

Joys and Challenges Report October 2023 - Middletown Monthly Meeting

Note: this is an amended report of the Spiritual State of the Meeting report sent to PYM in April 2023

Our Worship and Care Committee meets monthly and reviews the status and needs of our aging members and attenders and outreach is made to offer assistance as needed. We continue to offer hybrid worship, in person and on Zoom to accommodate the needs of our members and attenders. We have strengthened the technical aspects of our Zoom worship so that there is better and more consistent connection.

The Meeting dealt with the way our majority European-centric culture approaches our indigenous peoples by providing a Quarterly Meeting program that informed us of PYM's First Contact Reconciliation Collaborative work to enhance respect and dignity for tribal nations that exist and thrive in the present. It also highlighted past colonial events which forced indigenous peoples out of their homelands. One member wrote an article for our Quarterly Meeting newsletter demonstrating how the influx of Quaker settlers did this for our own Lenape people in the 17th and 18th century. Four of our members also attended an exhibition of indigenous photographer Will Wilson at the Delaware Art Museum which portrayed negative stereotypical images of Native peoples alongside present-day images which gave a more respectful presentation of their lives.

We strive for our meeting to be good stewards of God's creation and God's loving presence in our greater community in times of disaster and recovery. Although our meetinghouse is not equipped to offer temporary shelter to disaster victims, we can be a resource to our community in other ways: a gathering space for worship/meditation, prayer vigils, healing services, support and relief to emergency responders (coffee, soup, etc). The Meeting collaborated with our township emergency management department to develop a disaster preparedness plan for our meeting property and offered our assistance to first responders if the need arises. We participated in educational workshops hosted by Concord Quarter Climate Action Working Group (CAWG) appointing Climate Witness Liaisons to this group.

Our focus and deep concern always is to ground our actions in faith. We are aware we can't will our way to spiritual health on our own by trying to perform our testimonies without the power that is available to us through Christ. To that end, eight adult education classes were held to discern the question "What did Jesus query?" from the accounts of Mark's gospel and Luke's gospel in May and June of 2022 and Matthew's gospel and Luke's gospel in October and November 2022.

Our meeting is very small and discussion is ongoing related to growth and sustainability of our meeting. The worship and Care committee used the booklet *Grow Your Meeting* from Friends General Conference as a basis for this discussion. What is God calling our meeting to do with energy, love and caring? We continue to take opportunities for prayer and sincere soul searching on this question.

Additional items of note since this statement was approved. The Meeting took savings from our tree fund and purchased and planted 7 native shrubs to create a pollinator garden. The Meeting hosted its annual Middletown Day which included a luncheon potluck attended by about 20 members and attenders held after our June 5 Meeting for Worship. We supported Chris Stern's leading to travel in the UK accompanying Oxford Meeting member Matt Rosen as an elder in support of Matt's travel in the ministry. The Meeting used a grant from the PYM's Quaker Building & Projects Granting Group to replace the roofing on its social room and outside front porch. We had an emergency replacement of the Meeting room boiler at a cost on \$8,000. We recently had Paul Indorf, former member of PYM's Membership Development group, come and lead a discussion of our Meeting's outreach needs.

Submitted by Rich Ailes - Clerk