

## 2022 Clerk's Annual Report

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Throughout the past year Newtown Monthly Meeting continued to adjust to evolving concerns over COVID-19. In October of 2021, we opened the Meeting House to in-person worship while connected to remote participants via Zoom video conference. We call this configuration "hybrid meeting for worship". Masks and vaccinations were required at that time. In March of this year, we did away with both requirements. We have continued to make minor improvements to the audio/visual equipment required to join Zoom from the Meeting House. While we welcome the presence of those attending via Zoom, we acknowledge that Zoom and our current audio/visual equipment have limitations. Recently we conducted a threshing session to discuss the benefits and challenges of "hybrid" meeting. Those who attended the session generally agreed that we should continue to include remote participants in our meetings, but also agreed that some changes should be considered. In the coming months proposals will be developed that will improve sound quality, make coordination of "hybrid" meetings less burdensome, and reduce distractions caused by the technology used to facilitate the meetings.

Through the first few months of 2022, the Meeting continued discernment on how parking should be expanded on the Meeting House grounds. Throughout this discernment process, we continued to exercise practices of Quaker worship, listening spiritually to one another, and waiting on the Spirit. In March the Meeting approved the construction of additional parking on the north side of the Meeting House. Additional parking proposed on the west side of the Meeting House was not approved but will be re-evaluated in the future after the Meeting has had experience with the north lot expansion. Moving forward with the construction of only one of the two parking areas originally proposed meant that the engineering plans needed to be revised and resubmitted to Newtown Borough for approval. We are currently awaiting their review. The Building & Grounds committee has begun searching for an outside firm that can help us to develop a master plan for our grounds. These plans will incorporate views expressed by Meeting members during our "Place Making" discussions held in November 2020.

Our Adult Religious Education began totally online due to Covid restrictions and switched to hybrid programs in February 2022. There was a wide variety of programs including 3 spiritual journeys,

6 programs on inward-focused issues (parking & placemaking, children's Christmas program, Camp Onas, FCNL discernment process, and Edward Hicks' birthday), 3 arts and culture programs (a documentary on indigenous culture, a focus on poetry, and a focus on murals), and 8 programs on environment and/or justice (POWER Bucks, Historic Fair Hill, George School DEI, Allyship in the Face of Isms, Welcoming the Stranger, Philadelphia Common Market, Mother Earth: Resilience & Possibility, Independent Russian insights on current events). Member Norval Reece continues to publicize our programs in the local media. Seventeen books were also purchased for the Library which serves as a resource available to deepen our knowledge, strengthen our faith and nurture our spirituality.

Children's Religious Education included 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, the resurrection of Jesus, the Sermon on the Mount, and the Lord's Prayer.

Our Simple Supper dinner held last fall raised \$2,515 half of which was donated to the Tuesday's Children charity and the other half donated to Bucks County Interfaith Coalition for Refugee Resettlement. Our spring Lasagna Dinner raised \$3,300 for Mercer Street Friends.

Worship & Ministry continues to create material and programming to deepen discernment in decision-making for business meetings. In February, the committee produced a document entitled: 'Faithfully Participating in Meeting Decision-Making'. The document asks us to contemplate what the Spirit

requires of us in the search for answers in our decision-making. We are reminded that once we release a message in business meeting, it belongs to the care of the meeting. Once that happens, we don't have to defend our point of view," just to hold the meeting in the light, and trust the Spirit." The committee also presented a program called "Coming to Love, ". This program considered how we can share differences of opinion without having to be heavy or contentious and be in a space where we are led by the Spirit. Love is a key element, along with humor. We considered queries that ask how we can "give up our points of view" and turn our wills over to the Spirit. We considered how we can respond to God in everyone, including Friends who have different points of view.

Our Care & Counsel committee maintains contact with young adults and inactive members through letter writing and visitations. The committee sent 54 notes to young adults and 148 to inactive members. Care & Counsel also provided much-needed support to members experiencing the loss of loved ones, illness, and other challenges related to the pandemic. Prints of Edward Hicks' "Peaceable Kingdom" painting were presented to 9 young adults who turned 21 this year. Healing quilts were delivered to 8 members in need.

Meeting operations continue to be financially sound. Contributions from members, attenders and F/friends met our budget target for the 2021/22 fiscal year. We are thankful to all who made contributions both financially as well as the time given in service to the Meeting. Donations covered the budgeted cost of Meeting operations, including contributions from the Meeting to BQM and PYM

(\$45K), NFS (\$4K), local police, fire, and ambulance (\$500 each), and six Quaker non-profit organizations (\$500 each). Our endowments are managed by Friends Fiduciary Corporation with socially responsible investments and performance that compares favorably with industry benchmarks. Capital expenses, including planning for the expansion of parking, are being paid primarily out of endowment income which now exceeds \$40K per year.

We continue to assess the formats of communication that work best for engaging and disseminating information to our members and attenders. Our use of Facebook, Mailchimp, and newsletters continues. This year we began using the Signup Genius web app to recruit volunteers to support hybrid Meeting for Worship and Meeting for Business. This app has been so successful we are using it for other Sunday morning volunteer opportunities such as babysitters, greeters, and hospitality.

Our membership numbers fell slightly this year. Two weddings were held under the care of the meeting, both on the same day. The first wedding was for Tucker Birmingham and Sameer Manchanda. The second wedding was for Brennan Kinnel and Sarah Chin. We also mourned the deaths of two members, Elizabeth Hurst and Almira Sharp. One member transferred to another meeting, and six minor members reached age 21.

	2021	2022
Total Members	343	340
Full Members	335	332
Adult	301	304
Minor	34	28
Associate	8	8

Recognizing the unique gifts that each member can bring to the meeting and then offering members the chance to contribute to the work of our community is vital to the life of our Meeting. Charged with this responsibility the Nominating Committee brought forward several nominations for important committee positions this year. Among them, Janet Braker was nominated and approved to become the new Assistant Clerk and Nancy Martin was approved to become the new Clerk of Children's Religious Education.

Newtown Friends School, which is under the care of the Meeting, is off to a great start this year. The school began the year at the highest enrollment they have experienced in many years, including two separate pre-kindergarten classrooms. As COVID wanes, they have been able to resume some wonderful traditions such as after-school sports and inter-grade buddy meetings. They have also completed several important renovations, including a facelift for the front entry.