

Abington Quarterly Meeting for Business
Held at Horsham Monthly Meeting
Eighth-Month 5th, 2018

Abington MM – 8: Byberry MM – 1: Gwynedd MM – 4: Horsham MM – 23:
Norristown MM – 6: Plymouth – 12: Richland – 2: Unami MM – 3: Upper Dublin- 4:

Friends settled, and after a short interval of silent worship, Amelia Diamond, AQ Clerk opened the meeting, briefly previewing an accelerated agenda.

Betsy Lukshides welcomed everyone to Horsham.

Friends approved the minutes of Fifth-Month 6th, 2018

Anne Hill reminded us of the late Christine Greenland's faithful service to the quarter, most recently as clerk of the AQ Worship & Ministry committee. Anne then presented the AQ Worship & Ministry annual report.

After Anne's presentation several comments followed:

Ruth Peterson said she loved hearing Anne's descriptions about what the various meetings in the quarter are doing

Judy Inskeep suggested the W&M report should be attached to the minutes & posted on website. (Anne's report is included in these minutes by reference, and posted under the "Reports" tab of the AQ website, but in a separate file from these minutes).

Friends approved the W&M report.

The next item on the agenda reads as follows: "A word on AQ State of Our Quarter Annual Report for 2017." Amelia explained that she would not read the report to us because it's lengthy and was e-mailed prior to the meeting. The report is included in these minutes by reference, and is attached below.

Amelia then briefly touched on a number of themes addressed in the report:

Looking to the future, what are we doing to encourage participation in the life of the quarterly meeting? How do we build community, open up spaces and activities? How do we see ourselves, and how do our neighbors see us? Do we truly listen; are we led further by worship? How do we work around limitations of time, attendance and material resources?

Friends approved the clerk's Annual Report for 2017.

Next, Tom Rei reported on PYM Annual Sessions for 2018 which had just concluded the previous 1st day at The College of New Jersey in Ewing. Tom felt that sessions this year went well. Pursuant to years of work on the part of many volunteers, the new edition of Faith & Practice is now available for sale (you can also

look at it on PYM's website). Commenting on the overnight dormitory facilities provided in Ewing: both air-conditioned and non-a/c room were available. Breakfast & lunch were in the common dining room of the college, but this year Friends had their dinner served at the plenary session bldg. Golf cart availability for transportation between the dormitories, dining facility and plenary space was excellent, and well organized this year. There were numerous workshops and conversation tents. Also, PYM's Spiritual Formation group had a retreat at the Ewing facility on Tuesday and Wednesday, before the yearly meeting began.

As Friends are aware, PYM's clerk Penny Colgan Davis resigned earlier this year and passed away shortly thereafter. Three assistant clerks shared the duties of clerking; Chris Luca from Yardley was approved as acting clerk; Amy Taylor Brooks was approved as clerk of the Quaker Life council, and Melissia Rycoft as clerk of Nominating. Sessions protocol and procedure seemed more streamlined this year – There was no "approving an item" and then (as in prior years) more discussion & then passing it again. The proposal for a "multi-cultural audit" a subject that had generated controversy in the past, was referred to a committee that was given responsibility to decide what to do. Friends of African Descent have organized a Quaker peace center (see <http://www.friendsofad.org/ujima-center/>). Children who attended had a special space set up for them. On the subject of finances – PYM has been adding to a reserve fund which is now topped out; no more reserve funds needed; and PYM has a balanced budget!

Comments on about PYM sessions:

Ruth Peterson expressed gratification that each children's age group came back with a minute; one group had a minute to visit a detention center. There is concern among young and young adult Friends on PYMs voice policy, the direct inclusivity of young and young adult Friends in PYM proceeding.

Tom Rie and Amelia spoke about the two minutes of concern that our Quarter sent to PYM for approval. PYM endorsed the "spirit of the AQ Benjamin Lay minute," but wanted two words changed. There was a concern that the reference to "slaver-holders" somehow might tacitly signal approval of the practice; it was suggested another word, such as "enslavers" might be more fitting. Our Planned Parenthood minute that originated at Gwynedd meeting also received endorsement with a reservation, rather than straightforward approval. Concern was expressed about what if any financial support for the Planned Parenthood organization would be implied? PYM doesn't give across the board support to any given not-for-profit agency. At present there is no PYM granting group authorized for this sort of funding; but there is the possibility of a health collaborative under which reproductive rights would conceivably fall. That is not a reflection on the various funds or the reservations that apply to them, but is because of the general reorganization of PYM that has taken place over the last few years, and the fact that finding volunteers to staff the new granting groups has been proceeding slowly.

Ron Inskeep commented favorably that there was no contentious discussion of

undoing racism, as had occurred in recent years, but work is going on in committee.

Judy Inskip asked for clarification about the Planned Parenthood minute endorsement. Will it be assigned to a granting group? Will there a grant be forthcoming? Amelia said our timing for this minute was favorable, as it may stimulate PYM to move more quickly in identifying specific funding.

Tom Armstrong commented that the Barney Fund, which is independent of PYM's granting process, currently makes grants to Planned Parenthood. But PYM needs to work out a way to make contributions to Planned Parenthood through the PYM granting group process.

Jim Fitzgerald – clerk of the ad hoc refugee committee presented a report about the progress of the Tuhenya family from eastern Congo. This report is included in these minutes by reference and is posted under the "Reports" tab of the AQ website, in the same file as the Worship & Ministry report referenced above. Friends approved Jim's report and his suggestions that the committee use the remaining funds -- as detailed in his report the ad-hoc committee has approximately \$2800 on deposit, and a \$525 credit with a charity agency -- to pay \$890 for airfare to allow Chakabutta to visit the Congo, plus about \$1000 for his living expenses, and the remainder to be used toward Chakabutta's further education.

A friend noted that this is an ad-hoc committee, and if it is going to be laid down who will dispense remaining funds? Jim answered that he would.

Several announcements followed:

Rebecca Cratin, clerk of Home and Care asked that if friends are aware of any older members who, for whatever reason, may feel inhibited about moving into a retirement community, please let a member of Home & Care know.

Chris Mrozinski, representing young friends working to support refugees from Syria, made an announcement about their next event, a "Camp-a-thon for Peace" -- to be held at Gwynedd beginning the afternoon of 9/29/18. A description of this event is posted under the "Reports" tab of the AQ website in the same file as the W&M report.

Margaret Anderson, editor of the AQ newsletter asked that friends who may wish to contribute or have event announcements included, please send such items to aqnews@gmail.com .

Friends were encouraged to sign the "get well soon" card for Helen file on table in the adjacent foyer.

It then being time for Horsham's meeting for worship, Amelia adjourned the meeting, encouraging all those present to stay for the picnic that would follow.

Respectfully submitted, Dan Turner

Abington Quarterly Meeting State of Our Quarter Report for the Year 2017

Our Quarter is an engaged community. Friends have been led in witness of human needs and brought into prayers for compassion in our times. Life in our monthly meetings has been blessed with many gifts. We have also faced many challenges.

This past year, Friends in several Meetings moved further into reconnecting with each other and restructuring their monthly meetings. A part of this work was literal and physical; trees, floors, windows, classrooms (Byberry, Plymouth, Gwynedd MMs). Two meetings have been working through a long process of reevaluating the shape of their committee work and the intention of meetings held (Upper Dublin and Richland MMs). One of our meetings agreed to now begin a full spiritual self-assessment (Abington MM).

The overwhelming portion of such hands-on work has been a testimony of faith, of integrity, simplicity and stewardship. In our meetings overall, attentiveness to worship and worship to attend to business, with particular accountability to equality and community, continues under the care of our monthly meetings' worship & ministry and care of members committees. Paying attention to the spirit of unity in the midst of diversity has required our constant focus. We are working to better recognize our space and who we are in it.

There is a growing awareness of limitations in members' and attenders' ability to participate fully in the life of their monthly meetings, in support of our continuance. Faith speaks for three meetings in our Quarter who bore net losses in membership (Abington, Gwynedd, Plymouth MMs). One of our smaller meetings moves on in the uncompromising spirit of worship despite heavy material setback (Norristown MM). Our largest meeting is looking for ways through the concern of impending financial shortfall (Abington MM). Might we reach a balance in coming years; in part, with an increase in membership as noted in two monthly meetings (Richland, Upper Dublin MMs) and in all, by us Friends moving in holy accompaniment on paths as may lie ahead. May we continue to deepen the grounds of intention.

In Quarterly meetings for worship to attend to business, our year began with voices in pain. We were necessarily led to dedicate our opening meeting for worship for business to a membership issue that centered in Upper Dublin MM. The visceral impact of this concern was fired with all the pains and repercussions of cultural and racial diversity as conveyed through the knot of human perceptions. We then followed with the beginnings of a response in the direction of unconscious bias. We spoke with Crossroads Ministries and received a full range of information suitable for heightening racial diversity awareness. We also brought to mind other sources, individuals who are dedicated speakers on issues that arise from differences among us. Two Friends agreed to follow through as

way opens, as other Friends may come forward, and possibly in conjunction with PYM's pursuit of an institutional audit. We are finding that moments of simple sharing, one-to-one f/Friendly conversation that opens from worship and honest connection, is beginning to heal some of the hurts that arose here.

Quarterly meetings for business presented us with several other points of social justice. We endorsed a minute of concern on behalf of Fellowship of Friends of African Descent. Speaking to the problems of racism, militarism and violence, the minute raised up respect, resources and love. We learned about the impact of population increase on our lives and to our planet. We became aware of subsequent changes in climate. A minute was approved to support the funding of Planned Parenthood. We got in touch with the international Worm Project to combat children's malnutrition; and so, we set up collection jars in our monthly meetings. Donations were already being forwarded before year's end.

Individually, our monthly meetings brought us to focus on more items of immediate import. International relief included: refugee support through fundraising at Gwynedd MM, sessions on immigration rights at Abington MM, hands-on support for our emigrated Congolese family by Friends at Abington MM, and, at year's end, fundraising for Puerto Rico disaster victims by Friends at Plymouth and Unami MMs. Water conservation in India carries on as a leading at Unami MM. Nationally, our continuing call for gun control was picked up again in a T-shirt installation at Gwynedd MM and approval for one to be repeated at Abington MM.

Our monthly meetings also invited us into a number of local programs and events. Topical sessions were organized on FCNL advocacy at Abington and Gwynedd MMs, Fair Districting and Fearless Benjamin Lay at Abington MM, Climate Change at Plymouth MM, Gender Identity at Unami MM. Witness was felt by participants in: International Woman's March with Plymouth and Gwynedd Friends, Interfaith Peace Walk with Upper Dublin Friends and in Vigil to Counter Hate by Unami Friends. Racism was broached in a neighborhood film screening by Abington Friends School with discussion sessions to follow, and at United Friends School as well, through AFSC Council on Education.

Each monthly meeting reaffirmed local community connections. To name just a few: Interfaith Hospitality Network, Face to Face, Food for Friends, Open Link, Ambler Coalition for Peace, and area ministeriums. Also shared were: township celebration and library support at Horsham and Richland MMs, coffeehouses and music circles which added to fundraising at Abington, Gwynedd and Plymouth MMs.

On-going gatherings in extended worship, meditation, yoga, Light group, reading groups and the basics of Quaker belief were appreciated across our Meetings. Sharing in simplest forms of hospitality and prayer was evident at Byberry and Norristown MMs. Our Foulkeways and Pottstown Worship Groups each worshipped faithfully within their means and space.

Our school affiliated Meetings participated in enhancing Quaker schools in our Quarter. Gwynedd MM carried out an extensive renovation of both GMM First Day School and Gwynedd Meeting Pre-School. With added staffing, Gwynedd Friends School (pre-K) is now fully accredited by Pa. Association of Independent Schools. Abington Friends School (preK-12) has begun a 10-year accreditation process with PAIS. Horsham MM hosted an annual open-house celebration of the Quaker School at Horsham (preK-8). Unami MM joined United Friends School (preK-8) in Fall Fest, distributing Quaker information. Richland and Unami MMs enjoyed a painting party for younger children at United Friends. Plymouth MM contributed to a nature playground for Plymouth Friends School (preK-6).

The spiritual life of Abington Quarter is at the heart of our Quarter's Worship & Ministry Committee. Early in the year, we mourned the loss of our clerk and friend, Christine Greenland. We welcomed our current clerk, Anne Hill. The committee meets to share high points and concerns in our monthly meetings. Committee members continue to offer spiritual and convivial support; visiting our monthly meetings, opening conversations as may be led in confidence. This year, consideration was begun on how we recognize our aging membership and how we engage with our younger generations. Frequently, thoughts were shared on how we extend a pastoral hand to soften opposing points of view. The concern came from varying circumstances in more than one monthly meeting. As was picked up by example, guidance to be revealed by listening deeply and accepting prayerful conversation becomes a tender, continually revisited life experience.

Our Abington Quarter Home & Care Committee, executive members - Nancy Gold, Bonnie Miller, Rebecca Cratin, continues to work toward easing life care concerns by offering to members avenues of financial support within the embrace of compassionate care. The committee learned more about CCRC's; this year, the Hickman and North Penn Commons. A comprehensive check list on end-of-life care was brought in. Thanks to our coordinator, we have been thorough in following our commitments with Foulkeways continuing care community. Awareness of AQ guidelines and requirements for assistance to our members were often reiterated.

Our Abington Quarter Trustees, president - Bob Taylor, have been considering updates to our By Laws and Conflict of Interest Policies. Our investment committee and the dedication of both our Trustees Treasurer, Dan Hazelton and our AQ Treasurer, Bob Reiff has allowed caring work to be carried forward through timely disbursements for home & care and youth conferences' needs. These were permitted by strategic investment in Friends Fiduciary Consolidated Fund and the Green Fund.

Our JFC/MSFC Youth Conferences, director - Karen Shanoski, held session in June at Westtown School, marking a 40th anniversary. The theme, Voices of Change: What are Things We Care about, brought focus on hunger and

care for the earth. The faith & leadership program explored how to honor concerns. A soup project donated \$155 to UNICEF. Activities included a fire pit, scavenger hunt, singing, worship at various locations and many other options. As with every previous year, student comments were all favorable.

Our Monthly Meeting Clerks' support group met again this year. Clerks may worshipfully connect with each other on joys and challenges that arise in their respective meetings.

We shared our good news in times spent together. In Summer, we enjoyed our annual picnic at Abington Meeting. This year's picnic brought a happy crowd of Friends as we commemorated 40 years of youth conferences. In Fall, a video presentation and report on the JFC/MSFC conference included sharing from young Friends who brought smiles to us all.

At mid-year, we welcomed a new editor for our newsletter, Margaret Anderson. Many voices make conversation possible. Our thanks to Dan Turner, web guru ever ready to lend a hand. We send our appreciation to Judy Inskip for taking on the job of recording clerk at both our meetings for business and our representatives' meetings. We acknowledge our AQ Representatives committee for sharing their meeting's updates and creating our business agendas. We thank our Abington Quarterly Fund committee, clerk – Tom Rie, for their careful yet speedy responses to quarterly meeting needs. And we are grateful for the presence of all our Friends.

Much lies ahead of us. Our Quarter is blessed with the energy of our school students, the working capacity of experienced adults and the wisdom of a blessed number of senior members. We recognize the need for renewal that may allow us to hold firm our accountability to each other. We hope to live into our future by serving needs as fully as we can. In worship and calls to action we look to deepen the grounding of Friends' commitments together in the Divine. May the scope of our prayers be realized.

submitted by:

Amelia Diamond
Abington Quarter Clerk

