

2023

Peace and Justice Committee Annual Report
Betsy Crofts, Clerk

There are ten members: Steve Bacher, Gene Borish, Matt Chandler, Betsy Crofts, clerk, Judy Fellows, Kathy Harr, Diane LeBas, Sameer Manchanda, Will Reid, Veronica Wetherill. Every meeting is open to anyone interested in our mission, and we have been blessed with the presence of Charline and Dick Watts, Debbie Finley-Troup and Susan Day.

This is a year of transition for the committee. Nancy Martin and I served as interim co-clerks until Nancy became clerk of Children's Religious Education in June. I agreed to be clerk until the end of this calendar year when I will pass the baton.

We have been using subcommittees to focus our work but two of the three are seeking new leadership and have been on hold for other reasons as well. Racial Justice suspended the bi-weekly Black Lives Matter vigil at the end of November when winter set in, attendance had dropped off, and we seemed to be energizing passersby who disagreed with us rather than inspiring others to join us. This subcommittee continues to receive reports from our three Meeting members who are active with POWER Bucks on issues of fair funding for public education in Pennsylvania and voting rights. Bucks County Interfaith Coalition for Refugee Resettlement also comes under the Racial Justice subcommittee purview. The P & J committee may change the name to Social Justice from Racial Justice.

The second subcommittee, Environmental Action, has not been meeting since the expanded Parking Lot issue was resolved last spring in anticipation of joining with Building and Grounds in their effort to propose a comprehensive plan for our meeting house grounds.

The third subcommittee was formed in response to Will Reid's leading to have Newtown Meeting fund a grant to a women's microlending group under the auspices of Right Sharing of World Resources, a Quaker non-profit that is active in Kenya, Sierra Leone, India and Guatemala. With the leadership of the RSWR subcommittee, we have been seasoning that proposal and will bring it to this same May business meeting.

Peace and Justice sponsored two Adult First Day programs, one on September 25, 2022 that used queries posed by the Urgent Call to the Religious Society of Friends. <https://quakercall.net> which led to the endorsement of the call by monthly meeting in October. The second Adult First Day on April 30, titled "Sharing Our Abundance: Striving for Justice not Charity" was designed to support the Committee's proposal for a grant to Right Sharing of World Resources at monthly meeting today.

Looking ahead, we intend to take time to discuss and discern a mission statement and goals for our work going forward. It's important to take advantage of the fresh eyes and varied experiences that new members and attenders are bringing to the Peace and Justice table. One final point – the Committee is faced with a dilemma. Now that Covid restrictions are largely behind us, should we resume our past practice of meeting in person, or, with environmental sustainability principles in mind, should we continue to meet on Zoom to save time and use less energy?