

Minutes of Abington Quarterly Meeting of 2/4/24 -- at Horsham and on Zoom.

Kelly Green, Abington Quarter clerk, opened the meeting at 9AM with a brief interval of silent worship. Then we **approved** the minutes of the 10/1/23 AQ business meeting.

1. Kelly then read his **Clerk's Annual State of the Quarter Report --** He highlighted various significant subjects, such as: – Environmental stewardship, being led by Page Menton who founded “Journey Work,” a nonprofit to deal with this concern; – How our monthly meetings are responding to our concern about terroristic shooters & hate crimes; – Reflections on the wars in our world, with no peaceful reconciliations in prospect; – Brief descriptions of the committees that support our monthly meetings through the quarter structure... as well as other topics. Kelly concluded each of these topics, and others mentioned in his full Clerk's Report, by naming and or thanking committee members, clerks, trustees, and Friends who have taken on responsibilities, such as the AQ newsletter. The full 2023 Clerk's report will be posted in the Members section of the AQ website and is included in these minutes by reference.

2. **Annual AQM Worship & Ministry Report --** Anne Hill, clerk of the committee, began her presentation with an Issac Pennington quotation: “Our Life is love, and peace, and tenderness; and bearing one with another, and forgiving one another...” She then outlined the many notable events reported to the committee by its members who represent all the monthly meetings of the Quarter. The full 2023 W&M report will be on the website and is included in these minutes by reference.

3. **AQM Finance Committee Report --** The committee consists of Tom Armstrong–AQM Treasurer, Linda White–Assistant Treasurer, Jim Hejl, Marguerite Hayes, Kelly Green–AQM Clerk and Robert Reiff–convener. As convener, Bob presented this report: The committee meets each month to oversee the review and reconciliation of each prior month's records. The committee has also reviewed the 2024 Liability and Workers Compensation policies of the Quarter and following members suggestions, asked the Treasurers to open a High Yield Savings account to earn interest on funds that currently are in interest free

accounts. In the next month or so we will be discussing the 2024-25 Quarterly Meeting budget and will bring forward a recommend budget for approval at the 5/5/24 Quarterly Meeting. **We recently received the \$20,000.00 grant from the Shoemaker Fund to assist with first year expenses of the coordinator. The committee recommends that the Quarter ask the AQM Fund committee to make funds available for that same purpose.** It is expected that after the first year, the constituent meetings of the Quarter will step up to fund the coordinator position. **The committee also recommends that the Quarter approve the Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer swapping positions effective 7/1/2024.** This change is part of ensuring the continuity of the finances of the Quarter. Bob having concluded the report, **Kelly put the swapping positions proposal to the meeting and it was approved.** The other request for approval was to ask the AQM fund committee to make funds available this year for the expense of the new coordinator. A question from the room was: “is the to pay the total expense of the coordinator? Bob responded: We see this as our first step; typically the process for applying for funds from the AQM Fund committee is to apply months ahead of the projected need for the funding. We are asking today for approval that the AQM Fund make funds available if the need arises. We have other funds available right now; part of it is the grant from the Shoemaker fund and we have some other funds in our bank account. **But if the need arises the Finance Committee could request funds from the AQM Fund. There was support for this and it was approved.** This report is on the website and is included in these minutes by reference.

4. Abington Quarter Communications Committee report -- Bob Reiff, convener of the committee, presented the report: The committee meets every Monday at 1:30pm on Zoom to discuss website issues, as well as inreach and outreach ideas. Our new coordinator Laura Lanza is a member of the committee and provides input and guidance to help our monthly meetings grow. All meetings are encouraged to participate in this committee. The committee is currently working on getting the monthly meeting websites into compliance. The website Terms and Conditions documents have been updated on all websites by HUBB. However, it is important that your meeting review those Hubb Terms & Conditions to ensure that demographic details are correct. The compliant versions of the Privacy and Copyright policies, which have already been approved by the Quarterly Meeting, have been distributed to all meetings for them to update on

their individual websites. So far 2 of the 10 websites are in compliance with 3 others actively working towards compliance. It is important to get your websites into compliance as soon as possible to avoid any possible legal issues. If you need assistance or have any questions or concerns, please contact me - Bob Reiff, at abingtonquarter@gmail.com. This report is on the website and is included in these minutes by reference.

5.AQ Coordinator Support Committee Report -(AQCSC)- The committee consists of Tom Armstrong, Kelly Green, Amelia Diamond, and Bob Reiff, Convener. At the 12/3/23 (called) Abington Quarterly Meeting, Friends approved the hiring of Laura Lanza contingent on a review of her references. The committee subsequently reviewed those references and hired Lanza effective 1/8/24. After Bob concluded the AQCSC presentation, Bob asked us to join him in welcoming Laura Lanza as our new Communications Coordinator, and invited her to address the meeting. The AQCSC report is on the AQ website and is included in the minutes by reference.

Laura Lanza said she is usually known as “Lanza,” and said she came into the Quaker community from working with Penny Colgan Davis, former clerk of PYM. Lanza is a member of Green Street MM. She said she has been to 12 meetings so far, as our coordinator – in AQ and the broader PYM area. She has noticed some disconnect between yearly and quarterly meetings – better coordination is needed! Her new AQ job will be part-time, for 20 hours a week. She plans to visit all our AQ monthly meetings in the near future. She has served as Philadelphia Quarter coordinator and currently also has a part time job at 4th & Arch St - Philadelphia Monthly Meeting. She will be attending the AQ Communication Committee's meetings on a regular basis.

6. Abington Quarterly Meeting Fund 2023 Annual Report

The mission of the Fund (AQMF) is to strengthen Abington Quarterly Meeting and its constituent monthly meetings by funding projects and activities that are consistent with Quaker principles and beliefs. Its investments are managed by Friends Fiduciary, which makes semi-annual distributions to fund AQMF grants. AQMF has two granting periods per year, Spring and Fall.

Spring 2023 grants disbursed: \$ 9,667.14 – distributed among:
Unami Monthly Meeting – Replacement of meeting house gutters.
Plymouth MM – Meeting property stewardship project to capture carbon and increase biodiversity.
Gwynedd MM – Meeting property stewardship project to capture carbon and increase biodiversity.
Abington MM – Grant to support their Accessibility, Safety, and Inclusion project.

Fall 2023 – No grant requests received; no funds disbursed.
funds carried forward and available for grants in 2024: 6,075.54

This report was presented by AQMF Clerk David Miller
The full 2023 AQMF report is on the website and is included in these minutes by reference.

7. The Shoemaker Grant presentation - Mary Ellen McNish

Bob Reiff put Mary Ellen's power point slide show on the screen. A graphical slide showed 25% fewer Quaker meetings in the United States in 2020 as compared to 2010, and 13% fewer members. Declines of similar magnitudes are happening to all traditional Christian Churches; Mary Ellen noted that “The Fund for Sacred Spaces” uses its resources to offset financial difficulties these declines create. Quaker yearly meetings in the US do not keep statistics in a uniform way; some don't keep them at all so it's difficult to know precisely how bad our declines are. The Shoemaker Fund was set up in 1920s by Shoemaker family members of Green St MM. The Fund’s sole purpose is to revitalize the Religious Society of Friends. In recent years it has made grants to Quaker Quest, Quaker Speak videos, and now one to Quaker Podcasts. At this point Mary Ellen made a telling comment: “But all these years of giving out millions of dollars have not turned around the trajectory. The numbers keep dwindling. So we have to figure out what to do. In the view of the members of the board of the Shoemaker Fund (full disclosure: Mary Ellen is on the board), the monthly meetings are the place from which spiritual authority is given birth... we are the base.” Little meetings in particular are struggling. In 2020 Byberry MM, created a model to address this problem, and obtained a Shoemaker grant to engage a 20 hour/week coordinator for two years. There are other such models: The South Jersey Quakers from Burlington, Salem and Haddonfield quarters are all working together to coordinate their websites and social media.

Radnor meeting – with about 10 nearby colleges (including Bryn Mawr, Swarthmore, and Haverford, which were founded by Quakers) – has a program they call “Benjamin Lay Fellows.” They recruit 10 college students each semester and pay them a stipend to do one project for Radnor Meeting – it's also a way to get those young people involved. New York and New England yearly meetings did a joint project where New England focused on families with young children and New York focused on young adults. Earlham School of Religion in Indiana has a huge Lilly Foundation grant for a Quaker Leadership Center. Friends World Committee for Consultation has a million dollar Lilly grant to fund FWCC's programs.

Mary Ellen's next slide focused on the coordinator model that Byberry developed. Susan Vorwerk took on the part time job and was very effective. Unfortunately, her personal priorities in response to Covid led to a parting of the ways. But luckily the Shoemaker fund was very pleased with the work Byberry accomplished with Susan, and so they were open to another grant proposal. At this point Shoemaker has recently funded a new grant to help Byberry, Upper Dublin (UD) and Abington Quarter (AQ). Mike Doyle was hired by Byberry on 12/1/23. As Mike also lives in the neighborhood everyone concerned thought he would be good fit for their goals of reaching out to the local community and getting increased attendance, in accordance with the same general “coordinator” model that they started with. This new grant provides Byberry \$150 thousand over 3 years to support the coordinator and meetinghouse property issues; also, 30K to UD for a strategic plan; and 20K pays for AQ's coordinator carrying out activities to build monthly meetings congregations.

Old Business - **8. PYM Advocacy policy**

Deb Hejl of Gwynedd Meeting updated us on the controversy around PYM's recently adopted Advocacy Policy, which asks its own committees and collaboratives and the monthly and quarterly meetings to discontinue any activities that encourage others to support a specific piece of legislation or to participate in grassroots lobbying. The policy came about because monthly meetings and quarterly meetings' 501c(3) status is tied up with PYM's, Political actions by a monthly meeting could potentially threaten that status. Last October PYM had a "threshing session" about this, and resumed the discussion in their November

continuing sessions. Voices from many of PYM's collaborative groups expressed concern that the advocacy policy represents an over-abundance of caution. Termination of a legitimate religious organization's tax exempt 501c(3) status has never happened. We have always been allowed to do certain amount of advocacy work.

PYM's Legislative Policy Collaborative laid itself down because it could not function with the new advocacy policy. Individuals are free to engage in political activity, of course, as are tax-exempt social welfare 501c(4) organizations, but not those so engaging on behalf of a 501c(3). Deb said some parts of the policy are clearly wrong. For example, it implies that although monthly meetings can use newsletters or websites to advocate for peace or against war in general, they can't use them to advocate for or against any particular bill in Congress; the PYM policy would not let monthly or quarterly meetings or their committees communicate with members about particular bills in Congress; that restriction would hobble FCNL (Friends Committee on National Legislation). We were told that we are not allowed to refer people to the parts of the FCNL website that advocate support for a particular bill.

In view of the general opposition to the policy expressed at these PYM sessions, Deb said the presiding clerk of PYM plans to meet with the PYM Administrative Council (who wrote and supports the policy) to see if together they can work out something more acceptable.

At this point it was time for Horsham's meeting for worship (MfW). Kelly took a moment to introduce and welcome Clarence Freed from the Worm Project, reminding us to reconvene after MfW as Dr Freed would be making a presentation

Kelly concluded the morning session

We resumed the AQ meeting after MfW -- Kelly asked us to take a minute in silent, thankful prayer, recognizing that we are here with God. After a short interval Kelly reminded us we will have a few more business items to consider after Dr. Freed's presentation.

9. Dr. Freed's Worm Project presentation

Dr. Freed began by calling our attention to little stacks of Worm Project (WP)

newsletters, and fliers for us he had placed on a nearby table, as well as his WP business card. Also, he has a small stock of books about the WP founder and the project's early history that he would be happy to donate – for any monthly meeting's bookshelves or libraries. He encouraged us to get in touch with him to obtain a book, or to ask questions or make suggestions.

He explained that he is a retired doctor who started in on charitable work in the early 2000s with Habitat for Humanity, helping to build houses in Guatemala and Haiti. He worked on construction and treated a lot of people for heat related issues (up to 132 degrees !) and got into serious medicine when the big earthquake struck Haiti. After strenuous times dealing with earthquake injuries, he volunteered to join a clinic in Haiti. Right away, people who came into the clinic were asking for deworming pills. In Haiti at that time the retail price of these pills was two US dollars. But that was unaffordable to many in Haiti's post-earthquake economic chaos, Then Dr. Freed found out the wholesale price of those pills was only one cent each.

Next, Dr. Freed told us about the severe health and developmental consequences of worm infestation in children. In all tropical countries these worms are endemic, especially afflicting poor children who go around barefoot. When Dr. Freed realized these tropical worms are such a massive problem and found out that the Worm Project was handing out pills for free to children in many countries, he decided to volunteer.

At this point he launched into a detailed description of the Worm Project. These minutes could never adequately convey his enthusiasm, nor the full scope of the Project, so please visit the Worm Project's website:

[**https://wormproject.org**](https://wormproject.org) For an effective introduction there are 4 short videos (5 minutes +/- each) under the “About Us” pull-down menu at the top of Worm Project webpages.

After thanking Dr. Freed, Kelly reminded us that Betsy Lukshides of Horsham Meeting introduced AQ to the Worm Project a few years ago, and through her persuasive efforts Worm Project donation receptacles have been installed at our monthly meetings, situated at appropriately visible locations. Thanking Betsy, Kelly explained that when friends want to contribute, they should just scoop spare change out of pocket or purse and throw it into the WP receptacle. It adds up – each penny deworms a poor child – a gift of incalculable, life-transforming value.

10. Additional AQ Business – Kelly asked, about approving the minutes from AQ's Special Called Meeting of Twelfth Month 3, 2023, during which we had instructed the Communications Committee to vet Laura Lanza's references and hire her if they were favorable; they were; and she is now on board. Friends present **approved** the minutes.

Deb Hejl, who is on the Friends Committee on National Legislation's executive committee, talked about "the world we seek" – FCNL's policy statement listing issues that the US congress should address. As it does every two years, **FCNL is asking every monthly Meeting to come up with 5 issues** they recommend for this statement. Please convey recommendations by April 15 (tax day!).

Next we discussed scheduling for 2024 AQ Meetings. FWCC's "International Quaker Day" falls on the same day our 11th month meeting would normally be held, so, do we move that meeting to 10th month, just 2 months after the 8th month meeting? We did not resolve this question, so Kelly asked Friends to contact him with their recommendations or suggestions.

Bob Reiff asked about **finding a volunteer to be Rising Clerk**. This is an unresolved issue. Kelly agreed that we need to find one, and suggested that if there is a Friend who feels called to volunteer, this is a good time to do it. He said all of us need to encourage friends who we think might be willing to serve.

There being no further issues or questions, Kelly suggested we find a quiet spot in our minds to thank God for being with us today in community. After a brief interval of silent reflection, **we concluded the meeting at 12:20PM.**