



Germantown Monthly Meeting

of the Religious Society of Friends

47 West Coulter Street Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19144 (215) 951 2235

Newsletter



Spring 2018



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This issue: When I seek content from Friends, I ask them to give me whatever they want to share with our community about themselves or someone special; a message or a poem; anything. So I never know what I'll get and almost every time, a theme appears. The spirit of our collective speaks. Out of very different submissions, this issue's theme seems to be **SERVICE**. What we can do to care for our family, spiritual community, the world. Thank you to everyone that contributed themselves to this issue. We hope that you will enjoy it. ~ Editor, Candice Price, and the Communications Committee.



Fellowship Report

By Candice Price - Member of Fellowship Committee

The intention of the Fellowship Committee is to facilitate opportunities for bonds to be formed within our own Meeting. Our doors and hearts are open to all, but the events this committee creates are specifically intended to bring our own community closer. The responsibility of the Fellowship Committee is to inspire participation through fun and enticing activities that encourage Friends to come to MFW as often as possible and enjoy each other in other ways, elsewhere sometimes, as well.

We are looking to expand on our successes we've had this year and in previous years:

- We all agreed that food is an easy way to accomplish that goal particularly after Meeting. Putting out tables and chairs encourages Friends to linger and have longer deeper conversations. We intend to have a sit down lunch once per month.
- The "Wine and Cheese" pop-ups! In the dead of winter, it was a great excuse to get out of the house and hang out with friends. Friendly Eights has seen a big drop-off in participation in recent years and the committee tried a new way and it was very successful. It seemed to be less effort on the host and guest and, also, in the afternoon which fit better for parents with young kids. We take in consideration that some people took issue with the alcohol aspect, but there was an alternate Afternoon Tea. Maybe we will find a new name. "Afternoon Nosh"? The host can decide for themselves what they want to serve and stipulate clearly on the sign-up sheet.
- The Art Show! It was a success for a number of reasons. It encouraged participation in a multi-layered way. The committee and non-committee helpers to organize and set-up; the artists that we hope felt seen and valued, because they were personally asked and celebrated for their talents; and the guests that were encouraged, early and often, through the Bee and announcements, with updates and specifics on who would be presented. It was advertised as early as 3 months before the event. We saw several faces that we haven't seen in a while and believe that they were enticed to attend Worship to see the show. We also raised almost \$500 for the General Fund! How incredible that the artists were willing to donate and, again, I believe that Friends showed up to contribute to the Meeting in a way they enjoyed. We intend to make this an annual event perhaps with GMM musical accompaniment at the opening on Saturday evening.
- Game Night, Talent Show, Movie Nights are all activities that have been favorites in the past and we intend to fit them back into our schedule this coming season.

Brainstorming ideas going forward:

- The Fellowship Committee will be hanging a large white board calendar in the Social Room that will have upcoming events for both member and visitors to see at a glance. Everyone has different ways of receiving info and this would complement our other forms. "Early and Often" Advertising is so important to the success of these activities.
- Occasionally, some of our ideas may fit nicely with the intentions of other committees such as the Young Friends, First Day School, Retreat, Outreach, or Fundraising and we want to keep exploring how our committees can work together to make even better opportunities for fellowship.
- Polling Friends of all demographics what kind of activities they'd like to participate in.
- We intend to ask for a budget for 2018/2019 to defray costs and/or some of our activities will be fundraisers for future activities as well.

Some new ideas we are thinking about for 2018/2019 season:

- A *multi*-generational day at the Wissahickon Creek (perhaps as a make-up for missing Camp Swatara).



Our challenge is to plan something for the whole family from baby to Grandmom and, of course, a picnic @ Blue Bell Field!

- A group outing to Old Academy Players to see Carla's latest directorial effort, "A Raisin in the Sun" This can be a fundraiser if we plan soon.
- Bowling, skating, etc, as family-friendly fundraisers.

Updates:

May Brunch: A great success! In addition to delicious potluck brunch dishes we also had a get-to-know-you game planned that includes being assigned a name and question to ask that person about themselves.

June Picnic: As always a favorite and this year brought back the Friendly Treasure Hunt and also a Quaker Trivia Game! Folks were having so much fun together!



**Just because you can't do everything**

By Janet Kroll

Conscientious Friends often examine themselves about whether they are living up to our historic Testimonies, such as Integrity, Equality, Peace, etc. It's a tough assignment, so it sounds rewarding and efficient if we can combine two Testimonies at once -- such as Simplicity and Stewardship (*the latter as it refers to caring for the environment*). *Friends Journal* appeared to do just that in its January theme, "QUAKER LIFESTYLES".

Articles discussed back-to-the-land efforts, drastically scaling back one's standard of living to enable concentration on spirituality, and a proposition for vegetarianism as a mass movement to combat climate change. But the piece that struck home to me most, "Simple Living Beyond the Thrift Store," questions that favorite Quaker bumper sticker, "Live Simply that Others May Simply Live."

Author Philip Harden acknowledges that it's good to resist materialism and downsize possessions -- but he wonders if self-denial, however sincere, may make us "intolerable zealots for a pious frugality." Does it distract us from the inequalities of our nation's economic system? Emphasizing frugality "could be seen as telling people not to ask for a bigger piece of the pie, but to learn instead the joys of living on the crumbs."

Furthermore, do personal examples of "simple living" actually influence policy changes that will benefit the larger society? Riding a bicycle to work instead of driving will lower one's carbon footprint, but it doesn't actually have much impact on better funding for better mass transit. Even when you donate skills and labor for a Habitat or Humanity project, Habitat's own CEO believes advocacy is also vital: "The housing need is far too great to build one house at a time. But that need can be met if we use our voices and not just our hammers."

OK, point taken -- but it does pose a dilemma for Friends who want to witness effectively for societal change, not just feel good about themselves. What can one actually DO in these times, given limitations of time, energy and finances, in a state which seems fortified/gerrymandered against citizen movements?

Luckily, I found some encouraging answers in the Feb. 11 edition of the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, in its "Currents" section with the theme "Act Up." Three activist writers addressed different "do-able" ways of working for good.

One encouraged "millennials" to investigate crowdfunding campaigns that support social causes they care about. "Giving Projects" is a cross-racial, cross-class, intergenerational cohort of Philly area citizens suggested as a place to check out. Another explained the advocacy work of the faith-based organization POWER, representing over 50 congregations in central and Southeastern Pennsylvania.



An article that spoke to all readers, however, was "Activism 101: Lessons on Making a Difference", by Paige Wolf, author and working mother of two. She listed obvious, but oft-forgotten principles for furthering change: (1) start with a direct "ask" of the person in power -- a principal, a CEO, a local elected official; (2) if no response, get "louder" with petitions, contacts with media, advocacy groups; (3) choose your time investments realistically. If an action group, however idealistic, isn't progressing, reinvest your time in a more productive movement. Her final advice, though, was the MOST memorable for every one of us who feels overwhelmed by the many worthy causes:

Just because you can't do everything, doesn't mean you should do nothing.

For example, if we can't go to Washington for an anti-gun protest, we might contribute toward the cost of bus-chartering for those who do go. If job or family responsibilities prevent some of us from taking part in a rally or campaign, we can call to find out other ways to help, like phone banks or volunteer driving.

A member of Germantown Meeting shows us the way, month after month. Limited in mobility himself, he's still a mover and shaker; He regularly runs a "Write Your Lawmaker" table during Coffee Hour, with stationery (and now stamped postcards) for us to write local, state and national officials on laws and policies of concern to Friends. He even offers suggested wording!

It's a small step -- from our personal at-home adherence to Testimonies, to active witnessing... but we can all make a beginning, with a phone call, or a petition, or even a handwritten postcard. Let's try it!



FDS planting seeds
at Stapeley!





Journey to Quakerism

By Anthony Stover

Like early Quakers in 1682, I was attracted to Quakerism for its religious freedom. I was brought up in the Black Baptist Church where Sunday's worship sometimes lasted most of the day.

The first time I had experienced Quakerism was when my daughter Taylor started attending Germantown Friends School for kindergarten in 2000. My wife, at the time, and I were very excited about sending our daughter to the best school that Philadelphia had to offer. We were living in Germantown and knew this was the school for Taylor.

After getting Taylor accepted at GFS, we came to realize that we were way over our head financially. I had the ideal that attending Germantown Monthly Meeting for worship, the Meeting might help us with the financial challenge of attending GFS. Well I was very wrong in that assumption. However, after attending Meeting for Worship, I started to find peace and spirituality in silent worship. I was looking forward to Meeting every Sunday.

I researched early Quakers who opposed slavery in principle, as it challenged their beliefs in the equality of all people. Thus they were instrumental to the growth of both the abolitionist movement and the Underground Railroad.

I also learned early Quakers were also as prejudiced as others at the time. At the Arch Street Meeting House in Philadelphia, as in some other Quaker Meetings, a bench was set aside as the "Negro Pew" where black members were expected to sit. Quakers might believe in equality, but they did not want their white daughters sitting next to black women or marrying black men.

Early on, I didn't relate to most of the members of GMM, as there was very few if any on any given Sunday who looked like me. I would come to worship, sit next to the back door, and leave at the end of worship. Then, after a divorce and living alone, I decided I needed more community in my life and joined GMM. I was welcomed and asked to serve on a number of committees, which I did. That brought me closer to others in the Meeting.

I have now been a member for 5 years, after being an attendee for 13 years. I still have a vision of more diversity within our meeting where others can experience the spirituality I found 18 years ago and not feel different due to the lack of diversity within GMM. Some Sundays it does puzzle me, after 18 years of worshipping within an urban community, that I can still be only one of very few blacks in the meeting.

The GMM and GFS community is working to address diversity, and be more reflective of the community that we reside. However progress seems to be moving at a snail's pace. I look forward to our success.



What can Germantown Meeting do to build community?

By J. Jondhi Harrell

Often in our worship, a recurring theme is community. How do we build it, how do we nurture it? How do we step outside of the walls of our meeting and truly interact with those who live around us; live down Germantown Ave. and in other parts of the city. When I ride up and down Germantown Ave., I often reflect on the history and make-up of the communities I am passing. You can actually gauge the socio-economic status as you cruise down the avenue and watch the buildings get older, more run down, more boarded up; and watch the residents range from white affluent wealthy & upper middle class, to poor black and brown. You can look at the lifestyles and dress and behavior patterns and understand that there are huge barriers between the communities in question. These barriers stand between GMM and the community.

How can Germantown Meeting and the PYM Quaker community begin to truly build community? I am not talking about white guilt and white privilege. I am not focusing on the fractious arguments that have torn holes in the unity of PYM over the past several years. I am simply talking about looking at what can be done to open up doors, building relationships, and begin reaching out to communities in a real way.

I am reminded of the Pittsburgh Meeting which I have attended in the past and the way that their meeting space has become community space. How so many groups in their community see Pittsburgh Meeting as the center of not only activism, but hope and joy strength and resilience. From environmental groups and young people and immigrants and racial justice folks, they all call that meeting...home. Because its doors are open to them and the space echoes daily and nightly with the voices of those who are working for change. It is change that builds community. It is the work of change that inspires hope for the future and builds a community united in purpose.

Can Germantown Meeting be the center of true community building? I believe so. But for that to happen we must do something that is in contrast to Quaker practice. We must do far less talking and pondering and discerning; and act. We must talk far less and do far more. We must sit down and plan out how to open our doors and space to the community and simply do it.

If we are truly a community walking in the light, we must shine that light and invite all those working for good to join us. We must live our worship.



Participation is Crucial to Make Our Community Thrive

By Candice Price

In recent years, we have seen a big drop-off in participation from our members, in Worship, committees, business decisions, and, even, fellowship activities. The Meeting Room is so sparse that it's like tiny polka dots on a huge piece of fabric. The Standing Nominating finds itself begging Friends to join a committee and finding very little willingness to participate in the Quaker process. Achieving a large enough forum to make decisions at Meeting with a Concern for Business is difficult more often than not. First Day School and Young Friends have barely enough membership each week to perform their projects or lessons successfully. Creating ways to turn this phenomenon around has become very important for me. You might call it a "leading".

There is a small group of Friends that have earned our admiration and respect because they have been loyal, dedicated participants for years willing to do anything and everything that needs doing. We are more apt to listen to their point of view and even approve their suggestions simply because we trust their judgment after all this time. We also tend to lazily let them do it all. It is a wonderful thing that we have such incredible and devoted people here. However, by osmosis, a tiny aging few are unconsciously, making choices, *for* us, not with us. Decisions are being made behind closed doors, as is necessary for some subject matter, before it's presented; but some of these decisions don't even *eventually* make it to Business Meeting for even rudimentary approval. Some committees rarely or never report to the Business Meeting. Those few committees are either trusted enough, or considered so unimportant, that they are not even required to report back or ask for approval for decisions. (Personnel, Childcare, Retreat, Fellowship, Communication, etc.) Are 3 or 4 people supposed to make choices with no checks and balances, or even just an update or input, in a Quaker Meeting?

The fact that Friends don't show up for Business Meetings or important Called Meetings does not mean that Friends are satisfied by the choices. I hear complaints all of the time about decisions, choices, the state of our meeting; but those same people say it's a waste of time to try to be involved. "The process seems to be for *other* people, not for me." I believe that there are Friends that don't realize their worth to our community. They feel like they are not seen or heard. I believe that this phenomenon leaves a lot of voices out, opportunity for secrecy, and a lack of desire to participate in Business Meeting or committees.

This is meant to be a place of consensus where everyone's voice is to be heard and respected; a place where everyone is in the discussion. This is supposed to be where That of God is in All of us.

I would also imagine that, because there are very few people willing or given the opportunity to make



these choices, for so many years, they are just as burdened as we are dissatisfied. Their time is stretched; they may be burnt out after all these years. Their decisions may be based on the path of least resistance.

My hopes for the health of our Meeting:

- The Clerks and the Committees need to be shook up periodically.
- Friends should not be Clerk on more than 2 committees, only one weighty committee, and not ones that have conflicts of interest like Nominating and Personnel, for example.
- More members of each committee need to be willing to devote effort and time whenever necessary to take this position seriously. Some people don't have time for even an hour per month, so they either decline, or worse, pick a committee they deem insignificant. They end up phoning in most of their participation and nothing gets done well. If one doesn't have time or desire, they choose a different way to be of service. One should certainly not be Clerk, if your lifestyle doesn't afford enough time.

How do we get this to happen? These are some of my ideas:

- Participation in committees, Business Meeting, Called Meetings, and community building events, like Retreat and other fun events, should be *inspired* and fostered in new and different ways.
- Each committee should set an agenda, to achieve this in creative ways. I am specifically calling on Standing Nominating Committee, Care and Visiting, Fellowship, Communication, Outreach, and Retreat Committees, and even Fundraising Committee to brainstorm new ways to encourage community. I believe these committees can work in tandem to make this happen. Care and Visiting and Nominating, for example. Outreach and Communication. Fellowship and Retreat along with Fundraising as a set. Fun community-building activities can be created by Fellowship and Fundraising, in combination, to also provide necessary funds to the Meeting, possibly for more activities, retreat scholarships, etc. Activities to enjoy each other's company, I'd argue, have an effect on participation in worship and committee service.
- In every area, Meeting-wide participation should be encouraged by notification of events, and important discussions, clearly stated and promoted *early and often* with complete transparency, and, most especially, emphasis on their individual importance to be a part of the discussion.
- Communication committee should be informed as soon as absolutely possible when there is an important event or discussion to get the word out quickly, with enthusiasm, and a clear insistence of its



importance to attend, in the Friday Bee, Newsletter, Website, and early and often messages, announcements and posted flyers from the Communications Committee. Everyone should be given the opportunity to be of service and/or a committee. Broaden the search. I suspect there are people, like myself in the past, who never get the chance to be on a committee, because they've never been asked nor have been welcomed to volunteer. Their participation has not fostered or encouraged, in my opinion. Standing Nominating Committee should make it their business to meet and get to know well every Member of Meeting to the best of their ability. "What are your strengths, gifts, occupation, and interests? How do you imagine yourself being of service to make this a place that serves your spiritual needs? Is there a committee or activity you would like to participate in?"

- Certainly if someone urgently desires to be of service in general or on a specific committee, that should also be encouraged. I am only on the Communication Committee to Edit the Newsletter, because I stubbornly kept insisting. I am so thankful that I have been given the privileged to do this. It brings me even closer to my community.
- I am now also a member of the planning group of the Fellowship Committee. The intention of the Fellowship Committee is to facilitate opportunities for bonds to be formed within our own Meeting. Our doors and hearts are open to all, but the events this committee creates are specifically intended to bring our own community closer. The responsibility of the Fellowship Committee is to inspire participation through fun and enticing activities that encourage Friends to come to MFW as often as possible and also in other ways, elsewhere, sometimes as well.
- Kids and Young Adults should even be encouraged to be on an age-appropriate committee. I might argue it's especially important to get kids and young Friends involved so they learn early in their lives the importance and reward of being of service to your spiritual community. We already have a tradition of giving a child a bible when he passes a certain age. I think at that same age they should also be indoctrinated to service.
- Some services are not for everyone and no one should be pressured into an area they don't feel comfortable or useful. But there are many ways one can be of service to our community even if it's just by their showing up..

EVERY SINGLE Friend is necessary to us, in their own way. We need each other to make our community. Everyone should be made to feel seen and important to our community, even just sharing themselves with us.



Financial Obligations of Meeting Members

By Jonathan Rhoads – Member of the Fundraising Committee

Germantown Meeting is the spiritual home of our members and attenders. We gather in silence, share ministry each week, and enjoy fellowship with one another afterwards. In our Monthly Meeting with a Concern for Business we hear committee reports, approve various matters pertaining to our members and attenders, and consider positions on a variety of subjects of concern to Friends.

The Meeting has expenses for our physical facilities, our Paid Friends (caretaker, secretary, and child care provider), clerical needs, and committee services. We have a commitment to contribute to the support the Yearly Meeting, and some scholarship support for the excellent school under our care, Germantown Friends School.

Financial support of the meeting is an integral part of membership. Is it every member's responsibility. Our fundraising is mostly low key. We do not pass collection plates. We send out a few notices each year and, occasionally, make announcements after meeting. But financial support of the meeting is necessary to have the meeting house we enjoy and for the support of our programs. It falls upon the membership to provide those funds. The last few years we have fallen short of our budgeted fundraising, reduced our support to the Yearly Meeting and our scholarship contribution to GFS. As we approach the end of our fiscal year, please consider giving to our Meeting to meet our budget this year.

Germantown Friends School – Germantown Monthly Meeting's Best Outreach

By Jonathan Rhoads - Member of the School Committee

Germantown Friends School is a first class school under the care of Germantown Meeting. It may have started as a school for Germantown Meeting children in 1845, but it has grown into a K-12 school with an enviable reputation which attracts students from many backgrounds over large portions of the greater Philadelphia area.

Being under the care of our Meeting, the curriculum includes studies of Quaker thought and values. The students attend Meeting for Worship each week. Two of the testimonies are considered in the curriculum of each school's divisions every year and two more the next year. A student spending twelve years at GFS will study each testimony three or four times. Currently, the graduating class is approximately 90 students, of whom only a few Friends. They go forth onto the world well aware of Quaker beliefs, values, and approaches to problems. In some cases their families learn our ways, too.

Over the years, we have had many people who came to the school, who became attenders or even members of our Germantown Meeting.



