

Clerks Annual Report  
November 2020  
**Clerk's Annual Report -- Chiyo Moriuchi**

This year brought high anxiety and upheaval in our daily lives. Meeting members found calm and connection in our virtual Meeting for Worship. Our community has proven to be resilient and supportive.

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, Newtown Meeting shifted to virtual Meeting for Worship on March 13th. While we sorely miss the handshakes and hugs of in-person gathering and the familiar surroundings of our beautiful Meetinghouse, Zoom web conferencing has provided a surprisingly satisfactory substitute with some benefits of its own. We have welcomed Friends from afar and enjoyed glimpses into each other's homes. The mosaic of faces greeting us each Sunday reminds us of the love we share. During this time of political discord and widespread recognition of historic injustices, we came together in our discernment on issues of climate change and racial justice. As a body, we seek to ensure that our words translate into actions that will lead to meaningful change.

We have worked to carry on traditions. Bibles and Faith & Practice were given to Fourth and Eighth graders, respectively. Candlelight Christmas Eve worship and Homecoming will be held. Prints of Edward Hicks' Peaceable Kingdom will be given to those turning 21 years old.

Our Adult Religious Education program is remarkable. We enjoyed 22 programs (16 in-person followed by 6 via Zoom). This fall, programs have continued on Zoom. We have heard a wide range of topics from expert views of COVID-19 to members' Spiritual Journeys.

Children's Religious Education has also adapted. Approximately 6-8 younger children attend regularly and 5-6 middle schoolers attend sporadically. Several others have been more involved in the past but are now less engaged. Given families' fatigue with online meetings, the program shifted to an activity packet sent to each family and one in-person, socially distanced gathering every month. A take-home, zoom-in Simple Supper and game night is being arranged to support a charity of the children's choice.

In 2020, we welcomed: 1 new member and 5 transfers into the meeting (3 adults and 2 minor members). One minor member and 2 associate members turned 21.

Worship & Ministry has worked to ensure that worship continued to be deep and satisfying in spite of the changed circumstances. Easter service included Bible readings and music. The committee also hosted a worship sharing on the quality of Meeting for Worship during the lockdown. The committee is making arrangements to create a greater sense of the season during the Christmas Eve worship even though it will also be virtual. A memorial service was held for Bob Appelbaum, a beloved part of our community.

Care & Counsel Committee has worked to maintain connection with members who cannot or choose to not participate via zoom. They have continued their efforts to connect with distant Friends and provide quilts to those who are ill. The committee led the discussions around the meaning of membership.

With the murder of George Floyd and the Black Lives Matter protests this summer, our Peace and Justice Committee has been extremely active. A silent vigil has been held every other Friday since June 19th on State Street in Newtown. The Committee led the Meeting's discernment on PYM's query regarding racial justice and organized Newtown's program for Quarterly Meeting, soliciting young adult Friends to share videos of their perspectives on racial justice. Earlier in the year, the Committee had organized a regular postcard writing campaign to legislators along with readings and discussions on race. The Committee supported members' involvement in a local building project of Habitat for Humanity which was named the beneficiary of the children's Simple Supper fundraiser. The Meeting supported the interfaith initiatives of Heeding God's Call to end Gun Violence and joined the Bucks County chapter of POWER .

Our meetinghouse remains closed. We have chosen to continue to pay our cleaning help. As ever, the Building & Grounds committee is busy managing care for our trees, on-going regular maintenance, and larger capital projects. Ceiling fans and efficient LED lights have been installed. The wood floors were refinished and the carpets cleaned. Utility service has been switched to a provider of 100% renewable energy. The graveyard subcommittee continues its research and organization of our burial ground. They have entered 514 names into the public database of cemetery records FindAGrave.com .

The ad hoc parking committee continues to work on potential parking strategies for the meeting. The developer of the adjacent lot where we will no longer be allowed to park has received regulatory approvals and development is expected to proceed.

Prior to the COVID lockdown, the Inreach/Outreach Committee had organized Friendly 8's dinners, a spiritual exploration retreat and newcomer potlucks. A major initiative was a survey of meeting members to learn more about who we are and what members are interested in. The committee has been successful at welcoming visitors and nurturing their interest in the Meeting. Over the last three years, 20 adults have become members along with 8 children.

The Communications Committee has been remarkably effective at rationalizing and improving our communications. The website has been revamped, and the committee has created clear guidelines on what goes where and who is responsible. As a result, it is a valuable resource and reference for both those inquiring about Quakerism as well as our Meeting community. Announcements, email blasts, the newsletter and our Facebook page have consistent information and have defined roles in our communications strategy.

Newtown Friends School, which is under the care of Newtown Monthly Meeting, was able to quickly pivot to robust on-line learning in the spring. Due to COVID, the school paused its exploration of the International Baccalaureate. The school was able to open this fall in-person for its younger students and with a hybrid model for the older students. This has proven to be attractive to area families given the disarray of the public schools response to the pandemic. As a result, NFS is fully enrolled with 270 students. 12% of the student body is Quaker. The Meeting is exploring supporting the installation of solar energy system at the school as an expression of our concern for the global climate.