

CHFM Peace and Justice Annual Report for 2022-2023

Peace and Justice is presently a small committee. We started out as 6 and we are now 3. Of the three left, 2 have full time jobs and all belong to 3-5 or 6 committees - in and out of Meeting. We need people. Nevertheless, we have been useful to Meeting.

Peace and Justice is responsible for most of the Meeting's Benevolences. 5 of these are "Legacy" - AFSC, FCNL, Inter-Faith Council, Carolina Friends School and Quaker House of Fayetteville need only be reviewed every five years. The remainder of the money goes to 3-5 groups. This year, the groups chosen were Bolivian Quaker Education Fund, Alamance-Orange Prison Ministry, Peaceful Schools NC (out of Carolina Friends School), Friends House Moscow and ReEntry House Plus (serving men released from OCC). We have received thanks from the last two and also from NC Warn, FCNL, AFSC and Quaker House. Both NC Warn and FCNL are grateful for past support and have sufficient money for now.

Working with other committees in and out of the Meeting

1. ARE agreed to give one Forum a month into the care of Peace and Justice. This is flexible and subject to ARE approval.
2. QEW on the issue of climate change. Wendy and Hank of P&J are also part of QWE so P&J has a direct link to work back and forth. P&J has shared sponsorship of Forums on the subject with QEW.
3. FCNCL is presently under the care of P&J. Work with FCNCL is done by individuals only.
4. Racial Equity Committee works independently under our care.

Forums -

1. Oct 2 - Stephen Zunes on Western Sahara which is one of two countries/peoples (Palestine is the other) controlled by a hostile neighbor and officially unrecognized as a country.
2. Oct 27 - Walter Nagle, surviving partner of Bayard Rustin, presented about the life and his memories of Bayard Rustin at CH Library to a welcoming, diverse group of people.
3. Dec 4 - Steven Laning brought his presentation about the current state of climate change on our planet
4. Dec 11 - Karen Porter: Friends House Moscow was described and the work they are doing (and still doing) in Russia. These include supporting Conscientious Objectors, refugees and orphans tossed from the childcare system. They also translate and publish Quaker books/pamphlets into Russian.
5. January 29 - Wayne Fineger - new Quaker House Director is introduced to CHFM.
6. March 12 - Mary Rider shared her journey on the US southern border observing the status of refugees and immigrants and visiting with people who have devoted themselves to helping them.
7. April 2 - Stan Becker and Richard Grossman on reproductive rights with Hank Elkins as moderator. Stan Becker is a retired professor of demography at Johns Hopkins University and a member of Baltimore's Homewood Meeting. Richard

Grossman is a retired ob/gyn and member of Durango Colorado Meeting, who for over 30 years provided abortion in Colorado. The two spoke about the data on abortion over time and across our nation, observing that abortion occurs whether or not it is legal, and that when it is illegal, the maternal death rate increases. They answered questions concerning unwanted, unintended and unplanned pregnancies, which the poor and underserved are more likely to be dealing with. The data show that over half of women who obtain abortion already have at least one child. In the US, more than half of women having abortions use the so-called abortion pill rather than go to a clinic for a procedure. The discussion that followed in part related to the FCNL's recent query concerning whether the organization should respond to legislation related to abortion.

8. May 7 - Sally Robertson talked about the status of solar and wind power in NC, the political power and resistance of Duke Energy and a bit about what the Build Back Better bill has to offer NC residents.

Reproductive Justice and Abortion statement of Chapel Hill Meeting for discernment by FCNL

1. This was the most important issue to come to Peace and Justice in 2023. The time between Meeting being notified (in Meeting for Worship, not Business Meeting) and the FCNL deadline for delivery was 4 weeks. Not ideal for a Quaker Meeting to come to unity.
2. The Clerk of P&J had seen the Quaker process of discernment done very well and done badly within Chapel Hill Meeting over decades and had a clear idea of how that process was supposed to work. It is named here to put it into the record of our Minutes.
 1. At least a year, but often more of discussion and factual presentations
 2. Transparency and communication between committees working on an matter of importance to the Meeting and the entire Meeting as a whole
 3. People willing to listen deeply
 4. People willing and able to share their personal insights
 5. Messages in MFW, E-News, Meetings and Forums called to allow 2 and 3 to happen within our community
 6. A spirit-led statement, well worked over in committee
3. We had one very important assist: the issue had been on the front pages of our nation well before June 24, 2022 when the Dobbs decision was handed down. The stipulation of a long, transparent consideration required by Quaker process was provided, gratis, by the Media, numerous state legislatures and the 2022 election cycle including who won races (the expected red wave was tiny) and the results of six state abortion referendums.
4. Our second assist: several committees were actively helpful – ARE, QEW and Publications all stepped up. Publications was particularly important. QEW had a Forum planned, they handed that spot over to P&J and ARE was on board. Publications was asked to publish everything sent to them (transparency) and they did.

5. At the initial MFW, the P&J Clerk described the process – a Forum on abortion followed by a Threshing session from which P&J would write a statement to be offered to MWAB in the month of April. This “program” was published again in the E-news along with the request from FCNL. A poll was taken in that same MFW as to likely attendance – 5 said yes to a weekday night, 5 to a Saturday morning. We did both.
6. Two passionate people invited Stan Becker, a John Hopkins demographer and Richard Grossman, retired obstetrician and gynecologist, to create a Forum which was presented the next First Day. Some 20 people were asked to Clerk the Threshing sessions. People were afraid, but two were found who said yes. A Note taker volunteered. The Threshing sessions were textbook – much deep listening and sober, thoughtful, passionate speaking. The Notes were published immediately after each session. A statement was produced by one person at the end of the first session, refined in the second and then refined again in the regular P&J meeting. It was published in the E-News before MWAB.
7. The statement was approved without change in MWAB. Several people spoke about the process and how they were affected by listening to each other.
8. One addendum. CHFM people range from those who are deeply against abortion to people who consider it necessary to people who hold that it is natural, proper and righteous. All of them agreed on two things – that the life of the mother is the first consideration and that making abortion illegal is wrong.
9. **April Minutes 2023 - Appendix 3** Statement Resulting from Reproductive Justice and Abortion Policy Threshing Sessions
 - I. Guided by our Quaker faith, we respect each individual’s process of inner discernment and their right to make decisions of conscience about their healthcare, including whether to become pregnant, avoid pregnancy, or terminate pregnancy. We observe that bans and restrictions on abortion have violated the principle of equality of all people, as efforts to enforce these have resulted in criminalization, incarceration, excessive surveillance, medical neglect resulting in death or severe harm, and violations of privacy, specifically of people who can become pregnant.
 - II. The Chapel Hill Friends Meeting agrees that universal access to affordable, effective, comprehensive health care, including age-appropriate sexual education, male and female contraception, and abortion, is an individual right and is necessary to allow all people to fulfill their potential. We oppose government efforts to ban or restrict abortion.
 - III. (Threshing notice is in the Fourth Month (April) Newsletter – the Statement can be found in the Fourth Month Minutes / Fifth Month (May) Newsletter 2023)

Voter Registration

1. Called returning citizens to check voter registration status
2. Assisted returning citizens in registering
3. Quakers registered people on the UNC campus

Palestinian/Israel

A letter concerning Israeli/Palestinian violence was presented to Business Meeting which approved the letter to be sent to President Biden from Peace and Justice. Ruth Zalph did the delivery.

Refugee Assistance by CHFM was principally done by two (now former) members of P&J, Joe Groves and Leslie Bassinger.

1. Last year, the Carol Woods Peace and Justice Forum asked the administration if it made sense to offer a house CW owns on Weaver Dairy Rd. as housing for a refugee family. The administration said yes and, working with Church World Service, we welcomed a Syrian family with 4 children, ages 8, 7, 4, and 2. Joe Groves from the CHFM Peace and Justice Committee has taken a lead role in the project with two other CW residents. Betsy Brinson and other Friends at CW have been deeply involved in work with the family.
2. The Carol Woods community—residents (over 100!), administration, and staff—repaired, cleaned, and furnished the house, cleared up the property, and welcomed the family. We've negotiated with the refugee agency, dealt with emergencies, contacted schools, doctors, agencies, and are doing English conversation classes. We have formed a partnership with Refugee Community Partnership in Chapel Hill for further support. The husband is working two jobs: full-time at Goodwill, and, 2 days a week, as a Carol Woods intern on a temporary, 3-month basis. We hope he can become full-time at Carol Woods.
3. Most importantly, Carol Woods has made an institutional commitment to working with refugees, with the Syrian father being the first step. Working with one family has led to institutional change.
4. Leslie Bassinger led on a second family. Samir Omary, his wife Reema and 8 month old daughter Aida are a refugee family from Afghanistan. They are currently living in Raleigh, NC and both Chapel Hill and Raleigh Friends Meeting have been in contact to provide support. A list of 13 "urgently needed" household items presented to Friends (thanks to the efforts of Friends John Bell, Vernie Davis, Mark Davidson, Lori Fernald Khamala, Tom and Jennifer Munk) is currently down to 3 items.
5. They are still in need of a firm queen size mattress, a food processor, and a pressure cooker. Diapers (Pampers Cruisers 360, currently size 4) and baby wipes are an ongoing need. Please contact Samir at 919-328-0906 if you have any of these items.

At some point, Samir may consider giving a Second Hour/Forum on his experiences and insights about the Afghan War. RFM will let us know when this is scheduled. The RFM Second Hour/Forum format is hybrid, allowing for both in-person and zoom participation.

Submitted by CHFM Peace and Justice Committee