

Hospitality Committee Annual Report 2022

Chapel Hill Friends Meeting

The Hospitality Committee strives to make visitors feel welcomed and to foster community within the meeting. Specifically, and in normal times, the committee serves to:

- greet attenders and welcome visitors to meeting, including sending a welcome note to visitors
- manage monthly potluck
- assist CYRE with the mid-December Christmas party
- Help plan memorial services at the Meeting
- serve as first responder for emails to friends@chapelhillfriends.org

The past year, once again, has not been a normal one. The committee functions have included the following:

- greet attenders and welcome visitors to meeting, including sending a welcome note to visitors
- serve as first responder for emails to friends@chapelhillfriends.org

Active members of the committee:

Ben Ray, Buzz Borchardt (clerk), Evelyn Fendler-Lee, Gordon Davies, Jennifer Leeman, and Quaker Harmon. Three members were unable to participate for personal reasons.

Greet attenders and welcome visitors to meeting:

After the meetinghouse re-opened on July 4, 2021 the Hospitality Committee resumed greeting visitors there. We can be particularly grateful to committee members Evelyn, Jennifer, Quaker, and Gordon Davies and Betsy Brinson for their readiness to greet. In addition there have been numerous Friends who have volunteered to greet when someone from the Hospitality Committee was not available, and for that the Meeting can be thankful.

Along with greeting visitors, the Hospitality Committee sends a welcome note to those who sign our guestbook. During COVID, the welcome note has taken the form of an email. Since the meetinghouse reopened in July, 25 visitors have signed our guestbook. And, since the meeting gathers on Zoom as well as in person, the Hospitality Committee in May of 2021 inaugurated an online guestbook for visitors to sign. For those not familiar with the online guestbook, it is [here](#). It can be invoked from the [Visit and Learn](#) and the [Online Meeting](#) pages of our website. Since its debut, 25 visitors have signed the online guestbook.

Last year's Hospitality Committee annual report thanked Hart Pillow for agreeing to continue sending welcome notes even though she had been scheduled to cycle off the committee at the end of June 2021. In this year's annual report, we can thank Hart again, with gratitude, for continuing to do so. Moreover, not only does she send welcome notes, but she recently suggested modifying the guestbook format to remove the question as to whether a visitor wished to receive a welcome note or not, and to send a note to everyone who leaves their email or snail-mail address. And the committee was at unity on adopting the suggestion. In her email, Hart invites recipients to respond with questions, and offers the opportunity to talk with a member of meeting in person or by phone. In 2021, three visitors requested such a meeting; and we thank Jennifer and Jeff (Brown) for meeting with them. Two of those visitors are now regular attenders, so we can think that our outreach to visitors has an effect.

In related news, having learned how to use Google Forms to create an online guestbook, we created a similar webpage for visitors to subscribe to our weekly eNews. Since the online subscription form went live in May of last year, we have had 16 people sign.

Serve as first responder for emails to friends@chapelhillfriends.org:

Since August of 2020, the Hospitality Committee has been the first responder for emails to friends@chapelhillfriends.org. The idea being that the response represents the point of view of the meeting at large rather than that of an arbitrary individual – i.e., whoever writes the response. This goal is accomplished by forwarding the email to Hospitality committee members and others to ask advice before sending a response if an appropriate response is not clear. And, then, when the response is sent, to blind-copy the Clerk of Meeting, clerks of Care and Counsel and Ministry and Worship, and any others who might have an interest so that they can join in the response if they wish.

At this time last year when the Hospitality Committee annual report was presented, we had detailed statistics as to the frequency of emails and a breakdown of how they were handled (ignored, responded to immediately, delegated outside of Hospitality). This year we don't have detailed statistics because, as it has turned out, the keeping of such statistics is more onerous than handling the emails themselves. However, it is probably safe to assume that during the past year we received a handful of emails each week. Of those, roughly 90% were spam. Some of those were advertisements for services such as web creation or janitorial services. A surprising number were for drones. And, many were the kinds of spam emails that everyone is undoubtedly familiar with. A number of people, for example, want to bequeath Chapel Hill Friends their fortune or invest large amounts of money in our Meeting (no funds have yet been received).

Probably most legitimate emails were handled within the Hospitality Committee and included such things as inquiries about:

- visiting our meeting
- someone's contact information
- how to post in enews

Some emails that we responded to provoked follow-up discussion among the people that we blind-copied on the response. For example, our negative response to requests for parking space provoked some discussion on the topic in the Building and Grounds committee. And some emails – such as a request to use the meetinghouse as a vaccination site – were acknowledged and passed along to others to provide a response.

Looking ahead

In the spring, COVID permitting, the committee hopes to hold a newcomers tea outdoors in the playground after meeting, with light refreshments provided by the committee. There have been a significant number of new attenders to our meeting during the past year, and the committee would like to provide them with an opportunity to connect with members of meeting and other newcomers in a more intimate, social setting.

In the first draft of this report, I wrote, "Next year might be challenging for the committee as 5 of the 6 active members, including the current clerk, are scheduled to cycle off the committee in June". Since then, however, there have been some very encouraging developments. Jennifer and Buzz have agreed to continue with the committee for another year so as to help the new clerk. And, even more heartening, Quaker Harmon has agreed to become clerk for another term with the committee. We thank Quaker sincerely for her willingness to serve, and all the committee members whose dedication has made this committee such a rewarding one to be on.

Respectfully submitted: Ben Ray, Buzz Borchardt, Evelyn Fendler-Lee, Gordon Davies, Jennifer Leeman, and Quaker Harmon