

## AQM Worship and Ministry Annual Report

2023

Presented: February 4, 2024

Our Life is love, and peace, and tenderness; and bearing one with another, and forgiving one another...  
praying one for another, and helping one another up with a tender hand.

-----Isaac Pennington

Abington Quarter's Worship and Ministry Committee, a Spirit-led, vibrant gathering, meets monthly, centering in worship, holding all of our meetings in the Light, and sharing the blessings and challenges of our faith communities. The committee members are: Anne Hill /Gwynedd, Amelia Diamond/Abington, Ann Davidson /Gwynedd, Adele Nepley /Byberry, Kelly Green /Norristown, Barbara Zucker /Richland, Betsy Lukshides /Horsham, David Miller /Plymouth, Stacy Kent /Gwynedd, Karen Gee /Upper Dublin, Lynn Biddle /Unami, Pamela Yaller /Upper Dublin, and Rebecca Cratin /Plymouth. Some of the blessings of our meetings which we would like to share are the following:

Abington Meeting's past year has recognized that their greatest challenge was moving beyond covid-distancing. To continue their friendly connections with one another, the meeting with the generous assistance of those gifted technologically, stayed grounded in the values of their blessed community.

Abington's Worship and Ministry supported five spiritual nurture groups (worship sharing) and two anchor groups (leadings and clearness), sponsored the Lighthouse Coffee House series and focusing particularly on the quality and appreciation of vocal ministry in meeting for worship. A children's area was created as a cozy space during worship; phone calls, cards and holiday deliveries went out to Friends infirm or at a distance. There is a new committee to bring together members' and attenders' spiritual and material gifts so that fiscal awareness become a part of spiritual accountability.

A new youth coordinator has been hired and the children's religious education committee realigned affording parents to coming together in community outreach. Annual right-sharing monetary donations have gone to Ujima Peace Center, and the adult classes focused, among other topics, on the testimonies. There has been hymn singing at the holidays before meeting for worship and caroling on Christmas Eve. These are just a few of the spirit-led activities of Abington meeting.

On May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023 some Byberry Meeting members attended the 20<sup>th</sup> annual Philadelphia Interfaith Peace Walk and in June, two members attended a special event in New York City to mark the rich 75 year history of the Quaker UN office. In October 2023, after much time, the Byberry Meetinghouse addition was completed and the meeting also held their 340<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration in October, 2023 with 55 people in attendance. In November, 2023 a dedication ceremony was held at the Byberry African American Burial Ground accompanied by singing and drumming. Prior to the ceremony there was a meeting for worship and luncheon at Byberry Meetinghouse. Byberry continues to enjoy its rich connection in worship with Upper Dublin Meeting.

Gwynedd Meeting continues to hold a peace vigil on the main road outside the meeting house and also holds midweek worship on zoom. Worship and Ministry Committee, as part of their meetings, continued worship-sharing discussions on Pendle Hill pamphlets: Four Doors to Worship by Bill Taber and Living from the Center by Valerie Brown. The Adult Quaker Education Forum covered such topics as the difference between worship sharing and vocal ministry, the ministry of silence, and presented Lives and Callings as an opportunity for members and attenders to speak about how Quakerism has made a difference in their lives spiritually. As a result of a concern for members who have lost their beloveds a

worship sharing group addressing bereavement was started. The JEDI (justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion) Group continued their ministry by offering zoom book groups around racial concerns, indigenous people, and neurodiversity.

Horsham continues to meet in person only. This summer, a member of Horsham meeting organized a peace camp for non-Quaker young who attend the school where he teaches. It was a wonderful success held on the property of Horsham meeting which will most likely occur again. Horsham is committed to supporting the Worm Project, supplying donations for medications to third world countries. In addition, new attenders continue to come through Horsham's welcoming doors.

Norristown Meeting hosted a well-attended community forum entitled The Heresy of Christian Nationalism which attempted to address the dangers of nationalism which seems to be rearing its dangerous head in so many communities. The meeting also continues to host a daycare program which rents their community room. Maintenance of the Upper Providence Meetinghouse which remains a challenge is a loving ministry which continues and the meeting also continues to host a soup kitchen every Thursday.

Plymouth Meeting continued to discern how information about how Quaker worship works to the attention of attenders. One member said he likes to suggest publications about Quakerism to attenders who say they prefer reading, or videos such as QuakerSpeak. Plymouth continues to offer two meetings for worship and has a concern around addressing the needs of those who choose not to use zoom and the impact this has on meeting unity and community. The meeting is also reaching out to those who have not yet come back since COVID. Some members of the meeting held a peace vigil after their regular midweek worship and several members of the nearby Plymouth Meeting Friends School also attended. Sadly, the vigil will not continue due to low attendance. Members and visitors gathered on Christmas Eve for caroling, worship and a vigil at the meeting's wall. Two members of Plymouth have been serving dinners at the Code Blue outreach shelter at the Church in the Mall at Plymouth Meeting Mall. Plymouth's Music Circles continues, a wonderful outreach attracting musicians from the community as well as members of the meeting. Additionally, the Land Acknowledgment Committee read about the history of Plymouth's relationship with the Pennsylvania Lenape. Several members attended presentations in the area and invited Adam Water bear DePaul, Chief of Education and tribal storyteller of the Pennsylvania Lenape to speak at the meeting in the future.

Richland Meeting continues with a successful "Quaker Shorts" program which occurs once a month during the last 15 minutes of meeting for worship. The goal is to provide information about Quakerism to new attenders as well as to be a refresher for everyone. Topics such as meeting for worship with attention to business, the Spices, clearness committees, and the history of Richland Meeting have been covered. Thinking pro-actively, Richland crafted an Anti-Harassment Policy similar to PYM's policy. The meeting invited members of the Quarter to participate in a two-day workshop on Bill Taber's Four Doors to Meeting for Worship, led by Melissa Wenner Bradley. While there was no attendance by anyone from the Quarter, the program was well attended by Richland Friends who felt they benefited greatly from the event. The meeting hosts "Food for Friends", which along with several other churches in the area, has been providing about 150 takeout meals biweekly for area residents. In December, Richland also presented gift bags to each person filled with useful items like warm socks and hats, toiletries, and candy.

Unami Meeting began the year masked but has since returned to "normal" except for continuing to offer attendance at zoom worship, discussions and meetings for business. Families with young children have been returning and, following a demonstration by Melissa Wenner Bradley of PYM, the meeting has begun a monthly intergenerational worship. Another adjustment made has been dropping twilight meeting, a time at the end of worship when Friends might share messages which haven't risen to vocal ministry. A lively program of discussions on spiritual growth and topics of interest before worship

continues. There has been enthusiastic attendance, especially from young families, a winter social, a summer picnic, a fall workday, and at our December Seasonal Celebration. The Carbon Forest Project continues to grow and the meeting has also become involved in a local effort to create a Code Blue shelter as well supporting and acknowledging a Lenape presence in the wider area.

Upper Dublin Meeting continues worshiping with Byberry meeting and also continues its midweek Unplug and Recharge meetings for worship and pot lucks.

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 encourage intervisitation among friends to understand the challenges that some of our Meetings face, and also to share the joys and blessings which they have received. By knowing those in our Quarter we can celebrate each other and "help each other up with tender hand." We ask you to hold AQM Worship and Ministry Committee 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

On behalf of the Committee