

Ministry and Worship Annual Report 2021

The Ministry and Worship Committee (M&W), made up of members of the Religious Society of Friends, supports the spiritual life of the Meeting. It also fosters understanding of Friends' principles and practices, in collaboration with other committees.

The COVID-19 Pandemic continued to challenge M&W and the Meeting this year. After consultation with Buildings & Grounds, Hospitality, and Children and Youth Education committees, comments at Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business (MWAB), and lengthy discernment, M&W proposed and received approval from the Meeting to offer options for worship and religious education on First Days. Beginning on July 4, 2021 on a trial basis, the small group opportunities were early meeting for worship in the meeting room at 8:15, Forum via Zoom at 9:30, late meeting for worship in the meeting room at 11:00, worship outside under the Magnolia tree at 11:00, worship online via Zoom, worship at Carol Woods at 11:00, and First Day School outside of the school building, including remote participation via Zoom. Buildings & Grounds invested in window fans to improve the air exchange in the meeting room and air purifiers to improve air flow in other parts of the meeting house. Masks were lovingly requested on Meeting property and social distancing has been practiced. Friends attended the offerings with which they were comfortable, with health, safety and well-being in mind.

M&W monitored attendance for each option and reported monthly to MWAB. The trial continues to date as the Delta Variant of COVID-19 persists in North Carolina.

Meanwhile, the Zoom subcommittee, under the care of M&W, has consistently supported meetings on First Days, committee meetings, and events on the Zoom platform. The subcommittee has also carefully researched equipment that would enable a blending of in-person and online participants, should the Meeting be led to offer a blended approach to worship. Two trial runs of a blended meeting for worship were completed in December, with a listening session to be scheduled for sharing experiences.

The M&W Committee:

- Oversees the quality of Meeting for Worship and Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business (MWAB), mindful of the living silence and vocal ministry.
- Opens and closes each Meeting for Worship and organizes announcements.
- Stimulates reflection through queries, with one read each month at MWAB and each week during Meeting for Worship as well as printed in the newsletter.
- Arranges activities (with other committees) to enhance the spiritual life of the Meeting, including small discussion groups, worship groups, retreats, and workshops.
- Supports Prayers for Healing/Holding in the Light, beginning as a weekly event in 2020 and now held twice a month. M&W is grateful to leaders Matt and Lynn Drake and Chris Stanley.
- Provides responses to questions about the Religious Society of Friends and arranges clearness committees as requested by individuals seeking clearness on spiritual issues.
- Receives letters requesting membership, convenes the related clearness committees and reports recommendations to MWAB. This year we recommended Tim Fogarty's transfer

of membership to CHFM from Gainesville, Florida Monthly Meeting. We also recommended the transfer of Polly Ulin's membership to Midcoast Friends Meeting in Maine. Both were approved by MWAB.

- Attends to the needs of visitors and new attenders; an example is a new welcoming document in 2021.
- Participates in clearness committees organized by the Care and Counsel Committee leading to the marriage of couples under the care of the Meeting.
- Nurtures other committees as they do the Meeting's work; examples in 2021 were CHFM's nominees to the Carolina Friends School Board of Trustees and the subcommittee on benevolences.
- Plans (with other committees) celebrations of significant events in the spiritual life of the Meeting. These include our annual Christmas Eve Worship, online last year, Worship Sharing with Attention to Animals; Meeting for Worship with Attention to Graduating Seniors (Matilda Chen, Rufus King and Henry Schneider in 2021).
- Holds the annual Clerks' Retreat, attended virtually by 20 this year. The retreat's agenda is created in collaboration with the Clerk of the Meeting with ideas from Committee Clerks on topics of interest. Focus is on helping old and new clerks gain skills in the process of discernment and the spiritual nature of clerking a committee.
- Organizes the annual Spiritual State of the Meeting gathering, attended virtually by 21 in 2021. The Spiritual State of the Meeting allows us to reflect on issues while sharing deeply with others on queries from the Piedmont Friends Yearly Meeting (PFYM). The committee reports the results to MWAB and PFYM. The report to PFYM includes a count of the overall number of Friends and attenders in attendance at Meetings for Worship, Forum, and First Day School throughout one month. This October we averaged 5 inside at early meeting, 8 outside at 11:00, 23 inside at late meeting, 22 on Zoom, and 9 in First Day School. In addition, about a dozen Friends are worshipping at Carol Woods. We note, sadly, the absence from worship of attenders from Orange Correctional Center, though we are heartened by attendance by returned citizens.
- Consults with the Zoom subcommittee, formed in April 2020, under the care of M&W.
- Oversees some of the meeting's annual expenditures on affiliations, services, and benevolences. This year M&W recommended expenditures of \$200 to Friends Journal for listing CHFM among monthly meetings in North America and support of QuakerSpeak video production, \$350 to the Piedmont Friends Yearly Meeting and Fellowship (not including leadership development support for attendance at in-person events), and \$600 to Friends General Conference as a monthly meeting affiliation contribution. For benevolences related to ministry, M&W recommended gifts to two organizations:
 - \$150 to the School of the Spirit. CHFM has a longstanding relationship with the School of the Spirit (schoolofthespirit.org). Mike Green and Judy Purvis completed the two-year "Being a Spiritual Leader" program several years ago. Mike became a teacher and leader of the program and, eventually, served as administrator of the Board. Judy continues to serve on the School of the Spirit (SOTS) Board as Secretary. Both continue to share what they learned from their SOTS experiences with Durham Friends Meeting (Mike) and the Friendship Friends Meeting (Judy). Matt Drake participated on the SOTS Board of Directors for several years, eventually serving as Clerk of the Board. Matt and Lynn participated in several SOTS weekend retreats over the years. Matt continues in

the role of a Board Elder, holding the SOTS Ministry in prayer. Meeting participants in recent SOTS programs (pre-COVID) included Kitty Bergel, Allie Scales, and Pat Mann and Pam Schwingl and others. They attended SOTS weekend retreats at a Catholic Retreat Center in Durham.

- \$100 to Friends for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Concerns (FLGBTQC, <https://flgbtqc.herokuapp.com/>), is a North American Quaker faith community that affirms that of God in all people, draws sustenance from each other and from the Spirit for work and life in the world, and learns that radical inclusion and radical love bring further light to Quaker testimony and life. CHFM has supported FLGBTQC for years in the context of some Quaker meetings struggling to accept gay and lesbian Friends. The gesture of a gift became more poignant in CHFM after FLGBTQC was denied rental of the Quaker Lake retreat venue in North Carolina around 2008. Though the contribution is small, it affirms CHFM's practice of joyfully embracing the Light within all, made visible through the participation of all people, no exceptions. Participants in the FLGBTQC listserv in support of community building include Jan Hutton.

M&W expresses gratitude to Publications and Communications Committee for the ongoing maintenance of the Chapel Hill Friends Meeting website, weekly e-news, and In the Light messages.

With great appreciation, we thank Kitty Bergel for her faithful service while she was able. We are grateful for new member Dottie Heninger who began serving in July.

Jeff Brown, clerk for the Ministry and Worship Committee, Madelyn Ashley, Alice Carlton, Dottie Heninger, Carolyn White, Matt Drake and Chris Stanley, *ex-officio*.