

## **Newtown Friends Meeting Memorial Minute for Howard Paul Kester**

Newtown Friends Meeting mourns the loss of Howard Paul Kester, a lifelong member, even as we reflect on the life of our resident historian, philosopher and Friend. For over 50 years, Paul's ministry enriched our Meetings for worship. When not in Meeting, Paul's considerable administrative and legislative skills served a wider community of F/friends, and a still broader community of Bucks County residents.

During a lifetime of service, Paul served on or clerked Worship and Ministry, Overseers and the Financial Oversight Committees, but his presence was everywhere; organizing, planning and coordinating were his forte. For years he orchestrated the men's annual Easter Pancake Breakfast and served as conductor (maestro). He planned, shopped, cooked and did not leave until the last person finished eating and the dishes were clean and put away.

Paul also remained active in Bucks Quarterly Meeting where he often served on BQM Worship and Ministry and the Budget and Nominating Committee. As Newtown Meeting's representative to BQM, he attended Business Meetings far and wide, and his reports back to Newtown were invariably clear and concise.

Paul's indefatigable energy and determination were a source of wonder. His long list of activities extended to Philadelphia Yearly Meeting for most of his adult life and his work there was far-reaching. Most recently, Paul clerked the Financial Oversight Working Group (FOWG), a committee formed to research the archives of PYM's numerous funds and bequests. With Paul's organizational talents, the committee oversaw the task of researching complicated details that had become confused or obscured over the years. The end result is a carefully documented, comprehensive, coherent and unambiguous description of PYM funds and bequests. That endeavor will benefit PYM for the foreseeable future and beyond.

Paul's natural inquisitiveness led him to explore the history and philosophy of almost everything. He had a lifelong love of Chinese thought and art. He particularly enjoyed relating the history of William Penn and Bucks County, as well as of Edward Hicks and Newtown, and of Newtown Friends Meeting. His grandparents had moved to this area so that their children could attend George School. Paul, along with his brother and two sisters, followed that tradition, as did two of Paul's daughters. Paul received his bachelor's degree from Earlham College before attending law school. Quaker education was an integral part of the way he conducted his life.

Paul and his wife Mary passed on their love of learning to their daughters: Valerie, Robin, Dana and Karen. Their children recall a family culture of creativity and exploration. After Mary died in 2009, Paul felt a leading to promote Peace in the world. He created a website with many links to other Peace sites and he hoped that his own writings about that part of his Spiritual Journey would remain a guidepost, and part of his legacy to us.

Newtown Friends Meeting will miss Paul. His dedication and commitment, along with his words and writing, provide a permanent reminder of his love for Friends, and for Newtown Friends Meeting. In his final days he shared with us his gratitude. He spoke of feeling at peace with the world. We can celebrate Paul's life with his family now, knowing that he ended his days at peace with himself and with us.

Caroline Wilson  
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