

Abington Quarterly Meeting for Business
Held via Zoom
Eighth Month, 2nd, 2020

36 in attendance

The meeting began with a few moments of worship. Friends approved the minutes of Fifth Month.

Anne Hill (Gwynedd) presented the annual report of the AQM Worship and Ministry Committee (attached). She invited Friends to consider some of the queries that the committee discusses monthly at their meetings. She also shared some of the blessings that meetings in the Quarter experienced over the past year in the programs and events that they held. Friends accepted the report. (report attached)

The Hall family of Horsham Meeting shared about their trip to Honduras. Brenda and Caden first went to Honduras in 2018 with a Mennonite service project, Healthy Niños Honduras. They partner with the Worm Project, which treated 10 million children in 2018. Brenda and Caden worked in the northern section of Honduras for a week to help Healthy Niños. The organization traveled to five villages. The project participants were divided into five groups: medical, dental, blood pressure, de-worming, and gifts. The participants helped with each of the stations. Brenda observed tremendous gratitude from the people who received their care. She noted that these projects are really suffering now during the pandemic without volunteers. Caden talked about his experience organizing a soccer game and his joy seeing how their work helped. Dawson took the trip in 2019 and worked on installing concrete flooring. He appreciated the immediate impact that their work made. Betsy Lukshides (Horsham) pointed out that these charities are 100% volunteer-led. The Halls raised their own funds to go. (contact information attached)

Amelia asked Friends to consider “How do we envision using electronic media in our meetings?” We settled into worship around this query. Rebecca Cratin talked about discussions at Plymouth. The main thing that the meeting agrees on is that one way does not fit everybody. The important part is keeping the covenant community together. There are so many limitations and so many opportunities. The technology allows people at a distance and people with mobility issues to attend. Tom Peterson (Unami) said that they have applied for funding to get their own Zoom license. They are working to get a meeting credit card to get the non-profit discount. Russ Bishop (Gwynedd) said that Zoom has the possibility to enhance the worship and meeting experience, even after we return to worship in person.

Kathy Singer (Abington) pointed out how different our experience would be during this pandemic if we did not have this technology. She agreed that it is wonderful to be able to see virtually people who have not been able to attend meeting in person. Abington is planning to continue with Zoom for people who can't come to the meetinghouse. Amelia asked Susan Vorwerk (Upper Dublin) to introduce the OWL speaker/camera. Susan said that one OWL is available to any meeting in the Quarter to try out. It worked very well at Upper Dublin, a small single-story meeting. There were some technical difficulties with the router when it was tried at Plymouth. The camera rotates 360 degrees, and the audio is exceptional at magnifying the voices in the meetinghouse and projecting the voices on Zoom. It was tried at Newtown in Bucks Quarter, which had mixed reviews because it is a two-story meeting and has a sound system that was not compatible.

Friends then joined Upper Dublin Meeting for worship.

Friends resumed Meeting for Business with more discussion about using technology. Russ Bishop asked if there was a communication committee at the quarterly level. Amelia said that there is a committee that has been meeting for the past year. Through this committee, the Quarter obtained the

OWL. Susan Vorwerk of the committee mentioned that communication is understood broadly, and she encouraged anyone interested to get involved with the committee. Anne Hill (Gwynedd) expressed gratitude to the committee for their work.

Kelly Green (Norristown) shared Norristown's experience of meeting in person on the meeting grounds. Last week, two members joined the live meeting via Zoom. He noted that the Zoom host has a lot of responsibility during the meeting. He suggested that there could be an assistant during a live meeting for worship like the person in yearly meeting who moves through those in attendance to bring the microphone to a speaker. The assistant would carry a phone and bring it close to the person speaking during meeting for worship for those people attending via Zoom. Amelia observed that a virtual meeting for business is improved by having more than one host to help see all of the people on the call.

Vicki Hain Poorman (Gwynedd) echoed the feeling of others that it has been wonderful to see members of meeting who live far away. Vicki mentioned that individuals can rename themselves in Zoom, and Susan said that the communications committee has been discussing this feature and the need for individuals to name themselves accurately so that everyone can be recognized when they enter a meeting.

Kelly Green reported on the work of the Nominating Committee. He spoke of the richness of working with members of other meetings in the Quarter, and he noted the importance of Nominating Committee's role in regularly asking people how they are doing, if they need a break. The Nominating Committee includes members of Unami, Plymouth, and Norristown. Kelly urged people to consider taking over the role of clerk of Quarter. Kelly gave a report to Amelia that will be included with the minutes. Amelia suggested to the committee that they could consider finding a rising clerk. (report attached)

Amelia led the meeting into a plenary discussion of how the Quarter addresses systemic racism. Sam Hotchkiss (Upper Dublin) spoke of his work at Comcast to make change in the corporate environment. Lynne (Abington/Upper Dublin) talked about her conversation with a friend who has suffered from racism. Pam (Upper Dublin) said that Upper Dublin has been working with girls from Carson Valley to teach life skills such as cooking. Pam is a member of Mothers in Charge and spoke of listening more to understand the needs of the African-American community. She also mentioned the conflict between defunding the police and the need to have police investigate homicide cases. Mary Ellen McNish (Byberry) talked about an article that she read in the *Inquirer* this morning about voting. She feels that one way to address systemic racism is to encourage everybody to vote. Nancy Gold (Upper Dublin) spoke of the challenges of the postal system and the worry that mail-in ballots will not be counted.

Ann Davidson (Gwynedd) talked about a new working group at Gwynedd called Justice, Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion. They are raising awareness about systemic racism in the meeting. They had a First Day School program with a Quaker Speak video and discussion about systemic racism. They plan to have workshops and speakers. Vicki Hain Poorman spoke of her work as a medical interpreter for Spanish-speaking families and the things she has learned about racism through her work. She has learned about her own assumptions and has found the conversations at Gwynedd helpful.

Lynne (Abington) said that Abington has been having peaceful protests accompanied by a table to register people to vote and apply for mail-in ballots. Kelly spoke of the blessing of having a daycare at Norristown with a multicultural population. Anne wondered how many Quakers are in local and national politics. Rebecca suggested that we have been forced by the pandemic to work more at an introspective, individual level because we can't gather safely in protest. What are we each called to do

to speak truth to power? Betsy spoke of the need to elect more people of color. Nancy spoke of supporting black-owned businesses. Vicki talked about smiling and being polite to families and co-workers at CHOP and helping where we can on a one-to-one basis.

Kelly asked which meetings have a Black Lives Matter banner. Amelia said that Abington is working on a permanent sign promoting diversity and justice. She said that Abington has also had discussions after watching videos. The Social Justice Committee has been partnering with a local synagogue. The Abington newsletter cited a website full of things that white people can do to understand and combat systemic racism. (include link?)

Susan noted several white papers from FGC, PYM, Woodbrooke, and Pendle Hill about opening meetings safely.

Rebecca said that the Home and Care Committee still has money available for members and attenders who may be suffering from a job loss or illness.

David Nepley (Byberry) reported on an addition at Byberry that will include a composting toilet and a green roof. Ground may be broken in December.

The meeting closed with a moment of worship.

Respectfully submitted,

Paige Menton
Recorder

Amelia Diamond
Clerk

AQM WORSHIP AND MINISTRY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2020

At its best, a Quaker Meeting is not just a collection of individual seekers, but a community of faith, a covenant community, knit together by our common seeking of God. We are like spokes on a wheel: as we draw closer to our center in God, we also draw closer to each other. . . And as Douglas Steere has reminded us, “To come near to God is to change.”

Differences and disappointments are inevitable, but in a faith community these are seen not as obstacles, but as opportunities for transformation. God calls us into community because it is only in community that we can learn God’s transforming lessons of love, service, compassion, and forgiveness.

Thomas Gates, 2004 (from p.193, Faith and Practice, revised 2017)

Every month members of AQM Worship and Ministry meet to explore the blessings and challenges that arise in the spiritual life of the Abington Quarter meetings. As we gather in worship we hold our meetings and each other in the Light. We know that living as Friends requires constant renewal and re-examination as a loving, Spirit-led community and we commit ourselves to listening deeply for the spiritual needs that arise, to nurturing our members’ and attenders’ gifts, to attending to the spiritual development of the young and to supporting our faith communities’ leadings.

I invite you now to imagine sitting around the table in one of our W&M meetings and to reflect on the queries which we have prayerfully considered and struggled with during this past year :

- How do we lovingly guide our meetings to recognize the differences among vocal ministry, worship sharing and the speaking that is not grounded in ministry during our worship?

- How do we elder lovingly?
- How are we open and welcoming to the increasingly diverse spiritual journeys which all of us travel?
- How do we appreciate the prior religious traditions and experiences of those who come as seekers to our faith community?
- Do we encourage spiritual formation groups to share our faith , practice and Quaker process?
- Do we understand that we are a covenant community and do we know what the elements of that covenant are and how we communicate those elements to others?
- How do we spiritually nurture our young people?
- How has the pandemic impacted our meetings spiritually and practically? Have we had any openings and leadings as a result?
- How are we caring for ourselves and each other during what, for many, is the pain of physical separation?
- How do we experience the Divine working in our lives both individually and corporately?
- How do we let our lives speak?

Some of the blessings of our meetings over the past year have been the following:

Abington has offered worshipful hymn singing before Meeting for Worship while Plymouth gathered for a contemplative Saturday morning retreat and held music circles. Unami continued its connection with the local ministerium and with its leading to plant native trees. Richland held an outreach event which was a wonderful experience and Horsham reinstated their Care and Counsel Committee and continues with its tradition of hospitality. Upper Dublin continues to attract new attenders and holds a monthly Unplug and Recharge Meeting for Worship followed by a potluck. Gwynedd offered Gathering Garden programs such as spiritual nurture as well as First Day Schools which highlight the Quaker faith, practice , and process while Byberry considered necessary renovations to their property. UpperDublin and Byberry Meetings have placed banners saying Pray for Peace , Work for Justice which have been prominently displayed to let the outside world know that Quakers are alive, well, welcoming and ready to speak Truth to Power. The Black Lives Matter movement has been supported by our meetings. Norristown , Gwynedd , Abington, Richland, Plymouth and Unami Meetings have physically stood in witness in their communities.

More recently and as a response to the pandemic, Friends from afar and homebound Friends have been joining us regularly for worship via Zoom. Using the Zoom technology many of the meetings in the Quarter have revived midweek worship, hold worship sharing, do intervisitation, conduct spiritual bookclubs, and children's meeting for worship. Some meetings have been discerning how to open their meetinghouses safely. The Quarter's Communications Committee has been trying out "Owl" at several meetings. With this technology some people attend in person while others join via Zoom because perceived risk obliges them to stay away, or because they are attending from remote locations.

In conclusion, AQM Worship and Ministry Committee will continue to serve the Quarter with hope, and joy seeking opportunities to learn God's transforming lessons of love. We ask you to hold us and our Meetings in the Light as together we discern to know what the Spirit would have us do and as we seek to "know each other in that which is Eternal."

Respectfully submitted,
Anne Hill, clerk

The AQM Nominating Committee has convened , presently we are in search for the next AQM clerk. We are gathering names of people who may serve. We have asked several people in the Quarter to consider serving in this role, if not now, at some point in the future, and are still looking for potential candidates for this cycle. We feel the candidate should have interest of the vitality of Abington Quarter and its future. If you are able and willing to serve as the clerk of the Abington Quarterly Meeting , please contact one of the committee members (below).

Rebecca H. Cratin rhcratin@cratin.com

Kelly Green ellykeengr@gmail.com

Tom Peterson tom.peterson.quakertown@gmail.com

Karen Shanoski shanoski@comcast.net

A Working Trip to Honduras – The Hall Family – Contact Information

1. **The Worm Project.** Gary Delp from Blooming Glen Mennonite Church was my contact. <https://wormproject.org/home/https://wormproject.org/home/>
2. **Healthy Ninos Honduras.** Dr. Richard Kratz was my contact, and is a member at Blooming Glen, and as well is a Board Member of HN. I have cc'd him on this email. <https://www.healthyninos.org/index.html>. Dr. Kratz is the one that organized the service project trips, which combine the distribution of the worm pills with the goals and activities of Healthy Ninos Honduras. He has been organizing these trips for many years and hopefully the year 2021 will be the date of a re-start for these yearly excursions.

I hope that Abington Quarter finds these 2 organizations to be consideration for any future involvement, financially or otherwise. We cannot speak too highly of them! The Halls had a fantastic time and were blessed by the experience. My hope is that my 2 younger children will be able to do a service project with these organizations in the near future.

Regards,

Brenda Hall

Horsham Friends Meeting