

January 2022 Report from Ministry and Worship Committee (M&W) on the Status of Worship to the January 16th Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business

Opportunities continue for small group worship in a variety of settings (inside the meetinghouse at 8:15 and 11:00 AM, by Zoom at 11:00 AM, and at Carol Woods at 11:00 AM.) Friends decide for themselves what First Day option best meets their needs for safety and wellbeing.

At the meetinghouse, Friends wear masks indoors and outside including children who are under age for vaccination.

M&W recently purchased dozens of the most effective commercially available masks (N95 and KN95) for distribution at the meetinghouse, and we urge Friends to wear them on Meeting property.

M&W continues to consult with the Zoom subcommittee, with gratitude for their attention to detail and patient persistence. The subcommittee provided a trial run of a “blended” meeting for worship on November 28 during which the meeting room was a Zoom participant. A second trial will be scheduled when health and comfort levels are favorable. M&W will follow with a Meeting listening session, open to all, to share experiences of the combination of Zoom and in-person worship. M&W will then consider a recommendation to Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business.

M&W is making a slight change in meetings for worship. A committee member opens and closes each meeting for worship. This month and next, the closer will read a monthly query at the start of the first and second First Days only. On the third, fourth, and fifth First Days, the closer will not read the query. Why this trial?

General queries have been used since the time of George Fox “as a guide for self-examination, as a framework for periodically examining, clarifying and prayerfully considering the direction of our individual lives and the life of the meeting community.” (Faith and Practice, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, p. 205). M&W offers monthly queries, read near the beginning of worship, with the intention of deepening our spiritual experience. Friends may use a query for personal reflection during worship or set it aside for later contemplation.

The Ministry & Worship Committee has observed from time to time that reading a query during meeting for worship may evoke responses that focus on the query almost exclusively. This can evolve into “worship sharing,” whereby Friends share responses to a specific question. In the Friends General Conference definition, “Worship sharing focuses on a particular question and helps us to explore our own experience and share with each other more deeply than we would in normal conversation.” While there is value in this type of sharing, it is very different from Meeting for Worship where we open ourselves to the divine/the Spirit/God and offer vocal ministry – as we feel led - from that source. Limiting the number of times in a month when a query is read at the start of worship provides more opportunities for Friends to open themselves to the divine/the Spirit/God.

As always, the committee values and invites your comments this morning or anytime via ministryandworship@chapelhillfriends.org.

January 16, 2022

Ministry & Worship Committee

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