Bucks Quarterly Meeting for Worship for The Purpose of Business 18th Day, Second Month, 2024

Held under the care of Solebury Monthly Meeting via hybrid format

Clerk: Bill Daly (Middletown)

Bucks Quarter Coordinator: Wendy Kane (Newtown)

Recording Clerk: Terry M. Christensen (Newtown)

Friends gathered at 1:04 pm and settled into a period of worship.

Welcome – Bill Daly

Review and Approval of Agenda – APPROVED

- Roll Call of Meetings: Bristol 1; Buckingham 4; Doylestown 1; Fallsington 2; Lehigh Valley – 1; Makefield – 1; Middletown – 8; Newtown – 8; Plumstead – 3; Quakertown – 2; Solebury – 4; Southampton – 3; Wrightstown – 6; Yardley – 4
- Stories of Vitality & Strength Fallsington Friend reported that Fallsington has established a Music and Singing Committee. The hope that this committee will attract more visitors and enrich their meetings in various ways.

Buckingham Friend reported that Buckingham meeting has switched to LED bulbs thus saving money and using less energy.

Wrightstown Friend reported that Wrightstown meeting has begun solar power project; thus far collected \$20K (of \$30K needed); they expect to complete installation in Spring or early Summer of this year. The coordinator will be writing an article about this project for the BQ website.

Bristol Friend reported that 14 people attended each of their last two [monthly] meetings.

Doylestown Friend reported that they feature music ("Music at the Meetinghouse") on the first Sunday of each month following meeting for worship. Doylestown will advertise these events using BQ Outreach Grant monies to produce signs.

Lehigh Friend reported that three toddlers and two children have become regular attenders at meeting for worship. Their conversion to heat pumps is well underway; they are waiting for utility company to connect them.

Solebury Friend reported improvements to their meetinghouse; they have removed wood from the gable end of their meetinghouse. This action exposes the old stone. The appearance and structural integrity of the meetinghouse has been improved.

Newtown Friend reported that the meeting has installed new audio-visual equipment. Among other benefits, anyone speaking from any location in the meeting room (i.e., offering vocal ministry during worship or comments/questions during Meeting for Business) can be heard not only in the meetinghouse but also on Zoom; all without having to use a handheld microphone. Another Newtown Friend reported that in addition to improved audio, new video cameras enable Zoom attenders to see who is speaking in the meeting room. Another Newtown Friend observed that this capability improves the vitality of Newtown meeting by making it possible for Friends for whom travel is difficult, to join in worship, adult education, and meeting for business.

Quarter Coordinator Report – Wendy Kane (see attached report) – The report began with Wendy encouraging Friends to attend Quarterly Meetings in person whenever possible; cites joy of fellowship and renewing connections.

This Quarter the Coordinator visited 11 of the 14 meetings in the Quarter.

Holiday Celebrations: Wendy was able to join Friends at Southampton, Yardley, and at Friends Village.

She attended a threshing session at Yardley meeting which was facilitated by George Schaefer.

Wendy has been working with Wrightstown Meeting. Wrightstown is celebrating its 300th anniversary this May, and she is advising them on a video production.

Wendy has been in contact with Bristol Meeting regarding a proposal by a teacher at George School about a possible service project that would involve cleaning headstones in the Bristol Meeting burial grounds.

Wendy reported that the Bucks Quarter Handbook is available in both print and digital formats. Each meeting will receive three print copies. The digital formats will be on the website later today (18 Feb 2024). The online version does not have a directory section in the back because it is not password protected. Extra paper copies were made available at Quarterly Meeting.

Wendy reported that BQ Outreach Committee has produced new Outreach Cards. These are easier to read reproductions of an earlier card. The Outreach Committee has also approved five new grants to monthly meetings for outreach. She notes that some monthly meetings have not applied for these funds. Wendy reviews the procedure for grant application. She also states that these grants can be used for a wide variety of projects.

Wendy reported that Bucks Quarter Clerks continue to meet quarterly. These meetings offer a good opportunity to interact and share ideas among meetings.

The BQ Ad Hoc Tech Committee is continuing its work. Using borrowed equipment, they have put together a "Hybrid Meeting in a Box" which has been used to enable participation by those Friends unable to attend BQM in person. The previous Quarterly Meeting (at Quakertown) is a good example. The Quarter is gradually replacing the items which have been borrowed from Friend Richmond Shreve.

Wendy detailed her work with PYM; she clerks the PYM Program Committee. This committee meets monthly via Zoom. She participates in Quarterly Staff and Quarterly Leadership meetings. She also attended PYM's Fall Continuing Sessions as well as a presentation of the "Spiritual Life of William Penn" offered by Fallsington Meeting. Due to inclement weather, this program was only offered on a virtual platform. Wendy is currently working at getting the video of that presentation up on the BQM YouTube channel.

Wendy participated in a Quaker Call to Action call. The program included Rep. Jamie Raskin (D. MD) who, among other topics, discussed "ranked choice" voting. She also attended the FCNL meeting "Setting Quaker Lobbying Priorities for the 119th Congress." This panel discussion included over 100 Friends on Zoom; many of whom were Bucks Quarter Friends. She also attended a "Young Friends Focus Group" about which we will learn more later in the meeting.

Wendy talked about social media and outreach. She is often seen taking photos of our gatherings to post on the Bucks Quarter website. About once a week, Wendy publishes a story of vitality on our website; these are often picked up and republished by PYM. Examples include Yardley Friends welcoming new Clerk, Ted Taylor as well as the Bristol Meeting program teaching unaccompanied refugees life skills, such as cooking. Wendy continues to post on our Facebook page. She also has an arrangement with Times Publishing for a monthly article regarding local Quakers. Wendy asks Friends to contact her about events in their meeting that they would like to promote.

Annual Report – Friends Camp Association – Jess Walcott (full report attached) – The report began with a request for Friends to examine the written report that was submitted. Friend Walcott credited Camp Onas Executive Director (Holly Mueller Hecht) for developing this document. Among the highlights, Friend Walcott reported that visitors are, once again, welcome to join campers and staff for Sunday worship. She noted that visitors need to call in advance of the visit. It is also helpful for Friends who wish to visit to be on the Camp Onas mailing list. The written report details several options for joining the list including a QR Code

Friend Walcott observed that many campers come away from the experience with the sense that Camp Onas is their spiritual home. For those meetings who wish to know more about camp operations, Friend Walcott suggested inviting Friends Camp Association Executive Director, Holly Mueller Hecht, to speak at their meetings.

Friend Walcott described the work of the Camp Onas Board of Directors and referred to the Camp Onas mission statement which includes, "building a community of people who are joyful, confident, kind, and engaged." She believes that the Camp Onas board is coming closer to that ideal. A key element is inviting every board member to speak on a topic under discussion. This practice is helpful to people who are not rooted in Quaker traditions. They have begun engaging in board education programs. They are also looking for new board members; interested Friends should contact Christine Godshall (Asst. Clerk and Clerk of Governance).

A Buckingham Friend asked about mechanism to donate to Camp Onas; **ANS**: There are several ways to donate to Camp Onas; the website has a donate "button." Also, you can send checks directly to the camp.

Annual Report – Chandler Hall – John Whitman (no written report available) – The report began with the observation that Chandler Hall is celebrating its 51st year of operation during which they have provided two million days of care to approximately fifteen thousand people. Mr. Whitman detailed the scope of services Chandler Hall offers including assisted living, skilled nursing, memory care, and home-based hospice care which serves between sixty and seventy patients a day. He noted that because of financial concerns, Chandler Hall has had to cease operating its in-patient hospice care. He notes that only five percent of hospice patients seek in-patient care. They have designated a few beds in the skilled nursing facility as hospice specific. A combination of core nurses and hospice nursed administer care for these patients. Mr. Whitman noted that there was some confusion about whether Chandler was eliminating hospice care entirely. He reaffirmed that that is not the case.

Mr. Whitman also noted that a once robust cadre of volunteers had been lost because of COVID-19 precautions. Chandler Hall is looking to rebuild that volunteer base and add more activities for its residents. Current activities include having shuffle-board teams (consisting of staff and residents) and a scarecrow contest at Halloween. They are implementing small bird aviaries in the skilled nursing and memory care sections of their campus.

A Southampton Friend asked how many people are in their independent living facility. **ANS:** They have three different levels of independent living: They have 19 units of apartment style living, six two-bedroom cottages, four "lofts" on the second floor of the Fox common building for a total of twenty-nine.

A Newtown Friend asked how Chandler Hall is meeting the definition of a "Quaker" organization. **ANS:** Whitman meets with each new staff member and impresses upon them that everybody has "the Light of God" within and that everybody deserves respect. Every resident should be treated as if they were a parent of staff.

A Newtown Friend asked if Chandler Hall does Quaker orientation for new staff. **ANS:** Yes

A Newtown Friend asked if Whitman could speak to the use of a raffle and the staging of a "Casino Night" when these activities are not traditionally part of Quaker fund-raising. **ANS:** Bob and Odie LeFever, Quaker residents of Chandler Hall also had questions about this practice. They were reassured that no cash would be exchanged; all transactions involved "chips." Although there were door prizes, it was not "gambling." Whitman said that Bob and Odie ultimately approved of the activity. With this event, Chandler Hall raised twenty-two thousand dollars for their memory care and hospice units.

A Wrightstown Friend asked if Chandler Hall is listed as a CCRC. **ANS:** Chandler Hall is listed as a CCRC.

A Wrightstown Friend commented that once patients transition to higher level of care, then care is offered on a "fee-for-service" basis rather than a "one-stop shopping" scenario where residents pay a higher initial cost but will not face increasing fees in the future. **ANS:** Yes.

A Buckingham Friend commented that one long-term connection to Chandler Hall has been our ability to come to Chandler Hall on Sundays and offer Quaker worship. In what ways do you imagine that Bucks Quarter Friends will be able to offer spiritual support that will be meaningful to Chandler Hall residents and meaningful to Friends? **ANS**: Because of COVID-19 precautions, Chandler Hall could not have visitors. In March, they will be hosting a breakfast for all the religious leaders in Newtown. There will also be a guest speaker who will discuss spiritual aspects of working with senior citizens. This will also enable Chandler Hall to reach out to these spiritual communities and build up their volunteer corps. Chandler Hall has students coming in to interview residents about life experiences. These stories are placed in a binder for the residents. Chandler Hall is also looking for volunteers to help with a garden in which they can grow vegetables. Whitman noted that they do have residents requesting religious services. Whitman encouraged Friends to contact him via email to discuss volunteer opportunities.

A Yardley Friend asked if Chandler Hall is looking for Quakers to serve on their Board? **ANS:** Chandler Hall has eight board members and five of them are Quakers. They are looking for more board members and if anyone is interested, they should contact Sharon Johnson who is currently the Asst. Board Chair.

Wendy Kane asked Mr. Whitman to be certain to include her among those invited to the March breakfast.

A Middletown Friend noted that prior to COVID-19, he served as a volunteer at Chandler Hall for nearly ten years and that there was a Quaker presence every Sunday during that time. Friends would host a half-hour worship service that included singing. Chandler Hall residents were very receptive to this practice. Also, Friends would also assist residents who wished to be present when St. Andrews would come to offer Catholic services. Middletown member Kathy Perry was an integral part of this. **ANS:** Kathy Parry is still very involved, and we would love to have you come back.

Wendy noted that Kathy Parry is involved with the Chandler Hall Auxiliary.

Mr. Whitman noted that dealing with seniors on a daily basis is challenging; it requires one to "have their heart in the right place." He observed that the best part of his day was visiting with residents. John [Whitman] offered an anecdote about speaking with a person who was temporarily residing at Chandler Hall. He also included a letter from the family of a resident who had passed thanking Chandler Hall for the care that their relative had received.

Bill Daly noted that members of various meetings in Bucks Quarter had been offering Quaker worship to Chandler Hall residents for nearly all of the fifty years that Chandler Hall had been in existence. He raised the question of whether it was time to begin a formal discussion about Friends returning to Chandler Hall to offer Quaker worship.

Annual Report – Makefield Meeting – Jerry Taylor (full report attached) – The report began with an observation that Makefield is a very small meeting, but also very special. After Meeting for Worship, Friends enjoy gathering around a table and engaging in fellowship as they enjoy coffee and snacks.

Over the past year, they have renovated their caretaker's house. They are very satisfied with the tenants who rent that space. One of the tenants teaches online courses and the other is a music therapist in New York. The tenants also work to maintain the grounds, which is a significant asset for a small meeting. Another development is that the tenants have Wi-Fi and consequently, Makefield Meeting now has Wi-Fi access.

This past year, Makefield lost a longtime member Hugh Shaudys. Hugh possessed extensive knowledge of the area – particularly as it related to farms. Makefield now has 19 members and 1 active attender. They do not have any children in the meeting. They have one new member who is heavily involved in Quarterly Meeting who also serves as their Recording Clerk. Makefield held a picnic last summer that was very well attended; several Friends who do not normally attend Meeting for Worship made it to the picnic. Makefield Meeting also has a Spiritual Enrichment Group that meets with Friends who cannot attend in person.

Treasurers Report – Lisa Parry (full report attached) – The report began with a review of the P&L statement. In December, BQM received the scheduled payment from Friends Fiduciary of \$1029.15. We are right on schedule with respect to Friends Fiduciary and we have received 51% of the budgeted contributions for the year. Monthly Meeting Contributions are \$128,885. These came in at the end of December, so she now has funds to send to PYM (\$52,181). Additionally, BQM has made \$300 donations each to Camp Onas, Chandler Hall, and Friends Village.

She notes that 45% of our budget is labeled "Personnel." Within this category are salaries, benefits, and reimbursements for our coordinator. Lisa noted that the cost of health insurance has gone up which requires a change in the budget. Lisa also observed that we still have Kirkbride money available for outreach grants.

Regarding the BQM Balance Sheet, as of December 31st, we have \$64K in the First National Bank checking account. BQM received additional funds in January, so we have the money to send to PYM. We also have \$51,301 in Friends Fiduciary. Lisa and Ed Snyder, past treasurer, and current assistant treasurer, have been working on the balance sheet this past week and we have a gain of \$1,083.

Lisa then presented a preliminary budget for the 2024-2025 fiscal year. She called attention to certain line items in the budget. She requested a 3% increase in the contribution to PYM. She noted that PYM has not yet asked for any increases. Along with a 3% increase in the coordinator's salary, the preliminary budget projected a deficit of \$6382.

A Yardley Friend comments that if we are showing a deficit, we need to find a way to balance the budget. Should we ask for a 1% increase in donations from monthly meetings, or are there other means to achieve a balanced budget? **ANS:** Yes. That is a good question. Last year we had some meetings decrease the amount they paid to the Quarter based on the membership at their monthly meeting. If monthly meetings are experiencing declining membership, it may be difficult to determine what monthly meetings should be contributing.

A Yardley Friend commented that the budgeting process requires a lot of discernment. It is important to remember that we are at the beginning stages of this process. In the coming weeks there will be many conversations with monthly meetings. He anticipates a change in the numbers before this budget can be approved.

A Yardley Friend observed that at this point, Budget and Nominating is not asking for approval of this budget; it seems to be a preliminary document and we will approve a final budget at our May meeting.

Wendy responded that indeed, this is a preliminary document prepared by the Treasurer and the BQM Budget and Nominating Committee. After BQM approves the preliminary budget, a copy will be sent to each of the monthly meetings who will gather feedback and report to BQM Budget and Nominating, who will craft a final draft of the budget and present it to the May BQM.

Bill Daly offered a comment: The total budget for the year is just under \$300K. The projected deficit is just over \$6K. Therefore, we're looking at a 2% deficit. This seems like a nominal increase.

A (meeting?) Friend noted that there are two philosophies about budgets. One is aspirational, which seems to be the case here. We ask meetings to carefully consider what they can contribute and work from there.

A Buckingham Friend made two comments: 1) Some time ago Buckingham meeting decided not to increase their support, although they had the capacity to do so. This decision was in response to learning that when there were excess funds, they were distributed outside of Bucks Quarter. The Friend asked Budget and Nominating to remember that there is accountability to those meetings who increase their

contribution to BQM. When the distribution is not rightly ordered, this action is painful to monthly meetings. 2) This Friend also noted that she gave money directly out of her pocket to BQM because she believes in what BQM stands for and does. Her wish is that all present consider directly donating to BQM.

A Newtown Friend observed that the federal Cost of Living Index grew 3.7% in the past year. Our budget deficit may reflect the changing economic situation as much as anything else.

Break

Special Report – PYM Young Friends Program – Clare Chalkley (no written report available) The report began with an acknowledgement that, as a consequence of COVID-19, participation in the PYM Young Friends Program has dropped off. Among Young Friends, there seems to be a growing interest in building community and establishing connections with other young Quakers. At the same time there is a sense of simultaneously being pulled in several directions, including a general disinterest in the thought of spending time with strangers on an overnight retreat.

Consequently, over the last several weeks the Young Friends Program Team has been re-envisioning the Young Friends Program with a focus on social justice and Quaker values as they exist in the world. They will also emphasize service.

They will be developing this program in partnership with young Friends over the course of the Spring. The program will be fully implemented over the next year. This semester will be the piloting phase of development. Most of the feedback will come from young Friends.

They will hold two meetings per month: one online and one in-person. The first meeting will be online only on Sunday, March 24th from 3 to 5PM. The next meeting will be an inperson workshop on Saturday, April 6th, from 10AM to 2PM. In between meetings young Friends will be encouraged to reflect on the discussion and bring their thoughts to the next meeting as well as their own spiritual home.

This is a good opportunity for young Friends to share their ministry and build communication skills. This work will be an easy addition to resumes as young Friends apply for college or jobs. Additionally, they will receive a stipend for completing the program. They may also receive credit for community service hours.

The PYM Young Friends Team is excited about this program, and they are relying on monthly and quarterly meetings for outreach to promote this opportunity for young Friends and attenders in their community.

A Newtown Friend suggested that one place to find young Friends and "Quakeradjacent" young people who are excited about spending time together would be Quaker Camps such as Camp Onas, or the Snipes Farm camp. Wendy offered to provide contact information for administrators of the two camps.

- Committee Report Budget & Nominating Committee Liz Fritsch The report began with a restatement of the B & N Committee's August 2023 decision to form an ad-hoc Technical Committee and purchase equipment that would enable hybrid quarterly meetings. Much of that equipment has been purchased. The compelling need now is for personnel. Wendy drafted the proposal for the committee which specified six members. The Tech Committed currently consists of three members: Scott Hoskins (Newtown), Richmond Shreve (Newtown), and Olivia Brangan (Wrightstown). Friends are asked to consider who among us would be good additions to this committee.
- Annual Report Outreach Committee Ed Snyder (see attached report) The report began with a description of the meeting schedule (bi-monthly, on the third Tuesday of the month, starting in January, at 7PM, via Zoom). They begin by sharing stories of each meeting's outreach efforts followed by a discussion and-or plan of outreach efforts for BQM. The committee is well represented and there is much enthusiasm for the work.

Each meeting may appoint one or two members to Outreach. Other participants are welcome. Friends should contact Wendy for further information. The report lists projects that the committee has been working on over the past twelve months include a "Quakerism in a Nutshell" in a box. This presentation is portable in that it can be used at any meeting. Last year BQ Outreach participated in a "Visit a Meetinghouse" Driving Tour which was listed on the Visit Bucks County website. We were reminded that the monies for outreach grants are on a first-come, first-served basis. It is estimated that the funds for the [\$500] outreach grants will be exhausted in 2025. There are very few constraints on how the money is to be spent.

As an aside, it is noted that Bucks Quarter is largely a pass-through entity in that we give two thirds of our money to PYM, we have a paid coordinator, and we have some administrative expenses. The Kirkbride estate money (which is the source of BQ Outreach Grants) came to us as something of a windfall.

BQ Outreach has maintained a presence at events in BQ. Most of this obligation falls on our coordinator. Outreach also organizes the BQM Picnic at Tohickon Valley Park. BQ Outreach has designed and purchased "Genuine Quaker" pins (which are still available). Our coordinator maintains and updates the BQM website. Friends are reminded that stories of vitality and strength are always welcome. BQ Outreach has developed new marketing/outreach cards which are easier to read than previous editions.

BQ Outreach has been operating without a clerk for some years now. Ed Snyder has volunteered to serve in this capacity (i.e., as Clerk of Outreach) for a two-year term.

Southampton Friend asked if each meeting was granted \$500 for outreach this fiscal year (ending June 30th, 2024), how would the remaining funds be distributed; would BQ award smaller grants? **ANS:** That would be the way that Outreach envisions the process.

Bill Daly commented that, as per the balance sheet, there is approximately \$9K in Kirkbride funds. If we spend the \$7K that is budgeted, we will have \$2K remaining. **ANS:** The \$9K already reflects some of the spending for this [fiscal] year.

Southampton Friend commented that she has been part of the Outreach Committee for a couple of years, and "it's really a fun committee." She also noted that she has the pleasure of hearing Outreach proposals first-hand. Friend observed that it is important to have each meeting represented on BQ committees. **ANS:** Yes, that is a very important point; we have a lot of work to do, and our numbers are not growing at pace with the work.

Annual Report – Doylestown Monthly Meeting – Liz Fritsch (see attached report) – The report began with a summary of events over the past year. Doylestown meeting came into the year feeling "a little beaten down" from the effects of the pandemic. Doylestown Friends felt a need to reenergize their spiritual vitality. This discernment led to a threshing session. Wendy was very helpful with this endeavor.

Doylestown Friends felt a need to be more proactive in relation to their meeting and its place in the broader community. Consequently, they applied for a BQ Outreach grant and developed a plan of action. This community involvement has led to their "Music Sundays" program and other offerings to which the general public is invited. Examples included a December program titled "Indigenous People and Allies Speak." They participated in the local clothing drive, and they kept their garden going so as to offer fresh vegetables to the food bank. Last fall, along with other religious organizations in the area, they participate in a walk against gun violence. In general terms Doylestown Meeting is becoming more intentional in its involvement with the broader community.

Although Doylestown meeting has struggled – and continues to struggle with – familiar issues (e.g., the population of First Day school or implementation of hybrid meetings), there is a sense of renewed commitment.

Doylestown meeting has 154 members, 5 under the age of 21. They have released some inactive members.

Annual Report - Quakertown Meeting – Lisa Uchrin (see attached report) – Quakertown was pleased to have added three new members in the past year. The new members of Quakertown Meeting have been very active and added vitality to the meeting. Sadly, they lost longtime member Jim Livezey, a pillar of their meeting who was very active in Building and Grounds. He also served as a Trustee.

Quakertown has accomplished a lot in this past year. They have replaced their furnace with electric "mini-splits" in the First Day School. They also replaced the propane furnace in the meetinghouse with mini-splits. Consequently, they have dramatically reduced both their costs and their carbon footprint. Additionally, they have replaced the hand railings around the campus. Their campus has never looked better.

Their Adult Education program has featured courses in Mindfulness and Meditation. They have reached out to the broader community. These activities include regular donations to the Flemington Food Pantry and, through Bucks Quarter, they contribute to the Mercer Street Friends. For Outreach, Quakertown sent out Christmas Cards to members they have not seen in a while. They continue to support the Peace Fair. They feel that for a small meeting, they accomplish a good deal. For example, Quakertown very successfully hosted the Bucks Quarterly Meeting last November. They continue to foster a spirit-filled environment in which members and attenders alike feel as though they are important to the meeting.

Thanks to the Bucks Quarter Outreach Grant, they now have their own website: Quakertownfriendsmeeting.org. With ensuing grants, they intend to publish a brochure and to repair, beautify, and illuminate their outdoor sign.

Quakertown Meeting currently has 26 members.

Review and Approval of Minutes from 19 November 2023 – APPROVED

Announcements – Solebury Meeting will be hosting a pancake breakfast on St. Patrick's Day. This is a fundraising event for Mercer Street Friends and Camp Onas.

Susan Thomson (Newtown; Clerk of PYM Spiritual Formation Collaborative) invited Friends to participate in the annual Spiritual Formation Retreat which is held April 19th – 21st at Pendell Hill.

Yardley Friend asked if all BQ meetings now have a website. **ANS:** They do now (**WK**).

Buckingham Friend announced that the Quarterly Meeting's Peace Fair will be held on Saturday, September 21st. Friends should mark their calendars now to eliminate conflicts.

Wrightstown Friend announced that Wrightstown will be holding its 300th Anniversary celebration on Saturday, May 4th – rain or shine. (Wrightstown Friend noted that the actual anniversary year was two years ago). They will have entertainment and refreshments.

Closing Worship – At 2:56 PM Friends settled into a period of worship.

Adjournment – The meeting was adjourned at 3:01 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Terry M. Christensen, Recording Clerk