

June 2021 Report on the Status of Worship

The Ministry & Worship Committee (M&W) is striving to honor all points of view about re-opening the meetinghouse and to include the whole community in the process. The committee recognizes that priorities and needs vary from person to person. Some of us emphasize safety and see part of our decision as an example of modeling responsible behavior for the wider community. Others express their need for the face-to-face support of our Quaker community and, being fully vaccinated, feel safe enough to resume worship. Ministry and Worship is not trying to choose one approach. The sense of the committee is that we need to find and propose a responsible path that offers options to serve our community.

Update

Ministry & Worship has made progress in our ongoing discernment. The committee held listening sessions with First Day School/Children and Youth Education on June 10 and with members and attenders available to meet on June 15. We learned from teachers and parents that children and youth are anxious to gather in person, preferably outdoors to start, with access to a bathroom as the only indoor need. We also learned that some fully vaccinated teachers are willing and ready to conduct outdoor sessions, and that children are accustomed to wearing masks in similar play settings at schools. Following bathroom protocols used by Carolina Friends School, not in session this summer, would be recommended. Also, indoor infant care by a vaccinated care giver could be safely provided if needed.

The June 15 listening session, attended by 32 and supplemented by email messages from other Friends, lifted up and clarified many ideas, concerns, opportunities, cautions, questions, and suggestions.

Some Friends have suggested ways to add in-person participation to the online Zoom meetings for worship that have served us during the pandemic. To clarify what adding the meeting room as a Zoom participant would look like and sound like, the Zoom Working Group, under the care of Ministry & Worship, and with approval from the Building and Grounds Committee, tested audio/visual equipment in the meeting room on May 30. With three people online at home, the Zoom group found that a laptop computer in the meeting room, connected to a webcam and to a portable Bluetooth speaker/microphone, produced satisfactory audio and video for online participants and for group members in the meeting room.

Ministry & Worship will ask the Zoom Working Group to continue to assist in researching technical issues relating to Zoom, monitoring information shared by Quakers about Zoom, and monitoring Quaker online conversations and workshops about options for both online and in-person worship and religious education.

Request

After listening carefully to our community and giving thoughtful consideration to ways to meet the needs of our community, the Ministry & Worship Committee has a request. The committee asks the Meeting for permission to begin offering reasonable, responsible opportunities for small group worship in a variety of settings. With your permission, we will invite our community to experiment with us and help us evaluate the options for small group worship over the coming weeks. In this unprecedented time, the committee is not pursuing the perfect answer to how to worship together, and we do not know the lowest risk way to proceed. We listen. We trust that our testimonies of community and integrity will guide each of us to decide for ourselves which options are best now and in the coming weeks and months. The committee plans to communicate the options through In the Light, e-news, announcements, and calls to Friends who may not be well connected digitally.

The committee would like to start this experiment with the following opportunities on First Day, July 4:

- 1. Early worship in the meeting room from 8:15 to 9:15 AM**
- 2. Forum via Zoom only, 9:30 to 10:30, giving 30 minutes before 11:00 worship.**
- 3. Worship in the meeting room from 11:00 to 12:00. The committee will ask the Building & Grounds Committee to provide window fans to pull fresh air from the playground side of the meeting room, and push air out of the windows on the street side**
- 4. Worship outside from 11:00 to 12:00, with help from volunteers to open and close worship. Bring your own chairs and set up under the Magnolia in front.**
- 5. Worship via Zoom in your own home from 11:00 to 12:00.**
- 6. First Day School on the playground from 11:00 to 12:00, and the nursery open if needed.**

There is not enough time today to discuss the role of hybrid meetings, using the Zoom platform blended with in-person attendance for worship and religious education. The committee will request time for a discussion at a future Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business.

As always, the committee welcomes your comments to ministryandworship@chapelhillfriends.org.

June 20, 2021

Ministry & Worship Committee

Jeff Brown, clerk, Madelyn Ashley, Alice Carlton, Matt Drake, Carolyn White and Chris Stanley, ex officio