

2021 Worship & Ministry Annual Report

Tim Mammel, Clerk

During the year 2020, Worship and Ministry focused on creating opportunities for deepening worship and took on the challenges of the pandemic. We encouraged continued connection and worship while people were in isolation. In 2021, still affected by the pandemic, Worship and Ministry continued an agenda for deepening worship and embraced deepening discernment for meetings for business.

On October 25th, 2020, Worship & Ministry grounded these themes with a worship sharing on the divisive 2020 election, titled With Malice Toward None. The meeting took place on Zoom in the evening, to hold the upcoming election and the state of the nation in the light. The meeting was attended by about twenty people and thoughtful worship sharing occurred.

In traditional events, on December 20, we joined Children's Religious Education in a Christmas Zoom program of reading and hymns played by Jeff Dershin. We urged Meeting to continue the Christmas Eve tradition of silent worship and were joined by Care and Counsel who announced the offering of the Edward Hicks prints to members of our community who turn 21. Worship & Ministry's John Davidson accompanied Clerk Chiyo Moriuchi to the Meeting House and lit a candle there, as part of the Christmas Eve Zoom meeting, to symbolize a future return to in-person Worship. The worship ended with the traditional singing of the carol, Silent Night, performed by Luke Mammel.

In January, hosted Searched by the Light: a program to help participants discover the Truth: Per Faith and Practice "Friends find that the Light Within...Reveals who we are, including what we would prefer not to see about ourselves, and leads us out of spiritual darkness or dryness" This programming to explore deepening worship included two adult First Day sessions and a special called meeting on the evening of January 31st. The committee took an informal survey of the attendees of the Searched by the Light sessions to be guided on designing future programming that would meet the interests of the members. Several members stated they were interested in continuing the deepening exploration with the triads. A special evening program was held, again on May 23, with worship sharing on how we continue to be open to be "searched by the Light." The slides for this program are on the meeting website.

On April 4th, Worship & Ministry coordinated with the CRE committee and presented a Zoom Easter program: Walking the Way of Peace from Palm Sunday to Easter: A Response to the Capitol Hill Riot. Worship & Ministry presented a Quakerly interpretation of Holy Week stories suggesting that the Father of Jesus was not a God of wrath murdering his son to atone for human sins, but rather a God of Love willing his son to accept the cross in the name of Love and thus to bring about someday our human at-one-ment. The Peaceable Kingdom! Special invitations were sent to the high school students of the meeting and several joined the program. It was a delight to have families join in the program during this time of isolation. At the request of Clerk Mark Ratliff, Worship & Ministry held a special meeting with the clerk to design a program on deepening discernment for meetings for business. This followed an adult class led by Arthur Larrabee on discernment. A program Discerning the Leadings of the Spirit for

Our Community was created and a special meeting on Zoom was held on June 27th with a slide presentation and worship sharing on queries that were presented in the program and on the website. The Newtown Meeting community has been working hard to come to unity on a decision regarding building a parking lot on the grounds, and more broadly, what our vision is for use and care of the Meetinghouse property. Worship & Ministry has been working with the Clerk of the Meeting in encouraging our community to use this challenge of decision making to deepen our discernment and strengthen the worship in meetings for business. It is our experience that our members have taken this opportunity to go deeper into worship and discernment.

During the Summer months, Worship & Ministry initiated outdoor worship every Sunday at 9am. Members of the meeting were eager to have in-person gatherings. The outdoor meetings are being held in the front (West) side of the meetinghouse grounds, under a beautiful canopy provided by the large trees in that area. A wide range of singing birds provided ongoing music for these worship sessions. Many members expressed being inspired by worship in such a beautiful setting and were grateful to have in-person gatherings again. The average attendance of these gatherings was about 20, including 2 to 3 children and 1 dog. Meeting for Worship on Zoom continues, with between 20 and 40 attenders.

Worship and Ministry remains dedicated to supporting space and opportunities for our community to go ever deeper in our experience and exploration of the leadings of the Spirit, and to allow our Friendship in the Spirit to grow stronger.