

## Abington Quarterly Meeting Minutes – Eighth Month, 4<sup>th</sup>, 2020

Held on Zoom hosted by Gwynedd Meeting

Attendance peaked at about 65 friends just prior to the Gwynedd meeting for worship.

AQ clerk Amelia Diamond opened the meeting at 9am with a brief interval of silent worship. Friends approved the agenda and the minutes of eighth month. Robert Sloan from Abington, Joan Eyre from Richland, and Joe Uknalis from Richland were approved as Quarterly trustees.

Tom Armstrong, president of trustees, gave the trustees annual report. Friends Fiduciary has eliminated fossil fuel investments from all its funds. Portfolio performance is almost back to pre-Covid levels. 4% payout is maintained. AQ Trustees meetings will continue using zoom. Dan Hazelton, is anticipated to continue as trustees treasurer and Russ Bishop, anticipated as vice president.

Dan Hazelton gave a summary of the various funds managed by trustees. Disbursements from funds are normally for the benefit of members only, but during the pandemic attenders will be eligible too. Permanent endowment funds have some restrictions from donors; such as a requirement to maintain the original amounts in perpetuity. Dan showed us several financial schedules, showing fund balances and changes during the year. Please see the attached trustees' treasurer's report for numbers and details. Outstanding balances of letters of intent are up slightly over last year; swing loans being repaid have caused funds received to exceed funds paid out this year, Amelia recognized the good work of financial management by Dan and the trustees. She further described the meaning of letters of intent. Rebecca Cratin said in some cases letters of intent do not require funds to be paid back if beneficiaries are financially unable to do so.

Bob Reiff gave the AQ treasurers report for year ended June 30. There was a positive cash flow of about 15K because the Junior Friends and Middle School Friends conferences were not held this year.

We adjourned the AQ meeting at 9:30 as Gwynedd's meeting for worship began, and resumed at 10:50.

The Home and Care report was presented by Bonnie Miller. Rebecca, who is the administrator, reports being in contact with applicants. As reported in May, the committee entered into a joint agreement with the AQ Qtrly Meeting Fund committee to help attenders, and received a commitment from the AQ Qtrly committee for up to \$100k, for yr 2020. Home and Care has helped 4 families, totalling \$11k, from this AQ Fund. For the month of September alone,

disbursements from another of our Funds totalled 17K, a rate equivalent to over 200K/yr. Details of disbursements are in the report that is attached. Report was accepted by the meeting.

The Youth program report was given by Joe Schatz. He said they decided to cancel the program this year due to Covid. However, they did have a zoom meeting for all concerned to explain their decision and discuss plans for 2021. Amelia thanked Joe, and Stephanie the co-director of the AQ Youth program, for their fine work. Friends accepted the report.

John Munro, who is a professional ecologist, made a climate crisis power point presentation with photos, illustrations and detail pages. He noted that climate change is an issue we are all responsible for because of our lifestyles, and inaction. His meeting, Unami, had three 90 minute discussion sessions on the “Carbon Forest Project” that John is working at organizing, and requests feedback about it from members of the quarter. (email: [munroeco@verizon.net](mailto:munroeco@verizon.net) ) Ocean warming, more extensive and damaging forest fires, deeper and more frequent floods, glacial disappearance, and more frequent and violent hurricanes are major results of climate change. Causes are deforestation, fracking leakage, mining, and fossil fuel use. Furthermore, glacial disappearance causes sea level rise and accelerates climate change. The strategy of the CFP is to plant and manage forests because trees sequester carbon. John noted that they need funding and are looking for offers of suitable sites for this project. Larger efforts from governments and other organization will also be essential, of course. Friends agreed in principle to support the project as they individually feel led.

The AQ Communications Committee report was presented by the committee's clerk Susan Vorwerk. She noted that membership in PYM has been declining, and projections suggest the possibility of a demise of Quakerism in this area by 2054 if the trend continues. An objective of the Communications Committee is to address and counter this decline. The strategy they are working on is to have a unified and appealing on-line web presence. At present four Meetings are participating, all with technically similar websites: UD, Byberry, Norristown and Plymouth. Their websites have members-only login sections for committee reports, zoom links, membership information...etc. The back-end of their websites allows for “contact tracing” so visitors can be counted and patterns identified. For example, Byberry meeting alone is currently up to 13K views since last December. Any Facebook page can post links to these Meeting websites so as to attract visitors. “Pooling our resources” is the enabling theme, given that technical expertise and initiative are rare qualities that may not be available at every single meeting, but as a

Quarter working together with this approach all of us will be able share and stay up-to-date. To reach Susan for further information contact her at [ByberryQuakers@gmail.com](mailto:ByberryQuakers@gmail.com). She concluded with the classic story about Icarus: his father warned him: not only not to fly too high where the sun would melt the wax holding the feathers to his wings, but also not to fly too low where vapors and ocean spray would bring him down, metaphorically suggesting we Quakers need to cease setting our sights too low. Instead we need a more public face and outreach, while setting our sights realistically and eschewing flights of global evangelism.

Wanda Wyffels read a minute approved by Abington Monthly Meeting on the subject of the unfortunate legacy of slavery and colonialism. Early Quakers were complicit in this, and the minute expresses the meeting's sense of how to address this regrettable legacy. Amelia stated that our Quarterly purpose is to endorse or defer the minute, not rewrite it. Susan Makler raised an objection to the minute, suggesting that AMM should take more time to consider and refine the minute. Wanda, who is Abington MM's clerk, responded to this, suggesting that the objection Susan was talking about concerns the phrase "land theft and violence". A reference was made that this phrase was historically incorrect. Wanda mentioned that she has done research to substantiate the word usage. Susan then said that the last sentence of the minute, referring to the establishment of the Rosemary Bothwell Fund into AMM assets, was also misleading. Rochelle Tormollen, clerk of Abington MM's Peace and Social Concerns committee, explained that the language of that last sentence is correct. Susan then explained that her objection was more- broad based, touching on issues such as liability and factuality. Rochelle responded to this explaining that she has looked into the factual issue, citing a history document written by a member of the Lenni Lenapi tribe that validates the phrase Susan objects to. Ben Lloyd of AMM then spoke to defend the minute, noting that moving forward in unity can be uncomfortable, which is a side-effect of white privilege. Florence Degler of AMM spoke in favor of the minute, noting that her Leni Lenape relatives feel Quakers were complicit. Alicia Agoglia, also of AMM, said she is concerned about the accuracy of the language. Clerk Amelia asked for a show of reactions, and six or eight friends signaled opposition. As a result, an endorsement of the minute was deferred to a later quarterly meeting.

Amelia moved us to the next agenda item, worshipfully sharing relating to the query: "What are we doing to foster Equality & Inclusivity?" "Where are we making connections." Ben Lloyd drew a relationship between the Communication committee's project and this query: communications opens up the topic of attracting people to our Quaker faith. We need to attract people of all backgrounds and classes. We cannot grow without being inclusive. Kelly Green spoke about personal qualities that project inclusivity, respect for all, being cheerful and tender to each

other, acknowledging our past faults, and being helpful in community. Tom Armstrong related his personal experiences, speaking to diverse neighbors; reflecting on his own family's inclusion by marriage of a non-Caucasian, suggesting that personal relationships can bring us to inclusivity. Barbara Seidel said she feels she needs to work on listening to perspectives she is not comfortable with. Wanda reminded us about Benjamin Lay, who made his contemporary Quakers very uncomfortable, but his efforts were not in vain and are an inspiration to us now. Amelia shared that engaging in efforts that address life issues – affordable housing, food distribution, gun control, health care, can be a way to open conversation that may counteract systemic racism. Rebecca expressed her gratitude to AMM for the minute; although she stands aside from endorsing it, she is in unity with the intention, and feels that we need to work on this topic. Other voices returned to the topic of AMM's minute, still torn over whether we should have deferred it.

Finally we undertook to share as led on the topic of education under Covid: "How is continuity in learning being conveyed?". Tom Armstrong, who has been a substitute teacher, told us that the teachers in his school have been teaching on-line since March. But this puts stress on families, because parents have to remain home with their children. The school is planning to go to a hybrid model in November, which should offer parents some relief. The school committee at Plymouth Meeting Friends School is experiencing more involvement and connection from parents who are not Quakers. Daena Berdough, head of United Friends School said they are trying to merge the in-person learners in their school with the on-line ones at home. To make this work they found they needed to provide personal microphones for the teachers at school because otherwise their voices were so muffled by the masks that kids at home couldn't successfully hear what they were saying. The need to handle both home and in-class at once puts an extra burden on the teachers, and is taking an emotional toll on them. Kelly asked about masks – will kids wear them? Dana and Maggie Chiles, head of Gwynedd school both affirmed that they require masks and the kids do adapt to wearing them. Maggie also shared that the Gwynedd school community is thinking about new ways to adapt, while continuing to function in the Quaker school tradition. Covid has forced them to focus and simplify. For example, being outside is emphasized, but how to handle that and make it an environment for learning is a continuing challenge. Wanda told us about her daughter Shannon who teaches in Philly; two of her students have lost parents to Covid, and others have friends and extended family who also have. This puts a lot of stress on the kids. Amelia talked about food insecurity and tech inexperience in less fortunate neighborhoods, which makes school and learning under Covid even more problematic. She expressed admiration for efforts being made to provide for kids and families that need help. Ranvir Bakshi, of Gwynedd, related a dilemma faced as

a parable: "When confronted by a teacher and God at the same time, whom should he pay respect to first? He chose to respect the teacher first, because without the teacher he never would have found the path to God."

Amelia asked Carol Ritting, clerk of Gwynedd that was hosting the meeting, for some final words. Carol thanked us for our persistence, it being 2:10 pm at this point, noting that it had been a rewarding experience. We then adjourned the meeting.

Amelia Diamond

AQ Clerk

Dan Turner

Note Taker