

## **Patapsco Friends Meeting Spiritual State of the Meeting for 2024 – Version 4**

Each year we gather to listen for the spiritual sense of the Meeting. We look at our strengths and challenges which the past year uncovered. We enter a period of discernment as the Ministry and Care Committee is charged with the responsibility to write the Spiritual State of the Meeting Report, completes their task. We listen for where we are growing, stretching and ripe for change.

PFM continues to hold a hybrid Meeting for Worship, with attendance varying from 25-35 people weekly in person and virtually. We noticed how the hybrid option served Friends who are ill, live at a distance, or are traveling. The ongoing evaluation of technology by the Tech Team provided a positive experience for both online and in person users. This year brought us the gift of learning how to integrate an attender with significant hearing loss. Her feedback has been extremely valuable.

We have welcomed new attenders. New Friends found something here and sensed the warmth of our community. We strove to feel like an extended family, caring for one another in practical ways and through prayer. Friends pitched in without being asked, always looking out for a new person at Sunday Meetings to welcome and incorporate. New folks are invited to move at their own pace in getting involved with the work of the Meeting. Friends have commented about how much they appreciated feeling free to get to know us without the immediate pressure of joining a committee.

The Religious Education Committee hired a person to teach on Sundays. The consistency and skill of our new teacher has been a relief and blessing to our community. Parents of RE students appreciated the ongoing weekly chat that is sent to each parent to check in on their children and their attendance for that week. This effort to stay connected is one loving way RE cares for our children. We are grateful to the creative RE members! The RE program feeds the overall health of our community.

The Nominating Committee calls each member and attender in our community every Fall to check in. We ask questions related to their experience at PFM, their spiritual practices, and journey. Members of the committee sought to discern the gifts of individuals and where they might feel called to serve. This year we were left with a number of committees and positions that we couldn't fill. This fueled the question: What is the essential spirit-led work for PFM? How do we want to

accomplish that work? A Listening session is planned for January 2025 to ask these questions and guide the Nominating Committee. Meanwhile, the plan is for committees to continue to be staffed with members who served in 2024.

Committee work is an opportunity to meet new Friends while accomplishing an important task. One Friend noted that it's through committee work that we really get to know and care for each other. Friends find great joy and satisfaction in this process.

Our Treasurer, who brought our finances into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, handed over his duties after six years of faithful service. His skill and commitment are deeply appreciated and valued. We look forward to working with our new Treasurer and being supported by his knowledge and experience.

The life of the Meeting was full!

Unity with Nature provided intergenerational walks and site visits, collaborating with the Religious Education committee.

Faith and Practice Study Groups offered a biweekly opportunity to read *Faith and Practice* together. We asked each other how the material informs our daily lives - and how we are living the testimonies.

The Fall Retreat on *The Beloved Community* connected people through a full day of sharing spiritual practices and fellowship.

Ministry and Care phased out the Care Partner program and instituted Spiritual Friendship pairs. Twenty Friends signed up and were placed through prayer and discernment. We called these "Spirit-led matches!"

We grieved the loss of two beloved Friends in 2024: Jan Warner and Rebecca Gardner. We wrote memorial minutes and held services. We gathered to remember and celebrate their lives. We rejoiced at the Meeting for Worship where, under the care of the Meeting, a Friend was married. We celebrated the birth and naming of a new child born to attending Friends, completing the circle of life in our Meeting community.

Our calendar was packed with meaningful noon sessions, Friendly Eight visits, Mid-week worship, Meditation Circle, *A Course in Miracles* Study Group, various book studies, a Spiritual Formation prayer group, and a Change Group.

One member of our Meeting has a travel minute to visit various monthly meetings, churches, and yearly meetings as led by the Spirit. The travel minute was approved by PFM and sent on to BYM. BYM's approval is pending. PFM provides a support committee for him.

Other Friends serve on various committees of BYM, sharing their time and talent. As both individuals and committees, Friends serve the broader community beyond PFM, supporting PATH, MAJR, and Quaker Voice. Individual service included work with refugee groups, returning citizens, and Interfaith efforts.

The Change Group has the mission of increasing our sensitivity around diversity and offered book sessions and a trip to a Pow Wow held in our region.

Friends shared a strong desire for events with the wider community, both on social justice issues and the Quaker experience. We hope to expand our presence in the larger community beyond the man on the Quaker Oats box!