

## **How is Spirit moving in your worship, and how have you nurtured deep, Spirit-led vocal ministry?**

Gwynedd Meeting is a theologically and experientially diverse meeting so our responses varied greatly.

We have found that when several Friends come early and settle into worship, they provide a foundation for others who join them. One could say that they establish a worshipping community and welcome the presence of Spirit. Sometimes it's easy to discern the presence of Spirit, other times not so much. We have been blessed with a few deeply gathered meetings – with or without vocal ministry. Some of us will experience that gathered meeting and others will not. It comes down to how well prepared each of us are. What are our expectations during worship?

Worship and Ministry has focused on helping Friends prepare for worship by offering Adult Quaker Education sessions on preparation, Taber's *Four Doors to Worship*, and various centering practices. Our latest focus has been on the Ministry of Silence. We have had articles in our newsletter featuring portions of PYM's Faith & Practice and *Friends Journal*. We have a reading at the beginning of each of our Meetings for worship with a Concern for Business.

Here are some of the ways Worship and Ministry has endeavored to nurture: deep Spirit-led ministry

- We held an Adult Quaker Education (AQE) program on "Where the Words Come From: Vocal Ministry, Worship-Sharing and After thoughts"
- Since nurturing is a function of relationships, to identify and acknowledge those with a gift of vocal ministry. To nurture those who seem to have this gift with the tools they need to give effective vocal ministry.
- Nurturing could include affirming the value of a message, with the proviso that its source is properly recognized as Spirit.
- Also, the formation of spiritual nurture circles under the aegis of the Gathering Garden program.

## **How have you fostered an environment in which members and attenders of all ages and abilities know they are loved, cared for, trusted, and respected?**

**How have you sought to be neighbors and in relationship with other communities, and how have you been changed by these connections?** In July this year Gwynedd Meeting hosted several families from the Interfaith Housing Network of Family Promise. A total of 4 women and 10 children between the ages of 1 and 19 were able to have a safe, comfortable place to stay while they worked on finding jobs, balancing their budgets, keeping their families together, and getting along with each other. We used three classrooms for their bedrooms, and they had use

of the kitchen, community room, and bathrooms. Birthdays were celebrated with pizza and cake, and Saturday breakfasts were a big hit- especially Jim Hejl's letter pancakes.

**How have you been called to address issues of social justice, inclusivity, and difference, both within your meeting and in the wider world?**

- We formed a Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI) working group, to discuss and develop programming for our community in reaction to big events going on in the world. This happened around the time of the George Floyd murder.
- We interacted with other organizations and institutions within the wider world to expose our Meeting community to people and cultures members may not otherwise have interacted with: The Poor Peoples Campaign; Pastors at SCI Phoenix; Jeneen and Omar Barlow from Barlow Enterprises; Bebash, Filmmakers and Native Speaker from Fighting Indians; etc.
- We provided opportunities for our Meeting community to think outside the box and provoked Friends to challenge their views of the wider community. We looked at diversity through lenses of race, economics, ethnicity, sexuality, and ability. We shared a 21-day challenge on racism and considered ways of becoming an ally, through book groups, summer QuakerSpeak series, Joy & Justice Book Club.
- We sought ways to break down barriers with the wider community through this education. We developed and hung external banners to express our beliefs to the community at large.
- Youth Response: The focus of the 2022-2023 High School Religious Education program was focused on understanding differences, recognizing and extending privilege at an age level awareness and applying that lens to other communities (school, clubs, etc)

**Care of Worship (e.g., How can we get more/fewer people to offer vocal ministry?)**

**Outreach and Inclusion (e.g., How do we welcome newcomers warmly without overwhelming them?)** The Coffeehouse events sponsored by our Fellowship and Outreach Committee continued with a schedule featuring KJ, Cosy Sheridan and Charlie, Whirl-Wind Quintet, Cornflower Jam, and The Pour Rabbits. The coffeehouse is an important community outreach program, bringing many non-Quaker visitors to our Meetinghouse.

**Adult Education Resources (e.g., How can we learn and share about our faith outside of worship?)**

- **Families and Children (e.g., What religious education resources are available to use?)**

The goal of the Religious Education Committee at Gwynedd Monthly Meeting (GMM) “is to foster the Divine Spark, the Inward Light through educational programs for all ages.” To support families and children there is a group of dedicated teachers who provide lessons, service activities and opportunities for group spiritual practices from September through May. For our littlest friends we have childcare so families can attend Meeting For Worship. There are intergenerational activities that the entire community can experience and grow together (e.g., Fall Pumpkin Carving, Gingerbread house decorating, Easter Egg Hunt). New lessons are created or existing lessons and curriculum (PYM, Other meeting, etc) are utilized in full or adapted to the current need of the class. Within the meeting, there is a library that contains books for both parents and children. When entering GMM, there is a children’s book nook that contains many books for our children.

The Peace Camp Committee at GMM hosts two summer day camps in August: a two-week Peace Camp at Gwynedd Friends, for children entering first grade through entering 7th grade, and a three-week Peace Camp for Little Ones, for children aged 3 to 5 years. Peace Camp is open to everyone in the community by registering and paying a fee. Scholarships are also available, and each year are provided to families who submit a request. Full scholarships are also provided to students from the International Learning Program, which the committee has been working with over the last few years to invite campers who would not otherwise be able to attend camp. The goal for both camps is to provide a curriculum that fosters conflict resolution, patience, communication, and of course peace. Some examples of activities from the older camp are partner yoga, meditation, map-making, skits, and fort building. The younger camp spends their days outside in nature, learns about other cultures and taking care of animals, such as chickens from a local friend. Older Quaker Youth are encouraged to be role models by applying for a Counselor-in-Training or Junior Counselor position, depending on their age and experience working with kids. The committee continues to build opportunities for the community and friends to participate in this summer experience.

There are also many resources that enrich the religious education of our families and children beyond our Monthly Meeting. As part of Abington Quarterly Meeting, our youth are invited to attend Junior Friends Conference (1st - 5th graders) and Middle

School Friends Conference (6th, 7th & 8th graders), a one-week residential conference for young Friends. Both programs offer participants the opportunity to live in a “Friendly” community that strives to live our Quaker testimonies in an environment rich in Quaker values. These conferences also provide an opportunity for our High School Friends to take on leadership roles in the Faith & Leadership program (9th & 10th) and as counselors. Access to the resources from PYM Youth Programming (family overnights, activity and Sessions and Continuing Sessions, etc.) are also available.

- Youth and Young Adults (e.g., How can we create a welcome space for youth and young adults in the meeting?) In the 2022-2023 Youth Program, Gwyndd Monthly Meeting Religious Education Committee piloted a monthly High School program aimed at helping high school students develop their own path to spirit. This program is evolving in the 2023- 2024 program and is focusing on integrating our high school aged youth into the meeting. Our High School Friends are taking leadership roles in activities such as shoe recycling collection and are providing service to other committees such as helping out with MFW Zoom connections and making updates to the GMM Website.

The Youth Quaker Education program and the initiatives above do help to transition youth out of YQE into being young adult members of the meeting. Specific programs have been offered to young adults such as pot luck dinners and cooking classes to foster community building and connection to the meeting. Young Adult members are encouraged to serve on committees, join in events such as Adult Quaker Education and Meeting House Work Days.

- **Witness (e.g., How do we walk our talk as Friends?)**
- **Committees (e.g., How might a different committee structure be helpful to our meeting in conducting our business?)** We’re happy with the present structure.
- **Quarters (e.g., How can being part of an active Quarter have an impact on meetings and individuals?)** Gwynedd always has a strong presence at Abington Quarterly Meetings.

**General Questions or Needs (e.g., Could someone visit my meeting?)** Thoughts from February MMB:

- Bible study, hymn singing, and socialization. Outreach to our wider community – maybe many don’t know we’re here.
- Maybe the community needs more knowledge about Quakers. There is not much emphasis on Quakerism and Quaker process in our community.

- We need to think about Gwynedd in the long term. The world has changed, other faith communities are facing same problems of engaging young people. We need a strategic plan for the long term, 10-20 years. Carol Ritting commented that PYM is thinking about this.
- A Friend asked about Quaker Quest. She was not sure if it is active, but knows that some meetings did it to make their meeting more visible to their surrounding communities. There is information through PYM.
- One Friend described a weeklong short course at Pendle Hill where she learned about Quaker Quest. Her former meeting, Scarsdale, did the project, but she is not sure if it is still active. The program did not bring in a lot of visitors, but it did change Scarsdale Mtg.
- A Friend commented that she had some ideas for Gwynedd for the longer term.
- A Friend mentioned when coffeehouse meets and visitors are invited to come to the Meeting Room with her or another Friend, it is very interesting how many people have interest and questions. Honolulu Meeting where she lived for two years, does more outreach. We can do more.
- A Friend was excited about more participation In Abington Quarterly Meeting.
- A Friend mentioned that we need to talk more about PYM Continuing Sessions.

### **How has the Spirit guided your work on climate change?**

#### **How has your meeting addressed the action areas identified in the Climate Change Sprint Report: Activism, Education, Reducing Carbon Footprint, and Finances?**

- We are trying to make our property more environmentally positive, in accordance with the landscape plan we obtained a few years ago.
- Education: we publish a monthly column in the meeting's newsletter, "A Sustainable Choice", featuring environmentally-positive information or actions one might take. For our committee's Adult Quaker Education program we had a speaker on single-use plastics. We co-sponsored an "eco-walk" with Foulkeways to showcase the native plants on both sites.
- Activism: we composed a letter, approved by the monthly meeting for business, to send to Lower Gwynedd Township supporting the banning of single-use plastics.
- Our resident groundskeeper does most of the grounds work and has supervised the planting of a children's garden and a community garden. She also established and maintains our pollinator garden. She took photos over the course of a year of various native plants and other green features on our property, and offered the framed photos for sale to support the purchase of additional native plants. We are trying to place small plants around the headstones in our burial ground, with sustainable, low-mow grass in between, to avoid further damage to the stones by the mower. Lower Gwynedd Township has awarded us a "Going Green" award in recognition of our work.

**Has your meeting appointed a Climate Witness liaison? If not, why not? We have not appointed a Climate Witness Liaison.**