 Quarterly Meeting are on the CQM website:

<https://concordquarter.org/documents/?category=Minutes> Please send any comments to the temporary Recording Clerk, Rich Ailes, at railesjr@ailesdodson.org by January 22, 2024.

Concord Quarter is continuing to look for a part time coordinator. All inquiries for job description and salary information should be sent to concordqmqsearch@gmail.com

Calendar of Events

- January 8 7 - 8 pm** **FGC - Meeting for Worship for Newcomers and Seekers** - online - aims to support Friends and seekers new to Quakerism. This program will introduce Newcomers to Quaker worship practices as well as allow them to ask questions and reflect on their experiences with Friends from the seasoned to the seeking.
<https://www.fgcquaker.org/event/newcomers-worship/>
- January 8 7:30 pm** **Walking in the World as a Friend Discussion & Practice Group** - Part 1 of a 3 part series using Nadine Hoover text which lays out the three jobs all Friends take on when we begin to follow the Quaker path—minister, steward, and witness.
<https://quakerrecollaborative.org/walking-friend-practice-group>
- January 8 7:30 pm** **Pendle Hill - Addressing Patterns of Racial Wounding and Racial Justice in Quaker Communities** - A First Monday Lecture with Lauren Brownlee and Zenaida Peterson. Free but registration required.
<https://pendlehill.org/events/addressing-patterns-of-racial-wounding-and-racial-justice-in-quaker-communities/>
- January 12 @ 6:00 pm - January 14 @ 12:00 pm** **PYM - Young Adult Friends Winter Retreat: "Being a Friend in the World"** - Calling Young Adult Friends, ages 18 through 35, to the Winter Retreat! The theme for this retreat is "Being a Friend in the World," and we will explore ideas of how to lead our lives as Friends with integrity and purpose. Please Register by January 10!
<https://www.pym.org/event/young-adult-friends-winter-retreat-being-a-friend-in-the-world/>
- January 18 7:00 pm** **Community Choice Aggregation: Boroughs are Ready for 100%**- PYM's Environmental Justice Collaborative presents talk by the CCA for PA team will provide an overview of CCA, introduce participants to local leaders from the five boroughs that have already signed. John McKinstry, member Swarthmore Meeting is one of the presenters.
<https://www.pym.org/event/community-choice-aggregation-boroughs-are-ready-for-100/>
- January 18 8 - 9 pm** **Intro to Advocacy with FCNL** - Online - Join in for an engaging and informative session on how you can effectively advocate for the issues that matter most to you. FCNL staffers Jessica Bahena & Tim Heishman will lead the training. More info and register here: <https://www.fcnl.org/events/intro-advocacy-fcnl-2>
- January 21 4 - 6:00 pm** **Roots of Injustice, Seeds of Change: Toward Right Relationship with Native Peoples** - Part 2 of 3 part series. In this 2-hour participatory program, we experience the history of the colonization of Turtle Island, the land that is now known as the United States. More info & Register here: <https://friendspeaceteams.org/trr-workshop-jan-2024/>
- January 25 6:30-8:30 pm** **PYM-Nourishing Spirit-led Action in Climate: a conversation and online potluck** - The Climate Witness Stewards invite you to an Online Climate Change Potluck where we can share concerns about the Earth and find ways to support and inspire one another to be part of the solution.
<https://www.pym.org/event/nourishing-spirit-led-action-in-climate-a-conversation-and-online-potluck/>
- January 27 10:00 am - 3:30 pm** **PYM-Thread Gathering: Governance & Stewardship / Property Issues** - Burial grounds, Greening our Meetings, Safety & Security, Joys and Challenges with Stewardship. Registration and more info here:
<https://www.pym.org/event/thread-gathering-governance-stewardship-property-issues/>
- January 28 8:30 am - 1:15 pm** **Concord Quarterly Meeting for Business & Program: Sharing Our Committee Work with One Another** - At Willistown Meeting. The focus will be on bringing clerks and members together to share their work.
<https://concordquarter.org/nextqmq-pastqmq/2024/qmq-at-willistown>
- February 4 1:00 pm** **Concord Quarter Planning Committee: In Person at TBD.** Open to all folks interested in the workings of the Quarter. Contact concordquarter@pym.org for location
- February 7 10:30 am to 12** **Concord Quarter's Working Group on Aging Concerns via Zoom:** Meetings are open to anyone interested in aging concerns in the Quarter. Contact the coordinator email address for more information and the Zoom link at concordquarter@pym.org
- February 17 7-9 pm** **Concord Quarter's Intergenerational Square Dance at Willistown Meeting** - Live Band and Caller. All ages welcomed and encouraged. Refreshments served. An annual fun time for over ten years.
<https://concordquarter.org/special-events/2024/cmq-square-dance-willistown>

Concord Quarterly Meeting In-Person at Willistown Meeting January 28, 2024



8:30-9:45 am Concord Quarter Meeting for Business
10:00 – 11:00 Meeting for Worship
11:15 – 12:15 Program: Small Group Discussion on our Meetings' Committees.
12:15 – 1:15 Lunch



Sharing Our Committee Work with One Another

How are your committees doing? A smooth ride or are there bumps in that road to community we all cherish? Quarterly Meeting in January will focus on bringing committee clerks and members together to share their work. What successes have you experienced that you can share with other Meetings in the Quarter, and what concerns do you face that we can work together on to problem solve creatively? Our Meetings are all trying to do similar work. It is time to share what is working and what is not.

Small Discussion Groups and facilitators will be available for the following committees:

**Pastoral Care/Care & Counsel • First Day School • Burial Grounds
Worship & Ministry • Property Committee • Meeting Clerks**

Childcare and Children's Programming will Not be available for this QM.

For more info, email concordquarter@pym.org
Event Website: <https://concordquarter.org/nextqm-pastqm/2024/qm-at-willistown>
7069 Goshen Road Newtown Square, PA, 19073

Concord Quarter at Westtown October 29, 2023 Minutes of Combined Business Meeting and Planning Committee

Opening Worship - The clerk asked the meeting to approve Rich Ailes as the temporary recording clerk - Meeting approved

Welcome to Newcomers – The clerk asked if there were anyone new to the Meeting for Business who would like to introduce themselves. As no newcomers were present the meeting proceeded.

Monthly Meeting Count was taken - Birmingham, Goshen, Middletown, Westtown, Willistown, Wilmington. Concord and West Chester representatives were not present.

Approval of Agenda The agenda as presented was approved with some revisions.

Approval of Minutes from July 23, 2023, at Birmingham was requested. These minutes were approved.

Welcome Corp Refugee Program Report (attached) - Susan Brodesser reported in addition to the attached report, the group is searching for an apartment for the couple from Columbia hoping to find something for \$1500 / month. This is a Spanish speaking couple so this may help with employment opportunities. The group plans one year of support for the couple. One of the members of the group will host the couple till they find lodging. AirBnB may provide a grant but there is an issue with government needing to know address location of the housing immediately. The acting coordinator will send out a fundraising appeal to CQM email lists at the end of November.

Joys and Challenges Report from Middletown Meeting (attached) - Meeting accepted with gratitude the report from Middletown Meeting presented by member Chris Stern.

Nominating Committee report - Rich Ailes, clerk of Nominating brought forward the name of Steve Kupferschmid of Willistown Meeting to serve on the Delaware Valley Friends School Care Relationship committee. It is a 3-year term that will end June 2026. Ginny Sutton and Susan Brodesser are the other members of this committee. **Meeting approved the appointment with gratitude.** Nominating Committee is searching for a recording clerk to fill an immediate vacancy and a treasurer to begin at the July 2024. The current members of the Quarter Nominating Committee are Julie Senko (Birmingham), Lisa Vosburg (West Chester), Peter Lane (Westtown) and clerk Rich Ailes (Middletown)

Climate Action Working Group (CAWG) - Paula Kline updated the Meeting on the status of the group. She had submitted the request to lay down the Quarter's working group after conducting several successful events along with the PYM Ecojustice collaborative. There have been requests put out for someone to step forward as the leadership of this group but no one has taken up the request. A Friend asked that getting alerts from the Ecojustice Collaborative be made known through an email using the CM email lists. **Friends approved that the working group be laid down with much appreciation to the group for their work. Paula Kline will send a letter to the coordinator to be posted on the group web page and be emailed out to the CQM email lists. Also, an article addressing this will be placed in the next CQM newsletter.**

Working Group on Aging Concerns – Rich Ailes reported the Working Group continues to meet the first Wednesday of the month. Interest remains strong amongst a small group. The group is currently handling clerking duties on a month-to-month basis. The group is currently planning a Zoom presentation on Driving Concern and Seniors.

Small Meeting Support - Debbie Murray-Shepard reported the October 19 Zoom session was well attended with 19 participants including Friends from the Quarter's small meetings. The Small Meeting notes should be sent out to the CQM email lists at the next Announcements email. David Leonard and David Jones from Birmingham are offering their support regarding legal issues which Goshen is experiencing. Sallie Welte of Goshen welcomed their support.

Birmingham noted the addition of an attender who came to a pollinator garden event. Also, someone who'd been to the Meeting's grounds for a non-meeting event also came to worship. The Zoom session was well appreciated by those attending, although a concern was raised that we didn't address what it is that we have to offer newcomers. Another noted that we need to have a consistent group of participants show up each week to keep that sense of community going. How do we help people be consistently connected? Zoom does not facilitate the social interaction needed to make this happen. Is a food social after Meeting helpful? Yes! How about emphasizing the joy of ministry or the call to speak. Birmingham had a Meeting for Poetry instead of Meeting for Worship. Is it time to be thinking out of the box? The clerk asked what the next thing is to be done. **It was proposed another Zoom session on Small Meeting support at the call of the clerk. This was approved.**

Treasurer's Reports (attached) - Charles Spadoni presented the treasurer's report. There was a question regarding who is eligible for tuition grants. Any child who is a member, or any child who has a least one parent or a guardian who is a member, of one of the Quarter's constituent monthly meetings other than Wilmington MM (which decided not to participate in the Quarter's tuition assistance payment program), who is in a grade from kindergarten to 12th, and who attends a Quaker school that is recognized as such by the Friends Council on Education. The treasurer's report was accepted with appreciation.

Review of October Program at Westtown – Friends present overwhelmingly felt a wonderful Meeting for Worship occurred with the children present during the whole worship. The only suggestion lifted up was that children should be given the play materials after the Faith & Play session as they did not seem to be paying attention to the presentation.

Planning for Quarterly Meeting at Willistown – Betsy Swan, clerk of Willistown, presented the Meeting's suggestion that the program for next Quarterly Meeting be a working time for Friends and attenders from all the Meetings share their joys and challenges which their individual committees are currently having. This suggestion was approved. Schedule for the meeting is as follows:

Meeting for Business 8:30 to 9:45
Meeting for Worship 10:00 to 11:00
Program 11:15 to 12:15
Lunch 12:15 to 1:15

After a discussion of timing of the next planning committee Friends approved going back to earlier format where the business of the Quarter would occur at the beginning of this Quarterly Meeting. The Quarterly Meeting Planning committee would occur the following week at the Hickman.

Suggestions for the next QM newsletter were offered: QM emphasis article – How can committee work support the beloved community, Article on graveyard management, reaction to Meeting for Worship at Westtown, a CAWG update, an article on the West Chester Area Refugee Resettlement Project, and an article on LBGTQ+ welcoming.

The minutes of the Meeting were read and approved. A 2nd Monthly Meeting Count was taken - Birmingham, Goshen, Middletown, Westtown, Willistown, Wilmington. Concord and West Chester representatives were not present.

Debbie Murray-Sheppard, Clerk

Rich Ailes Temporary Recording Clerk

Reports

West Chester Area Refugee Resettlement Project report for QM at Westtown

After six months of planning, preparing a detailed Welcome Plan, and submitting our application to the U.S. State Department's Welcome Corps program, the West Chester Area Refugee Resettlement Project is pleased to report that we were certified as a Private Sponsor Group on September 28, 2023. We were matched with two Colombian refugees, a married couple, aged 29 and 23, on October 5, and on October 20 received notice that they will arrive on November 7. The couple speak, read, and write Spanish; they have no English language skills.

We've raised about half the money we estimate will be needed to ensure our couple will be supported until they are able to support themselves. The actual amount will primarily depend on how quickly our newcomers can get jobs. Team members have been working on securing and furnishing initial housing, gathering clothing, and planning initial meals and stocking the pantry. After arrival we will be assisting our newcomers in obtaining Social Security numbers and Employment Authorization, finding employment, connecting with government and local resources (e.g., for food, medical care, ESL classes), and becoming familiar with American culture and our community. - Susan Brodesser, coordinator - WCARRP

Joys and Challenges Report October 2023 - Middletown Monthly Meeting

Note: this is an amended report of the Spiritual State of the Meeting report sent to PYM in April 2023

Our Worship and Care Committee meets monthly and reviews the status and needs of our aging members and attenders and outreach is made to offer assistance as needed. We continue to offer hybrid worship, in person and on Zoom to accommodate the needs of our members and attenders. We have strengthened the technical aspects of our Zoom worship so that there is better and more consistent connection.

The Meeting dealt with the way our majority European-centric culture approaches our indigenous peoples by providing a Quarterly Meeting program that informed us of PYM's First Contact Reconciliation Collaborative work to enhance respect and dignity for tribal nations that exist and thrive in the present. It also highlighted past colonial events which forced indigenous peoples out of their homelands. One member wrote an article for our Quarterly Meeting newsletter demonstrating how the influx of Quaker settlers did this for our own Lenape people in the 17th and 18th century. Four of our members also attended an exhibition of indigenous photographer Will Wilson at the Delaware Art Museum which portrayed negative stereotypical images of Native peoples alongside present-day images which gave a more respectful presentation of their lives.

We strive for our meeting to be good stewards of God's creation and God's loving presence in our greater community in times of disaster and recovery. Although our meetinghouse is not equipped to offer temporary shelter to disaster victims, we can be a resource to our community in other ways: a gathering space for worship/meditation, prayer vigils, healing services, support and relief to emergency responders (coffee, soup, etc). The Meeting collaborated with our township emergency management department to develop a disaster preparedness plan for our meeting property and offered our assistance to first responders if the need arises. We participated in educational workshops hosted by Concord Quarter Climate Action Working Group (CAWG) appointing Climate Witness Liaisons to this group.

Our focus and deep concern always is to ground our actions in faith. We are aware we can't will our way to spiritual health on our own by trying to perform our testimonies without the power that is available to us through Christ. To that end, eight adult education classes were held to discern the question "What did Jesus query?" from the accounts of Mark's gospel and Luke's gospel in May and June of 2022 and Matthew's gospel and Luke's gospel in October and November 2022.

Our meeting is very small, and discussion is ongoing related to growth and sustainability of our meeting. The worship and Care committee used the booklet *Grow Your Meeting* from Friends General Conference as a basis for this discussion. What is God calling our meeting to do with energy, love and caring? We continue to take opportunities for prayer and sincere soul searching on this question.

Additional items of note since this statement was approved. The Meeting took savings from our tree fund and purchased and planted 7 native shrubs to create a pollinator garden. The Meeting hosted its annual Middletown Day which included a luncheon potluck attended by about 20 members and attenders held after our June 5 Meeting for Worship. We supported Chris Stern's leading to travel in the UK accompanying Oxford Meeting member Matt Rosen as an elder in support of Matt's travel in the ministry. The Meeting used a grant from the PYM's Quaker Building & Projects Granting Group to replace the roofing on its social room and outside front porch. We had an emergency replacement of the Meeting room boiler at a cost of \$8,000. We recently had Paul Indorf, former member of PYM's Membership Development group, come and lead a discussion of our Meeting's outreach needs. - Submitted by Rich Ailes - Clerk

Editor's Note: For unredacted Treasurer's report please email concordquarter@pym.org

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