

Worship & Ministry Committee -- Annual Report -- October, 2020

At the beginning of 2020 Worship and Ministry set an agenda for the year of continuing with consideration of deepening worship, enhancing a sense of centered space in the meetinghouse, and creating opportunity for committee members to share their spiritual concerns.

By March the Pandemic had refocused how we addressed these priorities. Concern for the space in the meetinghouse was transformed to the question of could our worship be deep and satisfying over Zoom. Suprisingly, we found digital Worship deep, and found the Spirit was available and could lead us however we gathered.

Friends from Pennswood, Friends Home and Village and Friends who live outside the Newtown area are able to participate via Zoom more easily than in person. Zoom also promoted concerns for the environment as Friends did not drive cars to Meeting for Worship or even to the committee meetings.

At Easter the meeting adapted to the Zoom environment with an Easter Adult Religious Education program with Bible Readings on Passover, the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus with music provided by Jeff Dershin on piano. The children did not participate with the customary readings as we learned that families were stressed by remote schooling and too much screen time.

In June, the Committee hosted a Worship Sharing using the query "How have you experienced Worship during the stay at home order?" There was a rich sharing of the experience of participants of Worship during lock down.

Continuing with the adaptation, the W&M committee plans to sponsor a Christmas Eve 2020 Meeting for Worship via Zoom, but with a presence of a few members on the facing bench in the Meeting house with candlelight and evergreen decorations.

While many Friends miss in person Worship, the inclusiveness we discovered using Zoom will likely be a part of any return to in person Worship. Marybeth Snyder represented Worship and Ministry in an *ad hoc* committee on return to in person Worship: the *ad hoc committee* found the time not ripe to risk in person Worship. Return to in-person worship will likely be in the summer or fall of 2021.

Early in the pandemic Worship and Ministry joined with Care and Counsel to reach out to members and attenders who may not easily join via computer. We deeply regret our loss of regular contact in worship with those who cannot or do not choose to join on Zoom.

The committee's priority of making space for committee members to share their spiritual concerns was intensified by the pandemic. Committee members, like many others in the meeting and elsewhere, felt stress and anxiety caused by social distancing and by the cascade of racial, environmental, and political tensions in our country.

In response, the committee felt led to develop an Adult Religious Education program called Searched by the Light. Early Friends found the Light could challenge Friends to uncover dark places in the soul that kept Friends from connection with God. The Light could also heal the dark place, that some might call sin. This program was prompted by one Friend's concerned response to systemic racism that 2020 racial injustice in policing is bringing to Light. Searched by the Light will be an Adult First Day program in January 2021, and will be preceded by a series of articles on this subject in the meeting newsletter.

Pandemic restrictions kept Worship & Ministry from our customary organization of worship services at Chandler Hall.

Prior to the pandemic committee members helped to organize the memorial service for our beloved member Robert Appelbaum.

In our October committee meeting, Worship and Ministry committee members look forward to using a Spirit lead, corporate discernment process to choose a new clerk for 2021.

Respectfully
submitted,

Marybeth Snyder
Clerk