

2022 Annual Report
Children's Religious Education
Annemarie Hindman, Clerk

Year in review. The 2021-2022 CRE year has seen some very welcome relief from the intense COVID shutdown period, in that we have been able to meet with children at the Meetinghouse since fall. We have shifted the time of our CRE class from 9:45 am - 10:45 am to 11:20 am - 12:00 pm in order to reduce the amount of time that the Meetinghouse is occupied (which in turn potentially diminishes COVID risks). At the start of the year, before vaccination was approved for school-aged children, all children were masked during CRE, but since spring we have moved (along with the larger community) to a mask-optional policy. Babysitters provide coverage from 11:20 am -12:00 pm on the first Sunday of every month, and children have really enjoyed this time with Meeting teens. CRE thanks Sharon Hulihan for her tireless recruitment and support of the babysitting team.

Weekly classes. This year we have been able to meet nearly weekly with children, and we have made a concerted effort to include more content about the Old and New Testaments. We began the year with a Faith-and-Play-style presentation of the Parable of the Good Samaritan, and since then we have covered topics such as core imagery in the Bible (dove, olive branch), Noah's Ark, the birth of Jesus, the expectant waiting process of Advent, the period of Lent, and the resurrection of Jesus. Still to come is a discussion of the Sermon on the Mount and the Lord's Prayer. Throughout, the kids have truly enjoyed being together again, playing, and generally chatting about life and the universe. The chance to have these young Friends together again has been a rich learning and Fellowship opportunity for all. For example, our class on Lent ended up launching a lengthy discussion about the origins of the universe. We will conclude our year with, as above, a few additional points about the Bible and time to enjoy the outdoors through stewardship-related work (weeding, stick, and trash collection) on the grounds in concert with Buildings and Grounds.

Fundraising dinners. In October, Lisa Li was again led to organize a fundraising dinner, which was a lovely opportunity for the community to come together. This was a particularly special event for CRE, because children were asked to discern an appropriate beneficiary of the proceeds. Meeting adults initially asked the children to consider Bucks County Interfaith Coalition for Refugee Resettlement, in the wake of the American military departure from Iraq and the advance of ISIS forces in the region. The children met and discussed the dinner on Sept 12, 2021. They were very interested in the BCICRR cause; however, they also all had recently discussed the events of September 11, 2001, in school and were also deeply committed to supporting victims of that tragedy and their families. A subcommittee of interested children (Jack and Lydia Ciccimaro and Charlie Forte) collaborated to select a specific charity for that cause, and proceeds were divided between BCICRR and Tuesday's Children. As with the previous year, Lisa and Cynthia and a team of adult and teen volunteers packaged soups for takeout. Donors then drove to the Meetinghouse and picked up their soup, and later that evening Lisa convened a Zoom gathering. A total of \$2,515 was raised, divided between the two causes.

In spring, Lisa and Cynthia again led a lasagna dinner with Mercer Street Friends as the recipient. Although a take-out option was provided, Friends also congregated face to face in the

Meetinghouse and on the porch for a more traditional dinner, complete with aproned children serving. A total of \$3,300 was raised.

CRE would like to once again express our deep appreciation for Lisa Li as an organizational mastermind and Cynthia Vandenberg as the logistical leader. These events represent a substantial investment of time and energy, and we are deeply grateful to this Dream Team for their continued work to help our Meeting serve the larger community and to model the importance of service to our children.

Holiday programs. In December, we departed from our Christmas pageant to allow children to create some queries for Meeting adults about their own Christmas memories and experiences. Children prepared the queries ahead of time, and we shared them with adults in small groups both in the Meetinghouse and on Zoom. Debbie Watts again oversaw the music for the event, bringing a number of exceptional string musicians, including some young and exceptionally impressive prodigies.

Children also requested and carried out a Simple Secret Santa event in which they were each given another child for whom they created a Christmas gift. Items were exchanged on the day of the Christmas show and included hand-made fidgets, a beautifully decorated rock, a hand-painted bowl, and a hand-drawn and popsicle-stick-framed picture.

At Easter, we had our traditional Egg Hunt on Sunday after the Rise of Meeting. We are deeply grateful to the many Meeting members who filled and hid eggs. We were particularly thrilled to have two teens (Nana Courtney-Bacher and Sarah Armour) oversee much of the hiding and subsequent squirrel patrol.

Presentation of Bibles. At Easter, CRE presented Bibles to two young Friends. Charlie Forte and Mishka Torres are both in fourth grade at Newtown Friends and Buckingham Friends, respectively. They selected their own Bibles and were pleased to receive inscriptions from the Meeting Clerk. CRE is delighted to watch these wonderful young Friends grow in the Light. Meeting family database. We continued this year to monitor our database of children under 18 and those who are post-high school in the Meeting, along with their contact information. This database enables the Meeting to reach out to both elementary and middle grades friends, as well as to teens in high school, with differentiated messages.

Publicity. Throughout the year, as in prior years, Norval Reece has single-handedly provided opportunities for the wider Newtown community to learn about the children's program at Newtown Meeting through publications in the Patch and other outlets. We would like to thank Norval for graciously volunteering his time and talents in this way and for celebrating the children's efforts.

Goals for the next year. For the coming year, we have several goals.

First, we continue to wrestle with how best to keep teens involved. Teens may not be interested in regularly coming to the Meetinghouse on Sunday mornings; however, they may appreciate other gatherings, perhaps at the level of the Quarter or Yearly Meeting, or even email resources and updates. We will continue to work on this aim and appreciate the opportunity to work with other Meetings in the Quarter under Wendy Kane's leadership.

Second, we have now purchased all materials for the Faith & Play curriculum, and Nancy Martin attended the trainings in fall 2021. We piloted a few of the lessons this year and look forward to jumping into this curriculum in the future.

Third, we hope to expand our pool of teachers so that we can better distribute the workload as well as better access the rich array of knowledge about Quakerism and spirituality more generally. This year, many adult Friends in the Meeting generously volunteered to share their talents with children by dropping into CRE for a day, and we look forward to being able to involve people in these ways as we sort out some of the logistics of getting clearances in place. The clearances have presented a significant hurdle for us this year, as the process seems to have become more complex, and we may need to consider Meeting-wide support on this front to map out exactly what individuals need to do to complete the process and how the Meeting could perhaps support the required steps.

Finally, we are seeking a Clerk for CRE beginning July 2022. There are a number of responsibilities folded into this role, making it a challenging undertaking. We look forward to partnering with the committee Clerks to see whether some kind of co-Clerking arrangement might be most feasible.

Concluding thoughts. The CRE team would like to sincerely thank the Meeting for its support over the past year. Friends have been incredibly generous with their time and very flexible with access to the Meetinghouse, for which we are deeply grateful. We look forward to the next year together.