

Founded 1708

**Plymouth Monthly Meeting of the
Religious Society of Friends
2150 Butler Pike
Plymouth Meeting, PA 19462
January 31, 2021**

ANNUAL REPORT TO ABINGTON QUARTERLY MEETING

Dear Friends,

Plymouth Mouth Monthly Meeting looks back on the year 2020 with relief that it is behind us, as well as gratitude for the opportunities that it has brought to us during these difficult times. There are still many challenges ahead this year, but we have hope that we can meet them together.

At this time, the membership of Plymouth Monthly Meeting is 133. We have gained two new members this year from out of state who come to us via Zoom. Our meeting community has experienced Covid- 19 among several members and attenders, including the death of a member of one family. Unlike recent years, we have not experienced the death of any long time members or regular attenders of our Meeting community during 2020.

Our financial situation is stable but we are concerned about the loss of donations from the organizations that met in our Annie H. Wilson room before the pandemic. We appreciate the clear and accurate management of our funds provided by our Treasurer Linda White. Our Trustees have worked closely with Plymouth Meeting Friends School as they have struggled to meet the financial needs caused by the Covid crisis and will continue to remain supportive of their work.

Maintenance of the property continues to be a significant part of our budget. We began extensive tree work this year as well as continuing to pay for the mowing and upkeep of the grounds. Our commitment to our Green Minute moved forward with the installation of a dual port electric vehicle charger in our parking lot for the use of the Meeting and School communities, as well as the installation of a tank less hot water system which we will appreciate when we can be back in the building. We are grateful to the men of the Meeting who offer their labor to maintain our historic buildings year after year.

The Burial Ground Committee maintains the records for our burial ground. Tom Armstrong also provides caring assistance to families requesting a burial here. We also maintain the physical condition of the graves. Two new grave markers were installed this past year and diseased trees were removed.

The House Committee kept the Meeting House rooms clean for the brief period of time we were able to use them. They now work with the school to facilitate in-person instruction in the Annie. H. Wilson room to take place in a clean, safe environment.

Our First Day School is small and only met a few times before we closed in March. We do not have a virtual outreach for the few children currently in the Meeting community. Our Library Committee has been working during this time to digitize our catalogue of all the books in our Library. Chris Mrozinski, a young adult Meeting member, has been sharing his technical skills to facilitate this project, working with Sally Bishop.

The changes brought on by this pandemic have been challenging, but they also provided new opportunities for focusing on the spiritual growth and vitality of our Meeting community. We began the year with many projects and activities planned. We looked ahead to having retreats and other gatherings that would make use of our new outdoor facilities. The Sunday afternoon music circles and the Cornerstone Café coffee house organized by Bill Alberts continued to bring joy to us monthly as we welcomed musicians from around the area and shared fellowship with them. We began an ongoing showing of Quaker Speak videos followed by interesting discussions and we planned to expand those experiences throughout the spring.

After years of concentrating on the necessary work needed on the physical structure, Plymouth was ready to put our energy into deepening and strengthening the spiritual and relational dimensions of our Meeting Community. Several Friends participated in the Women's March in Philadelphia in January, for the 4th. year, as political concerns loomed large in our hearts and minds. We were happy to host Abington Quarterly Meeting here in early February and to share ideas with other Friends about Quaker witness in the world.

Then came Friday, March 13th. and everything shut down. Our community was touched immediately by Covid concern as one of our members had just experienced a possible exposure. Fortunately, it did not result in his contracting the virus but it made us painfully aware how vulnerable we might be as a Meeting Community. Plymouth followed the directives from the State of PA and closed the Meeting House, as did the School. This also cancelled all the activities of the various organizations that regularly used our Annie H. Wilson room. We did not gather for worship for several weeks.

Worship resumed via a Zoom link in mid-April, with an average of around 12 people participating. In August through October, we experimented with blending onsite in person worship with those on Zoom using an Owl conferencing system. Attendance increased to an average total of 22 people (14 onsite, 8 on Zoom). The weather cooled in late October and those who preferred to be onsite moved into the Meeting House where we worshipped with the Friends on Zoom using the Owl. An increase in Covid cases in Montgomery County prompted us to close the Meeting House in early November. Since that time, all of our worship, First Day and mid-week, as well as all committee meetings, are being conducted on Zoom. In order to assist Plymouth Meeting Friends School spread the classes out across the campus for the safety of the students, we have allowed the 4th. grade to convert our Annie H. Wilson room into a classroom for as long as this health crisis continues.

Our Meeting House remains closed at this time. Worship on Zoom continues to be meaningful for those who participate regularly, although some Friends would prefer to be back in the Meeting House. Others are unable to consider returning to onsite worship due to serious health

concerns until it is safe to be in close contact with people. Some Friends have begun to worship with us on Zoom from other states and will never be able to share onsite.

One great blessing of this new format is the return to our community of a member who grew up in our Meeting and moved out of state years ago. She now worships with us regularly and participates in other activities and committees. Two new members from out of state have joined Plymouth through this new opportunity and are also participating in the life of the Meeting and sharing their gifts with us. Others who live in the area but are not able to drive are able to come from time to time.

The technology is a serious drawback for several Friends who are unable to connect via Zoom. Other Friends do not find the use of this technology enables them to worship in a meaningful way and prefer not to use it. The blending of Zoom and onsite worship seems to work for those who use Zoom, but it does not meet the spiritual needs of everyone who might prefer to be in the Meeting House. Our Worship & Ministry committee hears all of these concerns and is trying to discern how to proceed in order to provide the opportunity for meaningful worship for each member and attender in our Plymouth community. We don't want to become separate groups. It is a challenge which is ongoing, but if we listen carefully and lovingly to each other, seeking God's guidance, we hope to discern the way forward this year.

A small group of Friends gathers on Wednesday evenings for a worship/sharing on Zoom. It is a quiet time of reflection and spiritual support and all are welcome to come. We did gather at the Meeting House wall in June to participate in the vigil after the death of George Floyd. We were so glad to see one another that it was difficult to maintain social distancing, but we tried. On Christmas Eve, we had a beautiful Zoom sharing of carols followed by fellowship with Friends who live at a great distance and whose presence brought joy to our community. Plymouth intends to focus on how we worship, communicate, and include all members in the life of our Meeting community.

Plymouth Meeting Friends School has certainly struggled to meet the crisis created by Covid-19. Our new Head of School Brenda Crawley had a very challenging first year and has led the school through these troubled waters very well. The school staff has worked diligently to create a safe, creative learning environment for the students, using both onsite and virtual options throughout the pandemic. Plymouth Monthly Meeting have given our full support to their efforts with gratitude.

The burdens of our current political climate have been difficult for us to bear. Individual members of our Plymouth community have felt led to address certain social concerns through their own actions during this time when it is difficult to act corporately. However, our Peace & Social Concerns committee discerned that it was appropriate to offer our \$500 Alice Ambler Award to Historic Fair Hill in recognition of the work they do within the North Philadelphia community which is underserved. Some of our members regularly volunteered there before Covid.

Our Care & Concern committee turned its attention away from some of the hospitality it usually provided for events throughout the year, which could no longer take place. The focus of the

committee turned to meeting the needs of everyone in our Meeting. One important project has been the updating of our Directory, which is now available for members and attenders registered on our website. We are grateful to Sally Bishop for her dedication to this ongoing project. Committee members also provided risk assessment for returning to the Meeting House property and will continue to fill that role later this year. The committee also provided outreach and concern for members of our Plymouth MM community affected by the pandemic, as well as those who are not able to be with us in person or virtually.

Our newly formed Website Committee has provided us with a portal to outreach into the larger world, as well as help our Monthly Meeting in-reach within our own worshipping community. This opens new opportunities for information, social concerns, vital communication within our Meeting, and many other functions that will enable Plymouth MM to learn and grow together in this changing world. David Miller and Carolee Duckworth have worked tirelessly to create an accessible website for us and are now trying to teach the Meeting how to navigate it easily. We are grateful to the leadership provided by Abington Quarter's Communication Committee, especially to Susan Vorwerk of Upper Dublin MM, whose knowledge and enthusiasm has opened this opportunity for all of us. Her patience and presence enabled members of our Meeting to learn how to use the Owl as well.

Plymouth Monthly Meeting recognizes the critical need for improving communication, one on one and within our Meeting community, so that we may grow together and not apart during this time of distance. We also embrace the opportunities now available to us through new technology to outreach into the wider community, in hopes of growing our numbers as well as expressing our Quaker witness in the world. Let us never forget that the most meaningful communication skill is listening with an open heart to one another. May we all move forward with renewed hope for a healthy, loving, peaceful future as we follow God's leadings in our hearts.

In Peace and Light,

Rebecca Cratin, Clerk
Plymouth Monthly Meeting