

State of the Meeting – Hockessin Friends Meeting, March 7, 2022

In July 2021 PYM approved minutes of action to be taken on anti-racism and climate change. How has your meeting been called to address these issues? What other concerns and initiatives has your meeting been led to address this past year?

Our Meeting has a number of initiatives addressing climate change and anti-racism issues. Our Peace and Outreach Committee organized a program for Delaware Peace Week in conjunction with DE Interfaith Power and Light, a non profit mobilizing people of faith to take action on climate change. The program included a presentation by Swarthmore professor Lee Smithey entitled Creating Peace Through Climate Action. Those that attended and participated via Zoom went away with a call to more direct and urgent action to address the difficulties we face with our rapidly changing climate.

Friends of The Peace and Outreach Committee has also had a longstanding involvement with the Friends of Hockessin Colored School #107 which was deeply involved in the Brown v. Board of Education decision which desegregated public schools nationwide in 1954. We are planning to increase our involvement with a joint activity in 10th month. Our Fundraising Committee has also joined in our support by donating the money we made at our Annual Bazaar to the preservation of HCS #107.

We continue to be involved with LCH Health and Community Services and their Escalera program assisting Latino students at Avon Grove HS with career and educational goals. We have broadened the scope and impact of this program by bringing it to the attention of other Meetings in Western Quarter.

Members of meeting are also responding to Friends National Committee on Legislation (FCNL) regarding FCNL's request for input on priorities. Members are asked to review FCNL's "The World We Seek: Statement of Legislative Policy and consider their priorities for advocacy which will be reported back to FCNL.

Lastly, we have been able to help out with Family Promise by preparing and serving food to the homeless families who are moving through this program.

How has your meeting evolved as a spiritual community given the ongoing opportunities and challenges of the pandemic?

We have worked to embrace the rewards and difficulties we have faced with meeting via Zoom. One positive impact has been the vibrant and growing Adult First Day program which has been able to reach more participants as a result of using Zoom. Conversely, we have lost some very good momentum we had going with the Children's First Day program. We suspect some amount of "computer fatigue" has been at least in part affecting the attendance because of the long hours students are in front of their screens for school.

As weather and conditions have allowed we have had many very enjoyable and engaged Meeting for Worship opportunities outdoors. When the weather has been less cooperative we have managed to meet in our Meeting room using multiple air purifiers and wearing masks. We have also had some outdoor holiday gatherings and several bonfires throughout the year to permit us to meet in person and socialize in a safe manner. Our Annual Bazaar was able to go on as planned, again with many outdoor components and some modifications to keep us all safe and healthy. We were also able to continue our holiday Carol Singing and Wreath making with some socially distanced protocols.

We were very grateful that musicians and participants were willing to brave some cold weather to keep these events going.

In this past year, the Meeting has continued as a spiritual resource for its members and attenders using Zoom. We have continued the use of Zoom even when we meet in person for those who choose to remain at home. The hybrid of in-person worship that includes Zoom participants has been very successful.

What practice and strategies are employed by your meeting to help members and attenders of all ages prepare for worship – whether in Meeting for Worship or in Meeting for Business?

As we still share concerns about the numerous variants of the virus, we have relied on our Ad Hoc Reopening Committee to help guide us in deciding when and how much we can meet in person. We have continued our Children's Meeting for Worship for Business which has been an excellent practice for bringing our children into the active life of the Meeting. With Zoom there have been some difficulties in maintaining this practice, so we hope as we are able to return to more in person gatherings the momentum will be regained. We have recently felt the need to call ourselves to greater worshipfulness. Many see the stresses and complications of meeting by Zoom as the distractions that have driven this concern, but we hope to be more attentive to this concern in all of our committees and our Meetings for Worship and for Business. We anticipate that much of this strengthening will occur as we are able to reconnect in person. Many of our members and attenders who prefer not to attend via Zoom have eagerly anticipated the chances for us to reopen and meet together again.

Recently, Meeting is re-establishing opening exercises that will include a brief reading and one or two hymns before Meeting for Worship begins. It is anticipated that this will help members and attenders focus finding it easier to center into expectant waiting during silent worship.

What is most needed to strengthen the communal witness of the meeting to the local community and beyond?

As many of the local community events return, we expect to be more present to our neighbors and the community around us. Our continuing involvement with LCH Health and Community Services, the Friends of Hockessin Colored School #107, DE Interfaith Power and Light and Family Promise have helped keep us connected and present to our local community. During this past year we have created an Instagram presence and look forward to adding Twitter as well. Our Facebook page has been a valuable tool for us in reaching those that might be interested in attending or participating in Meeting and the Annual Bazaar has brought in many people from our area and given them a chance to get to know us better. One concern we have is in maintaining the energy for all of these very important activities as we struggle to keep all of our members and attenders connected to Meeting. We also struggle with the best way to get younger members involved and energized to be part of the work and life of the Meeting.

Is there a query or queries that your meeting would like to respond to that has not been included here?

The query that came to us was, "how do Meetings prevent burnout when membership is low and goals are so large?" We also asked if we are sufficiently valuing our members and attenders contributions to the work and life of Meeting. The final query we ask ourselves and other Meetings is, "what is your Meeting doing to engage younger members and to create an active future Meeting?"