

11/5/23 AQ Representative Meeting at Foulkways Retirement Home

The clerk, Kelly Green, thanked those attending, both in person and virtually on Zoom. Stacy Kent, Rebecca Cratin, David Nepley, Tom Peterson, Marguerite Hayes, Dan Turner, and Ann Tucker were present on the Zoom link, which was hosted by Bob Reiff. Kelly, Mary Anne Darlington, Betsy Lukshides & Frank Starrett were there in person.

Kelly called on us to worship attending to our faith community's business. Following the printed agenda, he asked if friends had the opportunity to look at the minutes from our last Reps's meeting? Were there any changes that needed to be made? None were offered, so we approved the 8/27 Reps mtg minutes. Kelly then suggested we proceed with the Monthly meeting reports.

Mary Anne Darlington/Horsham MM - reported first, stating that they were going to have a Christmas Tea, December 17th. We are also having a Christmas Eve service, she said, and when we finish worship we will have a Carol sing. Horsham offers first-day school for 4 young people who come sporadically and not all 4 at once. Horsham has been having visitors, whom they are happy to welcome. She said that David Charles, Horsham's treasurer has been visiting PYM's website & is concerned about what he regards as political lobbying on that website. He stated as a 501(c)(3) faith community we should not be lobbying, and has drafted a minute to address that concern.

Betsy Lukshides/Horsham MM - came into the room at that moment and gave a copy of Horsham's draft minute about lobbying to Kelly. He remarked that the Horsham newsletter, which is distributed by snail mail, is always a joy to read. Betsy said Alan Folsom does double duty as newsletter editor and clerk of the meeting.

Betsy said she agreed that as a faith community Horsham shouldn't be lobbying. She reminded us that FCNL lobbies in the interests of Quakers. They do the lobbying, she said, while our Meetings focus on religion & faith in action. The clerk read the draft minute out loud, summarized as follows:

After thoughtful discussion and reflection:

1. Horsham Friends believe Philadelphia Yearly Meeting and its member Meetings, in order to protect their 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status, should refrain from using their resources to encourage people to lobby for government legislation
2. Horsham Friends believe every Quaker Meeting should support the spiritual and educational needs of its members and be a place where friends test leadings and convictions to discern God's way toward witness in the world.

3. Horsham Friends believe it is the right and duty of individuals living in a democracy to be politically involved and active.
4. Horsham Friends value the diversity of views held in good faith by Friends within PYM.
5. Horsham Friends suggest individual Friends wishing to advocate for their tested leadings and convictions contact the Friends Council on National Legislation (FCNL) or other lobbying groups.

Betsy also shared that she had gone to the Worm Project dinner, where the latest Worm Project newsletter was distributed. The keynote speaker, Dr. Clarence Freed, spoke about the project. Betsy said she would like to invite him to come and speak at a quarterly meetings. “When we give money to the Worm Project,” she said, “all the money goes for the project as it is all volunteer based and supported. The doses for the inoculation cost only 8 cents, so a dollar goes a long way.”

Ann Tucker /Richland spoke about having a Worm Project speaker at an upcoming quarterly meeting. She said the project is well supported by Richland MM. She would like the speaker’s presentation made available for everyone to share. Ann went on to say she has looked at pictures over the years of children with big bellies who were starving. This was hard to understand, but later she learned that worms grow in those children’s stomachs, eating the children’s food, fattening themselves while starving the children and swelling their stomachs. The project is focused on children who are five and under. This is an important time to help these children get a proper start in life; it is critical to growing up to be a healthy adult.

Rebecca Cratin/Plymouth MM, suggested that Horsham formally minute this Worm Project concern and bring it to Quarterly meeting.

Rebecca also suggested our Quarterly Finance committee look at how lobbying might affect our tax status. If our Meetings choose to go on record as supporting concerns that are engaging legislative attention, could this be misconstrued as lobbying? She has heard that Gwynedd Meeting has been discussing these issues. She also remarked that perhaps the Horsham draft concern is driven not so much by our tax status as by moral conviction to stay focused on faith related activities. Those who are connecting with PYM about lobbying should consider inquiring whether expenses are being incurred to publicize or support politicized issues.

Kelly spoke to the advocacy policy that is driving this conversation. He said he feels that Horsham and Gwynedd’s concerns are one and the same. “We don’t want to put our 501©(3) status in jeopardy, but historically we as individuals have stood and spoke truth to power. This was true with slavery, women’s right to vote, and war resistance. Typically we do not do this as a corporate body; these activities are done as individual leadings. What

Gwynedd brought forth with their minute was: PYM's advocacy policy seems to preclude Friends from following leadings arising from our faith and testimonies. As Quaker Meetings we don't lobby, but that shouldn't preclude individual Quakers from expressing their visions of change to the wider world.

Tom Peterson/Unami, shared that the IRS has tightened their view on what churches can do in this regard. It is relatively safe to frame such views or declarations with language like this: "Historically Quaker voices have been drawn into wider public conversation on this topic" ...or something to that effect." Kelly asked Tom, "if we frame it that way, are you saying we shouldn't have any problems?" Tom said "That's right. If you have questions, you can speak to Linell Curry of PYM, and she can give you some advice. She is a busy person, so have patience. We are all in agreement that we should not to jeopardize our tax status. But should we let the IRS silence us? Actually, politics are going on today in churches throughout this country. We should make it clear to the IRS, and the general public, that Quaker testimonies and beliefs are alive today.

Dan Turner/Abington, shared that if you do an internet search for politics in Evangelical churches, you will get a long list of links to what those faith communities are doing today. One such link is to an Atlantic Magazine article about Evangelical pastors preaching politics from the pulpit. It discloses that there is a growing trend of people leaving congregations focused strictly on religion, and migrating to churches where right-wing politics is promoted from the pulpit.

Tom Peterson told us that Unami has restarted children's religious education (RE) on first day mornings. Many of the families are from United Friends School. The parents are encouraged that their children will have RE while adults have their meeting for worship. "We are seeing the benefits with being affiliated with a Quaker school," Tom said.

David Nepley/ByberryMM said that last weekend, on October 28th, Byberry had their 340th anniversary celebration. "We been a Quaker meeting since 1683" he said, "We also celebrated the 200th anniversary of the school house, which actually is our third school house. And our meetinghouse, which was built in 1808, is our third or fourth one. Even though we only have 15 people in our membership, there were 55 people in attendance. Some attendees came great distances to be there."

On October 29th Byberry did their 2nd clean up of the Byberry African American burial ground, which is located about a quarter mile from the meetinghouse. The burial grounds look good and they will have a celebration there on November 12th. The burial ground was owned by Byberry Meeting from 1780 to 1980 when the Meeting sold the ground to

the city of Philadelphia. The deed for the ground has been lost or was never registered with the city. This has come up because Benjamin Rush State Park, adjacent to the burial ground, is interested in taking it over and maintaining it. Byberry is trying to find the deed.

Byberry is concerned about Byberry Hall, which has a different address than the meetinghouse. They are applying for tax exempt status for it, which will make a big difference in their property tax.

In September Byberry arranged to have the adjacent "Byberry store" put on the Historic Register. It was a blacksmith shop and a post office for the community of Byberry, circa 1820.

They are also celebrating the new addition to their meetinghouse, with running water, bathrooms and a kitchen! All of other events coming forward will be in their newsletter. General amazement was registered by reps meeting friends at the progress going on at Byberry!

Rebecca Cratin-Plymouth shared that when the war in Gaza started 2 weeks ago Plymouth members thought about having a peace vigil at "the wall" (Their property's masonry wall along Germantown and Butler Pikes) after their mid week worship on Wednesday night. They always do a candlelight vigil there on Christmas eve. And whenever there is a call to put their witness out to the wider world, some Plymouth friends go to the wall with candles. They sometimes invite others to join in this activity. Rebecca asked Mike Mrozinski if he would contact the Plymouth meeting school to see if any one wanted to participate in our worship and the vigil, and two people from the school administration attended. In addition, a man who is a member of the Beth-Or congregation in Horsham, got the email that the school sent out and showed up for the worship and vigil. The following day the head of the school contacted Mike Mrozinski to let him know that some people were concerned that the worship and vigil was only in support of the Jewish community. Actually, the notice the school sent out didn't say that. Mike responded to the head of the school, explaining that our intent was to hold all the people in the light who are suffering from the violence. We will continue our vigil after mid week worship, and show support for peace. "We stand up and speak our testimonies" Rebecca said, "I appreciate what Horsham is bringing forward, but as Quakers have done in the past, we will continue to stand for non-violent resolution to conflict."

Plymouth is looking forward to some Saturday in December to have a meeting retreat. They were going to have it October 28th, but as Rebecca's daughter Jeanne had just passed away, they had a memorial service for her instead on that date. The prospective retreat in December will start with worship together, followed by an interval when those attending will be free to walk the campus or sit in reflection. This will be followed by a meal

together. This event was originally planned for Plymouth members, but now it will be open to all members of the quarter, Rebecca will share the date as plans solidify.

Plymouth is still holding 2 worships on Sunday mornings, the 10 o'clock one is plain worship without technology, and the 11:15 one is hybrid, using technology to connect in worship with those at a distance. There is concern that the meeting is becoming two groups. They are going to have a called meeting to talk about how to resolve this and be one meeting. There are deep feelings on both sides of this divide.

Plymouth is smaller, post pandemic, with 8-10 people attending the plain worship and 12 or so attending hybrid worship in-person or on zoom. If any friends from the quarter would like to attend, Plymouth's midweek meeting for worship is at 7PM. They go to wall for the vigil 30 or 40 minutes later, holding candlelight witness for peace.

Dan Turner/Abington, shared details about Abington's AS&I committee's recently finalized current program (AS&I = Access, Safety and Inclusion): bathrooms for the handicapped, as well as automatic door openers for the meetinghouse -- like at a hospital where you push a button to make a door open. Also, for about 40 years there has been a program in the fall at Abington called "Sunday-at-7." It like Quakerism 101, designed for new attendees. It usually gets a mixed group of new and seasoned friends. But this year the program's clerk decided she wants to do it after the new year, specifically in the spring. So 2023 won't have any Sunday-at-7 sessions,

Marguerite Hayes/Norristown, shared that the daycare center operation that rents space in their meeting house has been transferred to the daughter of the daycare owner. We want to continue to supply space for the daycare, as it is much needed on our local community, and will continue with the daughter as the tenant.

The third Thursday of every month Norristown friends volunteer to work in the soup kitchen at St. John's Episcopal church. A free lunch is prepared there every weekday by volunteers from area churches. The soup kitchen generally gets over a hundred people coming each day. Norristown Meeting's participation is blessed with a core group that makes different things to contribute to the lunches each time they are hosting. Carol Ashby is the leader of this Meeting activity.

Norristown is planning a carol sing at Upper Providence meetinghouse, December 24th at 7 pm. There is no electricity or running water in that historic building. Attendees will be using flashlights, and gather around a woodstove if it's cold. They sing carols and afterwards have hot chocolate, cider and donuts. This is a 2 room meetinghouse built in 1820, weathered by

time but otherwise unchanged from when it was built. They generally get 30 people at this Christmas Eve event; check Norristown's website for the details of the event.

Kelly said that leasing space to the daycare over the last four years has raised a concern regarding rental income. He has learned that churches can have outside income below a certain level. Radnor Meeting has a private school at their facility and have a shared space agreement with that school, facilitating the shared objective of providing schooling to children. The agreement gives each entity opportunity to propose changes going forward. Norristown is considering this as a way to frame their relationship with the daycare.

Norristown is also doing the Plant Palooza project that Paige Menton is offering to our monthly meetings through "Journeywork," a program to introduce native plants and establish areas of native plants.

Stacy Kent/Gwynedd, said they restarted their Quaker Education program in September. They have Quaker education after MfWorship 1st & 4th Sundays. On 2nd Sundays they have coffee & fellowship, and on 3rd Sundays they have business meeting following worship. Their next coffee house will be November 11. On November 18, 9am -1 pm, they have their AFSC fund raiser flea market scheduled. They are continuing with the landscaping project that includes a Bus stop, and will hire an engineer to dimension the scope and expense of the project. They have a grant from the county for this purpose, but want to understand what it will cost.

Stacy said she is pleased to hear about Plymouth's vigil at the wall. Gwynedd has had spoken ministry about the Gaza war, and she will share what Plymouth is doing with Gwynedd's Justice and Inclusion committee.

Ann Tucker/Richland said their meeting's strongest features are worship, adult education, and "Food for Friends." At worship they usually have 25-30 people. Their Adult Education program has been reading Friends Journal articles, and participants love discussing them. "Food for Friends" is a take out dinner, usually on 2 or 3 occasions each month. It used to be a sit-down affair, but with Covid it became drive by and pick-up. There also was a lawsuit brought by somebody who came in for a meal and fell down. The lawsuit dragged on for about 5 years. It was quite upsetting to the friends who made Food for Friends happen. So, at present, the drive through dinners seem to work. Foods for Friends is close to thirty years old. Fewer people came for these dinners years ago, but when Covid hit the attendance has been up towards 180 dinners served. Because of the enormous numbers of dinners being prepared, Richland has had generous donations of kitchen appliances for food-prep and cleanup, as well as another stove and a

dishwasher. They are remodeling their kitchen to have these installed . There will be a larger food prep area, with a larger island. They are looking for a 6 foot run of back-to-back base cabinets: if any one knows of the availability of any such cabinets, please keep Richland in mind!

Ann runs Richland's Religious Education program, which has teachers with clearances. But presently there is only one family with children and their attendance is erratic. The teachers are ready if children show up. but it's discouraging to not have more active attendance.

Kelly said he was uplifted by all that is happening at our monthly meetings. He suggested we move on with agenda.

Judith Inskeep asked if we would be open to inviting an after lunch speaker for the May 5 quarterly meeting. This might attract more people to attend that meeting in person. Ann Tucker asked if we could invite the worm project guy to speak, and share the recording of his talk with everyone. Kelly said that the next opportunity for a speaker could be Quarterly meeting at Horsham MM in February. Betsy Lukshides said she could ask Clarence if he would be available to speak then. Kelly will work with Judith & Betsy to see if they can make the necessary arrangements.

Kelly shared that Karen Shanoski has reported that the AQMYSC (youth conference program) met and approved the contract for 2024 at Camp Innabah. Monthly Meetings in Abington Quarter will be asked to submit names of children whose families are members or attenders, together with the parents contact information so AQMYSC can send camp invitations to them for the 2024 camp.

The quarter is looking for new Abington Quarter Fund committee members. The AQM Youth Support Committee also needs additional interested friends. AQMeeting is looking for a rising clerk; if interested or if you have a name to suggest, please contact Kelly Green. Jim Hejl/Gwynedd, has asked about joining the AQM Finance committee. He would join our other new member, Marguerite Hayes/Norristown on the committee together with Robert Reiff.

Rebecca Cratin asked what's going on with the AQM coordinator support committee. The clerk responded that the committee has interviewed several people and is close to making a decision, Kelly said they are hoping to bring a prospective coordinator's name forward at our next quarterly meeting. They will be having a second interview with a prospective candidate soon. Robert Reiff shared that we could have a called quarterly meeting to approve the candidate instead of waiting for the next scheduled meeting in February. Rebecca encouraged the committee to move forward ASAP, if they can.

Robert Reiff shared that the AQM Communications Committee has been meeting 2 days a week. But going forward they will only be meeting on

Mondays. It's important that all monthly Meetings send someone to attend these meetings. The quarter is close to hiring a coordinator and the communications committee will be a key place for interactions with the coordinator. On the subject of interactions and communications, the Worm Project dinner that Betsy attended could have been on the Horsham MM website and also shared on the AQM website. Friends throughout the quarter need to have a convenient way to learn about these significant events. Kelly thanked Robert for his work and dedicated willingness to serve!

Kelly then inquired if the monthly meetings with "Church Insight" websites had approved the "Terms & use policy" language prepared by Rebecca Emerson. No negative responses were offered.

Kelly then asked if there is anything else that needs to be added to the February quarterly meeting agenda. Nothing further was offered, so he explained that the annual Worship & Ministry report, the AQM Fund's annual Report, and the Clerks Annual report will be on the agenda. Horsham will host the February meeting, providing coffee and pastry before our business meeting and Deserts & Beverages at lunch. Please bring a brown bag lunch for your main entree.

Kelly, our clerk, thanked everyone again for helping to attend to the quarter's business while maintaining a sense of worshipful friendship. He asked us to return to worship for a final few minutes, thanking God for giving us a path forward.

recorded by KellyGreen