

Abington Quarterly Meeting – State of the Meeting Report- Calendar Year 2019

Friends in Abington Quarter have consistently affirmed their faith. They have carried an energy that moves as witness through the transforming power of community. Again in 2019, we have extended our reach, seeking ever-wider compassionate space.

Our sensibilities are continually drawn to paying attention: to work through discernment, to rest in prayer and then to work again. With the intention of supporting diversity of spiritual growth in a unified community, worship and ministry opens ways for keeping a living faith among us: reconfiguring children's FDS at Abington and Gwynedd, introducing music as worship at Plymouth and Abington. Bible study, readings and spiritual nurture groups are cradling richness across all our Meetings. Space has opened for centering and worship in gratifying ways. Mid-week worship bridges time constraints. Focused worship has taken Friends to meetings for healing at Gwynedd and Plymouth. A Contemplative Saturday retreat at Plymouth added tangibility to spiritual practices. At Abington, a women's meeting for worship is attending to diverse needs. In Meetings with fewer participants, Friends continue to support each other in quieting prayer and generous fellowship.

Our Meetings have opened worship space to Buddhist, Jewish and Baptist groups, with room to spare for Alcoholic and Narcotics Anonymous, Audubon Society, and a Homeopathic Study Group. Abington and Norristown each lease space to day-care centers, one dedicated to autism. Norristown gathers with folks from Upper Providence Meeting in periodic worship and seasonal celebration. Our Pottstown WG and our aging Foulkeways WG continue to follow the call to their place in time.

Honoring our Meetings, we face the challenge of revitalizing our meetinghouses while preserving their historic integrity. In addition to scheduled and surprise maintenance in all our Meetings, Horsham has worked double-time, securing their home Meeting as well as the now vacant Warminster meetinghouse. Gwynedd, Plymouth and Unami have added attractively workable enhancements to both inside and outside property. Abington and Byberry are envisioning broad-scale renovation that will carry into the coming year. The ability to fund these projects weighs heavily upon member donations, capital campaigns and zero interest loans, forcing clear plans for resource and asset allocation.

Commitment beyond our own buildings has brought several Meetings to set precedents in community outreach. Norristown Meeting has supported the leading of one member to build affordable housing units in the Norristown area. AQ Home & Care Committee has offered a Letter of Interest as endorsement, looking to the prospect of funding from an outside source.

Unami Meeting has created a program, "Courageous Conversations", based on the NPR radio offering "Better Conversations – A Starter Guide". Unami Friends, in association with their local ministerium, have facilitated sessions in their surrounding community for opening human understanding across socio-economic and cultural differences. This Spring, Abington Quarter offered

a Saturday session to our membership which was well attended and well received at Horsham Meeting.

Upper Dublin Meeting hosts a monthly sharing session and dinner at their meetinghouse for young girls in residence at Carson Valley. This facility in Fort Washington provides housing and nurture for teens at risk. At UDMM, the girls begin to learn good nutrition by helping with dinner and to recognize social values by sharing on topics of self-esteem, goal setting, and envisioning their future.

Moving in equal force, we have conveyed statements supporting national and global, social and environmental justice. Our Quarter's meetings for worship to attend to business have engaged timely leads. We learned about the values and needs for sustaining our planet through resource preservation and alternative practices. We endorsed, and forwarded to FCNL, a minute of concern to stop abuses in family detention at our southern border. We joined the call to end cash bail in Montgomery Co. We endorsed legislation on behalf of the Climate Change Lobby. A presentation by Laurel House made us more acutely aware of domestic violence and its prevention. By their discerning gifts, members among us shared their individual awakenings. We supported the Norristown initiative to build affordable housing. We marked our calendars for the Richard Moore dedication, recalling the abolitionist cause in Richland. We pre-sampled "Courageous Conversations", listening to understand ourselves.

Late in the year our Quarter approved forming a new AQ Communications Committee. They are tasked with pursuing the possibility of a common web platform: one that would allow efficient access to our Quarter's vision, practices and activities, both for inquirers and for ourselves. In the past year many of our Meetings enhanced their on-line presence in various ways. This broader approach is viewed as a seminal step forward.

From within our Meetings, many gatherings added dimension to our broader community. "Sundays at Seven" at Abington, "Gathering Garden" at Gwynedd, "Light Group" at Richland, "Unplug & Recharge" at Upper Dublin and Byberry are among our Quarter's on-going sharing groups. Hospitality has translated into "Soup Sunday", "Food for Friends", "Friendly 4th" and "Friendly Eats". Moving further into our neighborhoods, we interface with Better Angels, Face to Face, Open Link, Fortniters, Kelly School Library, Interfaith Housing Alliance, Horsham Interfaith Council, Mothers in Charge and our local ministeriums. Friends have participated in Interfaith Peace Walk, Women's March, Peace Vigil, and, this year, Abington hosted the annual World Day of Prayer.

Our Quarter's committees have supported the good works of our membership. AQ Worship & Ministry committee continues to offer spiritual and convivial support; visiting monthly meetings and sharing conversation as may be led. Attending committee is a way to recognize and connect with the engagements and resources of our monthly meetings.

AQ Home & Care committee is easing life care concerns through financial support to members. Our administrator encourages conversation on available services, community facilities, and end-of-life care. AQ Trustees have maintained our allocation in FF Consolidated and Green Funds. Green Fund is

held in the hope that it will, in time perform as well as the Consolidated Fund and in faith create a cleaner planet. Our Trustees Treasurer informed us that drawdowns from one of our funds for aging are exceeding income – a portent of times to come as we all live into older age. Our AQ Fund committee gave us timely responses to our monthly meeting needs. AQ Representatives committee shared Meeting updates and helped set our agendas.

AQ Youth Conferences allowed JFC and MSFC young people another season of sessions at George School under the banner “We Are Friends”. In June, participants played games, learned crafts and skills and grew together in life-long f/Friendships. In the Fall, our Quarter vigorously approved a minute of appreciation for our conference directors as they step down to make space for new leadership.

In noticing the span of years that surrounds us, intergenerational ties become vital. This past summer, Abington and Gwynedd each hosted intergenerational game nights. Richland brought kids’ crafts to the Arts Alive Festival in Quakertown. MLK Jr Day is celebrated at Abington as voices of all ages join in poetry, reflection and song. Horsham opens the Spring season with an FDS picnic and in the Fall, Gwynedd carved pumpkins. We also remember that our Quarter’s annual picnic is a grand time for barbeque, nature walks, games and fellowship. Early in the year at AQ meeting for business, we were delighted to hear from Abington Meeting’s Youth Committee. Formed from middle and high school age, these young people seek to deepen their spiritual awareness while reaching for community connections.

Our Quaker Schools - United Friends School, the Quaker School of Horsham, Abington Friends School, Gwynedd Friends School and Plymouth Friends School – continue to demonstrate the conviction we share in lifting our faith for future generations. Conversation has been carried through many venues including an open house for the Quaker School at Horsham, hosted by Horsham MM and a discussion and worship with United Friends School, held at Unami MM.

As we are guided by the passage of time, we hold in our hearts beloved members of our community. Abington, Horsham, Norristown and Upper Dublin suffered deep losses. We raise our prayers in celebration of those Friends who enriched us so many years, in so many ways.

We have lived a full year. We stand in appreciation of the unerring commitment that has emanated from our entire community. As we have held up our work to the workings of the Divine, our gratitude for the compassion granted us is immeasurable. May we continue to reflect a vision that fosters growth, well-being and peace.

In faith,

Amelia Diamond, AQ Clerk

