

Chestnut Hill Friends Meeting
Peace and Social Concerns Committee Annual Report
January 17, 2021

This year the activities of the Peace and Social Concerns Committee became considerably more integrated into the life of the Meeting, both spiritually and organizationally. This result was something the Committee had worked towards for a couple of years. Coordination with the Worship and Ministry Committee, the Addressing Racism Committee, and the Working Group on Immigration, as well as other activities helped this effort. This change occurred despite the pandemic.

While we did not consciously plan to follow Quaker testimonies, these were our spiritual heritage and environment and, so, we actually did in large part:

SIMPLICITY: Our environmental activities and careful consideration of grant recommendations showed a concern for using financial and natural resources carefully.

PEACE: We promoted alternatives to violence in our interactions with **POWER**, response to police conduct, and reactions to federal voting and postelection concerns, as well as grant giving.

INTEGRITY: Our Committee's witness to the world is about letting our outer life reflect our inner lives/values, and we tried to continue these values in the way we interacted with the Meeting and each other

COMMUNITY: Connecting better with a wider range of our Meeting members/attenders was part of this, as well as the more obvious attempt to reach out in a non-patriarchal way to the community outside Quakerism

EQUALITY: Our work with **POWER** focused on racial justice/equality. In our questionnaire development (see below) we tried to recognize all the different kinds of backgrounds of people in the Meeting, including class.

STEWARDSHIP: Our focus on environmental issues is about stewardship

While we worked to involve the Meeting in peace and social concerns activities/opportunities and represent the Meeting to the outside community on these issues, our work has focused primarily on the following topic areas, although letter writing (see below) addressed a much wider number of areas:

- Racism and inequality
- Environmental issues

Specific activities and actions of the Committee include:

- Before the pandemic lockdown, we focused intensely on letter writing, offering letter writing monthly on the first Sunday of every month for the first 3 months of the year. 143 postcards were written in those months, more per month than 2019. In a few months after that, summary letters to use to contact legislatures were put in the newsletter, and for one month a sample message for First Day Schoolers related to police reform was offered. Letter writing, of course, is a way to involve the Meeting as a whole in the mission of the Committee (peace and social concern activities in the community).
- We continued writing more about our Committee's activities in the newsletter and bulletins. We hoped this information would enhance the Meeting's interaction with our Committee's activities. Not infrequently in these venues, we had suggestions for Meeting members/attenders about further resources or activities to support (e.g., RGGI or Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative). Since we are now a member of **POWER**, activities of **POWER** were routinely shared with the clerks and the newsletter.
- We recommended the Meeting give \$4250 in grants to 7 nonprofit organizations which involve Meeting members or attenders. These organizations were in 3 groups: environmental, international/world peace, and

underserved communities (especially people of color and the poor). These were all the grants applied for. In late 2019 we had responded in writing to the Meeting's queries about our grant giving and we presented this document to the Meeting in 2020.

- To help the Meeting decide how it could respond as a body to racism, we developed a questionnaire to ask people what actions they could support and checked with the Addressing Racism Committee about the content and purpose of the questionnaire. We also supported a vigil outside the Meeting during the George Floyd demonstrations. Finally, we collected information from other Quaker Meetings and organizations about their attempts to deal with racism and discussed findings with the Meeting.
- We hosted several zoom sessions: a spiritual sharing zoom session after the election coordinated with the Worship Committee, a RGGI talk followed up by opportunities to take action. A presentation by an FCNL member had to be cancelled because of COVID-19. Other sessions are in the planning stages.
- We planned to use the funds allocated to the Committee to help other worthy organizations use Meeting space for fund raising (e.g., PA Interfaith Power and Light) but these opportunities were cancelled because of the pandemic, although EQAT was able to complete their event before the pandemic.
- We worked to help the Meeting understand more about POWER and participate as appropriate. A POWER representative was scheduled to talk to the Meeting, but COVID-19 intervened. We attended a number of POWER events and zoom meetings of other Friends who have joined POWER. The result was that more members/attenders outside our Committee began participating in events organized by POWER.
- We recommended the Meeting support a minute on the environment being considered by other Quaker Meetings in the area. The Meeting did so.

Going forward we wish to:

- Continue with our newsletter/bulletin presence
- Help the Meeting develop more effective work with POWER. This effort may involve exploring and reaching out to develop relationships with diversified others in POWER or our community.
- Continue with our present level of work on grant recommendations and letter writing
- Explore additional ways to help the Meeting take action on matters of racism
- Use our funds to help worthy organizations use the Meeting for fund raising
- Continue to try to use our limited resources effectively – we really **need** more members who have the time to work on Peace Committee issues between meetings. Six members of the Committee currently consistently attend meetings, and Mary Day Kent (who is our letter-writing affiliate, FCNL liaison, and UN liaison) coordinates with us. We welcome anyone to attend our meetings.

Committee members: Linda Clark (clerk), Steve Elkington, Linda Rosenwein, Robert Rosenwein, Lori Spadaro (part of the year), Jean Warrington, Kay Wood