

Peace and Justice Committee
Annual Report June 2022

We are a committee comprised of members and attenders who meet monthly (except in July and August) to take up the concerns of individual members, attenders, and the Meeting as a whole. We attempt to live in peace, incorporating into our daily activities the other testimonies of stewardship of the Earth, integrity, community, equality and simplicity.

Current active members are Steve Bacher, Gene Borish, Matt Chandler, Betsy Crofts, Judy Fellows, Kathy Harr, Diane LeBas, Nancy Martin, Alisa Myles. There are two openings. This year we welcomed John Magee, a member of Southampton Meeting where he has been a committee of one, to join us so we can consider together ways to collaborate on more than the Black Lives Matter vigils in Newtown and Southampton.

Most of our activity comes out of the work of two subcommittees, Racial Justice and Environmental Action. Membership in each is not limited to P&J members. Anyone interested should contact Nancy Martin or Kathy Harr.

Racial Justice has sponsored the bi-weekly vigils at Washington and State Street in Newtown since June 2020. They presented an Adult First Day program in October that included photographs and comments from participants followed by discussion in small groups. One outcome was a presentation for Adult First Day by Barbara Simmons on microaggressions. Newtown Meeting's commitment as a member congregation of POWER Bucks is overseen by Racial Justice. This grew from a few Meeting members' leading. Pat McBee, Nancy Martin and Norma Kaplis serve on POWER committees that are advocating for full and fair funding for education and voting rights, and they enlist others of us to attend rallies and contact our legislators.

Environmental Action has spent this year supporting the Meeting's discernment process related to the loss of the adjacent parking lot. We are grateful for the listening sessions and the hard work and great patience of the ad hoc Parking Committee that resulted in a decision to build only the North lot extension at this time. The subcommittee is looking forward to collaborating with Building and Grounds as they begin a comprehensive plan process for the meeting house grounds.

Another example of stewarding an individual's leading is this Meeting's support for Bucks County Interfaith Coalition for Refugee Resettlement (BCICRR). Two Syrian families who arrived in 2017 are well settled and have earned American citizenship. An Afghan family of 6 arrived much more recently and are settling into their apartment in Morrisville. The Meeting has covered one month's rent each year for the Syrian families who are now close to being self-sufficient. This year's contribution of one month's rent for the Afghan family has been approved by Financial Oversight. It is this committee's recommendation that the amount be doubled as a reflection of our concern for those who worked closely with Americans in Afghanistan and so were especially vulnerable to harm as the Taliban took control of their country.

Peace and Justice has always looked to FCNL (Friends Committee for National Legislation) for direction in guiding our advocacy efforts with members of Congress. This year, when asked for recommendations for Legislative Priorities for the 118th Congress, we used our March Adult First Day session to gather in small groups for discernment. The seven key priorities that emerged were approved by monthly meeting in April and sent on to the Legislative Policies Committee of FCNL's General Committee for their consideration.

Legislative Priorities for the 118th Congress as discerned by Newtown Monthly Meeting

1. Promote peacebuilding by emphasizing diplomacy and by working towards peaceful prevention and resolution of violent conflict. Advocate for an unarmed civilian peaceforce to mediate and mitigate.
2. Urge recognition of the role of climate disruption as a significant cause of violent conflict.
3. Promote nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Prohibit the use of tactical nuclear weapons.
4. Ensure that the U.S. immigration system promotes and respects the rights, safety, humanity, and dignity of all immigrants, refugees, and migrants whether from war, persecution or climate disruption.
5. Advocate for a justice system that is fair and equitable. Eliminate mass incarceration, racially biased policing, private prisons. Support bail reform and the re-enfranchising of returning citizens.
6. Champion national common core standards K-12 that encompass civics to preserve democracy, sustainable scientific solutions to the climate crisis, and the economic basis of social equity.
7. Strengthen environmental protections and advance environmental justice, while recognizing the finite capacity of the earth and the need to protect diversity. Promote the restoration of land damaged by human activity.

Looking ahead, Peace and Justice will in September start a seasoning process for a proposal brought to us by Will Reid who would like to see Newtown Meeting become a sponsor for one of the Right Sharing of World Resources micro-lending projects in Africa or India. RSWR gives grants to groups of marginalized women to fund individual micro-enterprise projects.

Betsy Crofts and Nancy Martin, interim clerks
Peace and Justice