

(Addenda To The PFYM Annual State of the Meeting Report 2020)

ABINGTON FRIENDS MEETING

In lieu of a formal Spiritual Condition Report, Abington Friends submitted the following summary:

Abington Friends survived and even grew during the pandemic thanks to Zoom. Three members who moved away rejoined us, two members from another Meeting that doesn't do Zoom come occasionally and we've had more inquiries and visitors from our website. There are usually 6-9 people in attendance.

CHAPEL HILL FRIENDS MEETING

2020 Spiritual Condition Report for Piedmont Friends Yearly Meeting

Friends at Chapel Hill Friends Meeting (CHFM) have experienced the working of the spirit in many ways. We appreciate more the things we can still do during the pandemic, such as meditating, connecting with nature, praying, especially for friends and family, reaching out to longtime friends (non-Quaker) to reconnect, even requesting membership to CHFM. We have slowed down, taking time to breathe and appreciate what is there, to calm ourselves so we can feel the spirit working within.

The biggest challenge remains keeping our meeting connected. Some aren't comfortable using Zoom. Our Care and Counsel Committee has reached out to all members and attenders by phone to offer any needed support. The Ministry & Worship Committee sent out a helpful email survey to assess how members and attenders feel about Zoom and assess what spiritual guidance is needed. Considering major decisions in Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business over Zoom is a major challenge.

Using Zoom with First Day School (FDS) is tough. For the most part, the children are weary of gathering virtually, even though they often end up having fun after their parents force them to attend. The Children and Youth Religious Education Committee (CYRE) is trying hard to be creative (movie nights, offers to change FDS time) to reach students and allow parents to attend worship, but it's been slow going. Our parents seem overwhelmed with home-schooling and coping with the isolation and grumpiness of their children. Some parents have expressed interest in gathering in person outside while others have concerns for health and safety. The teens have met at different times with different activities to boost attendance.

We are having ongoing discussions about when and how to safely reopen the Meetinghouse for in person worship. Communications with the Meeting as a whole can be difficult. There are wide ranging opinions, and we are far from unity.

Holding Wednesday evening Prayers for Healing/Holding in the Light is meaningful for some Friends. The breakout rooms for small group fellowship after worship allow us to get to know Friends we didn't know or to enjoy getting to know better those we did know. Many of us are concerned about climate issues. The possibility of installing solar panels is being considered. The efforts to deepen our lives in the Spirit during this challenging time matter a lot to our Meeting.

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Our Peace & Justice Committee (P&J) has made focus on racial justice a priority, despite the COVID-19 limitations on our response. Nevertheless, we approved a letter regarding racism that we labored long over. In addition, there is a book group forming on racism and social justice. Also we worked to encourage voting, in light of knowing about NC counties that restrict minority voting. Some attended the local school board meeting to speak against arrests of students when in school. Our Transition and Support Committee helps men released from Orange Correctional Center (OCC) to adjust to life back in the community. We announced the Racial Equity training and offered financial support (via Shotts/Leadership Fund) for those who wished to attend. Monthly queries, Forum topics and Friends Journal readings on social equity all serve to encourage personal reflections. We miss the presence of the OCC visitors who cannot attend worship during the pandemic. We are concerned about the disparities made worse by COVID-19 as well as the welfare of pre-school children in NC. We hope and pray that these will be addressed after the pandemic is under control.

We appreciate Zoom for the connections it provides to Piedmont Friends Yearly Meeting (PFYM) and other Meetings throughout the US and world-wide. Sharing with other PFYM meetings is helpful. What are other Meetings doing on the topic of racial injustice? How can we encourage more People of Color (POC) to attend our Meeting? We understand the need to meet folks where they are and not expect them to join us by becoming like us. Could we pair with a sister church different from us as we did thirty years ago? We noted with sadness that our own POC rarely attend Zoom worship now. We wonder what other meetings are doing in regards to hybrid worship as we consider safe return to our Meetinghouse.

Other concerns include the lack of Adult Young Friends (AYF) in Meeting. How can we encourage them to attend? We also wonder how to encourage vocal ministry with Zoom worship compared to in-person worship.

We certainly miss being in the Meeting House in the presence of others, miss the children and youth and miss the men from OCC. We appreciate Zoom for keeping us together during these times.

Meeting Participation

What is your average attendance in a typical month for:

Meeting for Worship: 43 First Day School: 5

Other Activities

(before/after meeting for worship, e.g., forum, adult education): 33

How many members and attenders are active in the life of your meeting? 135

CHARLOTTE FRIENDS MEETING
SPIRITUAL CONDITION REPORT for 2020
(In response to queries offered by Piedmont Friends Yearly Meeting)

1. How have we experienced the working of the Spirit this year?

Charlotte Friends Meeting has been Spirit led to more fully understand and live our Quaker testimony of Community as we have been challenged by the Covid-19 pandemic. As we explored and developed creative ways of sharing and worshipping, Spirit led us to understand that our sense of community is much more than gathering in person-

When we had difficulty finding a Friend who felt led to serve as our Meeting's Clerk, our decision to follow the path to establish a Clerking Committee was another spiritual leading. This change has been successful because we are all allowing Spirit to guide us through this transition.

Earlier in the year we used Quaker process to season and act on the leading to establish a pollinator garden. And, when we united in support of restorative justice, Friends felt truly Spirit led. We also recognize that the working of Spirit is always present when we discern which path to follow within our committees and during our MWAB.

2. What challenges have we faced this past year?

The widespread Covid-19 pandemic, with its accompanying restrictions, concerns, economic consequences, and social unrest has challenged our community in ways we would have previously considered unimaginable. Concern for our nation's course amid this trying environment has continued to weigh heavily on many of us, particularly during this election year. Individual's messages of hope, fear, and encouragement as well as meeting-wide focused worship sharing opportunities have helped support us through these times.

One major challenge has been our move to virtual meetings. This transition was made easier by a cadre of tech savvy Friends who set up our Zoom meetings and are still working to help ensure all Friends feel comfortable with this technology. Friends rose to this challenge with a sense of willingness, flexibility, and even enthusiasm. Some Friends report having found an expanded sense of connection through our virtual meetings. Friends from our Upstate Worship Group, as well as others not here in Charlotte, have been able to join from a distance. Others feel a growing sense of frustration as the period of time we have been worshipping via Zoom has grown. We are still adjusting to the challenges of settling into worship virtually and often miss our Meeting House and the opportunities for fellowship it provides. Some Friends find worshipping via Zoom difficult due to the technical challenge or are unable to find the spiritual depth they seek via the internet. We miss them and are seeking other ways to be in community with them.

Providing a supportive environment for the children has been on the minds of many Friends. Recognizing that they are being impacted in more extreme ways than just missing First Day School has weighed on Friends' hearts. We strive to continue to nourish our children, albeit in different ways. Our First Day School Clerks are continuing their ministry by sending out weekly lessons for at-home use. We also enjoy welcoming our children at the Rise of Meeting each First Day and appreciate their ministry of music at occasions such as our 60th Anniversary Celebration.

Supporting and caring for Friends in need or those going through personal challenges has been more difficult, but we still strive to meet their needs and let them know that “Charlotte Friends Meeting has your back”.

Another challenge was working with the reduction to our income because our main tenant has only used our space once since March. Additionally, we decided to continue our support of the cleaning service we use as many small businesses have been negatively impacted by the pandemic. Throughout these challenges, House and Grounds has remained excellent stewards of our meeting house reminding us through their actions that “work is worship”.

3. Tell us about any leadings that our meeting is excited about, ambivalent about, or challenged by.

We celebrated our 60th anniversary this November. Although our plans had to be reimaged due to the pandemic, we were excited to be sharing this special milestone together.

On September 27 we held outdoor worship in our parking lot combined with a workday. This brief return to worshipping in person was a poignant reminder of how much we cherish and miss this sense of community. This led to our forming an ad hoc committee to plan our eventual safe return to meeting in person.

4. How has our meeting responded to the growing awareness of racial injustice?

Last year Peace and Social Concerns presented a 3-month program entitled “Rethinking Incarceration” which, along with the FCNCL Minute on Antiracism and other events of the past year, has led some Friends to examine how they might have unconsciously been a participant in systemic racism. Friends have expressed a growing realization of the relationship between Covid-19, the Climate Crisis, Racial Injustice, food insecurity, and poverty. As these are all intertwined, responding to one concern leads to them all. During the events of the past summer, many of us struggled with the dilemma of wanting to participate in mass actions without spreading, or risking exposure to, the pandemic. Peace and Social Concerns has been exploring ways for us to balance these concerns while providing support to our neighbors in need. Additionally, a Friendly 8s Group is studying the book “My Grandmother’s Hands: Radicalized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending our Hearts and Bodies” to learn more about the impact of racism and the steps to take toward healing and racial justice.

5. What kind of support would we like to see from PFYM?

We see PFYM as a resource offering monthly meetings an opportunity to share and exchange information. We have been enriched by what other meetings have shared (such as a Clerking Committee) and hope to share our experiences with this broader community of Friends.

We would like to ask other meetings to share their plan for returning to in-person meetings or contemplating dual meetings (joint virtual and in-person meetings). We would also like to see PFYM continue to facilitate programs such as the Clerking Workshop or perhaps a program on racial injustice from a Quaker perspective.

6. Share any additional information that we would like PFYM to know about our meeting.

Despite all the challenges of this past year, we remain connected as a loving community and joyfully celebrated our 60th anniversary together.

7. How have we fared during the pandemic?

Through perseverance and with love in our hearts, we have managed to fare quite well, retaining our vitality, spirituality, and strong sense of community. We look forward to the time we can, once again, gather together to worship and celebrate our fellowship in person.

Meeting Participation

What is your average attendance in a typical month for:

Meeting for Worship: 33 First Day School: 1
Other Activities
(before/after meeting for worship, e.g., forum, adult education): 19

How many members and attenders are active in the life of your meeting? 70

ENO FRIENDS MEETING OF HILLSBOROUGH
SPIRITUAL CONDITION REPORT 2020

Eno Friends Meeting of Hillsborough felt the working of the Spirit this year in many ways. The unexpected and intense developments of this past year have required us as individuals and as a meeting to adapt, and at times change plans. The pandemic has compelled us to stay connected in new ways. The economic impact of COVID magnified the problem of food insecurity in our community, moving us to respond to the need. Our Meeting's participation in prison ministry evolved to include individual acts of contact and outreach with the men at Orange Correctional Center (OCC), after in-person contacts were prohibited. The nation-wide call to action against systemic racism deepened our commitment to this work, and many of us have been compelled to gather and march in solidarity with Black Lives Matter.

Our greatest challenge has been the inability to physically be all together for worship, business meetings, forums and potlucks. Friends missed our monthly potlucks, where conversation often sparked ideas for action, and fostered deeper connection among us. We have struggled to find ways to provide support for each other during the pandemic. Some Friends found our Meetings for Worship via zoom comforting and an opportunity for deep worship and connection. Other Friends found zoom gatherings unsatisfying or difficult. This led us to experiment with "hybrid" meetings with some Friends gathering at an outdoor space, other Friends being linked to this gathering via zoom. Our Clerk worked diligently to gather ideas and preferences, sending out a

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survey to try to determine Friends' needs. Although our hybrid meetings continued, weather permitting, from May through December, we are taking a break from our in-person outdoor meetings with the acceleration of COVID spread.

Our Meeting started the year with excitement to provide our wider community with an educational event about climate change. Speakers were lined up, a date was set, only to be cancelled by the pandemic. We also felt led to provide an opportunity for Friends and the general community to learn more about Palestine, and especially the Ramallah Friends School, we hope we can accomplish both of these events in the future.

Our commitment to provide support for the men at OCC was expressed through individual actions and the Meeting's financial support. Knowing that the men inside are experiencing extreme stress from isolation, as well as a dangerous COVID spread, several Friends became pen pals with OCC residents. The abrupt release of some of the men from OCC due to COVID has made the mission of an organization that provides support for re-entry, including a planned group home, even more important. The Meeting continued to support this project with funds, and we are proud that a member sits on the board. For Christmas, many Friends bought gifts for the children of the men at OCC, and the Meeting purchased toothbrushes and toothpastes for all of the men residing there.

The problem of food insecurity in our community weighed heavily on our hearts. To address this need, some Eno Friends increased volunteer work for food banks, helping with food distributions, packing produce boxes, and preparing meals. We continued our support for a healthy snacks program in our public schools, and working with our local food co-op, increased our monthly donation to the food bank. Our meeting approved a mid-year budget dispersal of additional funds to our food bank, as well as support for a local free meals program.

Eno Friends continued its desire to participate in the call to end systemic racism. Many of us marched in BLM events in Hillsborough. Some of us have expanded our support to include the black community in Alamance County by joining them in peaceful protests and other actions in the quest for racial equity and justice. Donations of warm coats and food gift cards by many Eno Friends were delivered to those in need.

Early in the year, our Meeting joined the Orange County Community Remembrance Coalition, which in coordination with the Equal Justice Initiative, seeks to raise awareness of racial terror in the US, specifically recognizing lynching victims in our county. As many of the events were cancelled or virtual during the pandemic, we hope we can take a more active role in the future.

Progress was made in Eno Friends efforts to maintain the historic Eno Friends cemetery. The Orange County Historical Commission is now working on a way for the cemetery to have established ownership.

Much of the work of this year, was about deepening our spiritual practice. In January, we decided to read Marcelle Martin's "Our Life is Love" together as a meeting. At first, we gathered on Thursday evenings in a Friend's home, and soon took up the work on zoom for the first few months of the pandemic. Those attending found this gathering to be quite meaningful, and it has continued through the year. We often watch a QuakerSpeak video and worship share about matters that pertain to our spiritual lives.

We continue to be deeply enriched by our monthly queries and hope that the loving culture that we are creating sustains, challenges and enriches us.

Meeting Participation

What is your average attendance in a typical month for:

Meeting for Worship: 12 First Day School: N/A
Other Activities
(before/after meeting for worship, e.g., forum, adult education): 5

How many members and attenders are active in the life of your meeting? 22

FANCY GAP FRIENDS MEETING **SPIRITUAL CONDITION REPORT**

1. How have you experienced the working of the Spirit this year?

In the midst of the uncertainties and concerns of our troubled times, we have been reminded that Quakerism began as one man's response to an inward call from Christ and have had the opportunity to bear witness to the eternal and unchanging truth of his call, "there is One even Christ Jesus that can speak to thy condition." We have experienced the working of the Spirit as we have tried to live into that truth in word and deed in our ministry to one another and to the wider community we serve. We have also been called to and challenged by Paul's admonition to the Christians in Rome, "Be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds that you may prove what is that good and perfect and acceptable will of God." As a meeting we have tried to listen for the leading of the Spirit rather than being swayed by political rhetoric or the News media's campaign to substitute their notion of what is and is not acceptable for God's law.

The members of Fancy Gap Friends Meeting have had the opportunity to reach out and lift the local community during the pandemic. During the worst of times in this past year, it has been the close bonds to family and friends that have gotten us through.

2. What challenges has your MM/WG faced this past year?

Our greatest challenge has been maintaining our ministry. Due to the impact of Covid and the subsequent forced closings of businesses and loss of jobs, our food ministry more than doubled. From midsummer till the end of the year, we delivered around 100 food boxes a month as opposed to the 40 or so we have been accustomed to doing. The folks that work on our food ministry do a great job and are able to provide a food box with about 15 items including soups, vegetables, canned meat, pasta, oatmeal, peanut butter and other things for about \$12 a box, but even so \$1200 a month for food for several months was a financial challenge. Fortunately our members continued to give even when we were not meeting regularly and friends of the meeting who were aware of the increased need we were addressing also were generous in supporting us and we have been able to continue to provide food to those in need.

When Covid first struck and the governor issued a stay home order, we talked with the sheriff of our county about what we should do. His response was that our food and transportation

ministries were essential services and he hoped we would continue to address those needs in our area. In fact his office began calling us with requests for food boxes for people who were coming to them for help. After some prayerful consideration, we were clear that it was important that we continued to see that folks got to doctors' appointments and other medical services. Of particular concern were the folks who depended on us to get them to dialysis three days a week. We did let the volunteers who were not a part of our meeting go, but the folks at the heart of the transportation ministry doubled up and kept it going. We only missed a week back in June because one of our members had the virus and since we had all been in meeting together the previous first day, all our drivers had to be in quarantine.

This fall we were challenged again when a lady we had been taking to dialysis for a number of years tested positive. The folks at the dialysis center knew that she could not live without dialysis and what they had done for folks in the past was set up a special time for them to come in order to avoid contact with other patients. But the lady had no other way to get to dialysis so they asked if we could continue to bring her. It was a real challenge to us to go from quarantining on contact to putting someone in the car who we knew was infected but became clear to us that we had to make sure that this lady was able to get this life saving treatment. On the advice of dialysis staff and our local EMS, our driver wore two masks, gloves and a disposable gown as did the patient who sat in the back seat and we were able to get her there. To say the least finding our role as ministers and co-laborers with Christ throughout this pandemic has been challenging and at times even a little scary.

3. Tell us about any leadings that your MM/WG has that you are excited about, ambivalent about, or challenged by.

One of the most exciting things and challenging things that has happened in our meeting is learning that we are not the only a cog in the wheel. For some time now we have been involved in a once a month hot meal delivery program with the Christian Church. This year we worked with the Pentecostal Holiness Church to get Thanksgiving meals prepared and delivered to folks in our ministry on Thanksgiving Day. We have also been involved in projects with a local community church, the Rock Worship Center, and God's Storehouse a soup kitchen in Galax operated by folks from an African American Church. We are learning that when God gives us a project sometimes we are called to take the lead and sometimes we are called to share the vision with others and let them take the lead and contribute whatever we can or are asked to see it come to fruition. It is very exciting to see God bring His people by whatever name they are called together to do His work realizing any good we accomplish is to His glory.

4. How has your MM/WG responded to the growing awareness of racial injustice?

Members of our meeting have been aware of these topics for most of their lives. It is nice to see other people catch up. We equally invite people of all backgrounds, race, nationality, gender identity, sexual orientation, economic status, physical & mental capability, etc. (anyone and everyone) to our meetings; and actively lend a helping hand to people who are facing disparities so that they may live a quality of life that may be considered healthy.

However, we do also realize that Carroll County (the county of which Fancy Gap resides) is 97%~ white. Most of our interactions and judgements involving equality deal with economic status because of this. We have only had one African American to attend our meeting for any length of time, but in our food and transportation ministry we have met and continue meet the needs of in our community and work with African Americans, Native Americans, Immigrants (both legal and otherwise). Our work is our response to the risen inquiry. Racial prejudice is rampant in this location with confederate flags commonly flown on private property or public

businesses; so while we can offer a safe place to worship to any who are interested we do not foresee our ministry making a dent on the local community's mindset.

5. What kind of support would your MM/WG like to see from PFYM?

We do not believe there is anything that PFF/PYFYM can do to support us at this time other than hold us in the Light and pray for the work to which God has called us.

6. Share any additional information that you would like PFYM to know about your MM/WG. N/A

7. How has your MM/WG fared during the pandemic?

Most members of our meeting have had coronavirus, but thankfully we have had no member deaths; we have lost people that we transport and deliver care to. There has been great conflict on how to meet this year. Since most of our members live in the mountains of Fancy Gap VA, the high speed internet service required for Zoom was not available to us. For several months of the year we did not meet due to state requirements and we have had several gaps of time where members self-quarantined due to exposure as well. Since it is a small group, we have been able to connect by phone, email, and in other ways; but it definitely is not the same as actually meeting for worship together.

Meeting Participation

What is your average attendance in a typical month for:

Meeting for Worship: 5 First Day School: N/A
Other Activities
(before/after meeting for worship, e.g., forum, adult education): 4

How many members and attenders are active in the life of your meeting? 5

NEW GARDEN FRIENDS MEETING

**2020 Spiritual Condition Report for Piedmont Friends Yearly Meeting
February 2021**

Response to Queries 1 and 7:

How have you experienced the working of the spirit this year?

How has your MM/WG fared during the pandemic?

At our first meeting for worship of 2020, our pastoral minister, Margaret Webb, began with the following reading:

If you could see the journey whole, you might never undertake it, might never dare the first step that propels you from the place you have known toward the place you know not.

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Call it one of the mercies of the road: that we see it only by stages as it opens before us, as it comes into our keeping, step by single step.

There is nothing for it but to go, and by our going take the vows the pilgrim takes: to be faithful to the next step; to rely on more than the map; to heed the signposts of intuition and dream; to follow the star that only you will recognize; to keep an open eye for the wonders that attend the path; to press on beyond distractions, beyond fatigue, beyond what would tempt you from the way.

There are vows that only you will know: the secret promises for your particular path and the new ones you will need to make when the road is revealed by turns you could not have foreseen.

Keep them, break them, make them again; each promise becomes part of the path, each choice creates the road that will take you to the place where at last you will kneel to offer the gift most needed—

the gift that only you can give—
before turning to go home by another way.

— ‘For Those Who Have Far to Travel’ by Jan Richardson, *Circle of Grace*

In her message on that First Day, Margaret reminded us that love would accompany us on whatever journeys we would undertake and that “we can do hard things.” At that time we at New Garden Friends Meeting (along with the rest of the world) could not have imagined how 2020 would unfold, that we would soon embark on an unwelcome collective journey through the COVID-19 pandemic. And we didn’t know that, following the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Greensboro’s own Marcus Smith and many others, the summer of 2020 would erupt into civil unrest and a call for our country to reckon with the racial injustices of our past and present. Margaret’s guidance, along with the support, guidance, and care of the entire NGFM community, helped us take those first steps from the place we had known towards the previously unknown challenge of being a faith community navigating great strife without the ability to gather in person for worship, fellowship, or the work of the meeting.

However, the challenges of COVID-19 led to many opportunities for us to experience the working of the spirit. As a spiritual community, we had to reflect on what we valued most about being part of NGFM and figure out how to preserve those things during such isolating times. We also had to communicate well with each other and remain flexible as we navigated this new situation.

Staying connected to each other became our first priority, and everything else we valued and wanted to do depended on finding new ways to stay connected. We are grateful for several technology-savvy New Gardeners who very quickly helped transition meeting for worship from our meetinghouse to Facebook Live and Zoom. Our first virtual meeting for worship was on March 22, and we learned that our pastoral minister’s gift for delivering thought-provoking and inspired messages extends to the online format as well. We are grateful for her flexibility and for the technical volunteers who stepped up on short notice (and continue to help us). It has been an unexpected blessing that Friends who are homebound or living too far to make the drive to Greensboro have been able to join us for meeting for worship and other meeting activities. In addition, we have had several guest ministers such as the Reverends Phil Gulley and Kay

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Royloff from Indiana and Minnesota, respectively, who were able to join us from their homes. About fifty households participate in our Zoom meeting for worship each week and many others watch on Facebook, either live or at a later time.

Aware that Friends were missing the fellowship they had shared over coffee or carry-in meals at our meetinghouse, our clerk of meeting has led Zoom community fellowship gatherings at 1:00 PM on some First Days. As a community we have become more comfortable online now and often these conversations and connections also happen naturally after the close of meeting for worship. Last spring our committee meetings and religious education programming moved online shortly after our first online meeting for worship. The members of Meeting on Ministry and Counsel noted with gratitude how the life and work of New Garden hadn't seemed to slow down despite our physical separation from one another. Along with their ongoing work, in 2020 each NGFM committee wrote an updated description of their committee for the NGFM Handbook.

A few specific instances when our community felt the working of the spirit amidst the pandemic included: an online renewal of vows in celebration of the fiftieth wedding anniversary of two New Gardeners; Facebook story times for our youngest Friends (where various New Gardeners volunteered to record a reading of their favorite picture books); and our Adult Forums with activists and community leaders, including some out-of-town speakers who might not have been able to join us in person, such as George Lakey, who shared his experiences and knowledge about uprisings and coups.

New Gardeners found ways to safely continue our beloved Christmas traditions, including an online Simple Christmas, an online Christmas Eve service, and our holiday Honor Cards program. The challenges of being safely socially distant have also given rise to new programs that enrich New Gardeners and help us stay connected, such as an opportunity to listen to and reflect on poetry that our pastoral minister shares on Facebook every Wednesday afternoon; organized and informal efforts to check on and support our most isolated senior Friends who live in retirement homes or are otherwise shut in; and a program called Friend to Friend, where individual New Gardeners are paired and have weekly conversations guided by prompts about spirituality, childhood experiences, values, etc.

We are grateful for the working of the spirit in the formation of an ad hoc Medical Advisory Group of doctors at NGFM who provide safety protocols for our community and also, through email and our newsletter, advise us about safe personal practices and local vaccine availability based on the latest COVID-19 developments. The work of this group has ensured staff safety for our pastoral minister, administrative assistant, religious education coordinator, and custodian, who need to be at the meetinghouse. The work of the Medical Advisory Group has also been invaluable to New Garden volunteers such as our Caring Friends group, which has been providing ongoing, COVID-safe caregiving to families and individuals in need.

Lastly, we experienced the working of the spirit in our efforts to address social justice issues and act on our responsibility for the environment. These are explored in more detail in response to the questions below.

Response to Query 2:

What challenges has your MM/WG faced this past year?

Ensuring the safety of New Gardeners during the COVID pandemic, figuring out how to stay connected while not gathering in person, and related to that, finding ways to continue the work

of New Garden Friends Meeting (for staff, committees, community outreach, etc.) definitely made for a challenging year, and yet, as mentioned above, these challenges have also inspired us to reflect on who we are and what we value most as a spiritual community. We have also felt challenged and called to respond to current racial injustice in America as well as this country's and our community's legacy of past racial injustice, specifically instances of police brutality against people of color. (This challenge will be discussed in detail in response to Query 4.)

We continue our efforts to clarify our ongoing relationships with other Quaker organizations. Even before the challenges of COVID-19, we struggled to identify New Gardeners who understand (or who have an interest and are willing to learn about) our long-standing relationships with organizations such as NCFE, PYM, PFYM, FGC, FUM, FCNL, FCNCL, FWCC, AFSC, and Quaker House. As a result, we have difficulty finding volunteers who can be actively engaged with these organizations and bring information, resources, and action items back to our meeting so that individuals and our meeting as a whole can be aware of and involved in the work of these Quaker organizations. In November NGFM held a called meeting to clarify what each of these organizations does and to discuss our ongoing commitment to and involvement in each. Monthly Meeting for Business and Meeting on Ministry and Counsel continue to discern how to move forward.

And finally, in the last week of October 2020, a windstorm knocked down an oak at NGFM, and the tree caused significant damage to the meetinghouse. We are grateful for an active and knowledgeable House Committee that worked closely with our insurance company and several contractors to have the repairs made.

Response to Query 3:

Tell us about any leadings that your MM/WG has that you are excited about, ambivalent about, or challenged by.

Early in 2020, several New Gardeners felt led to respond to the global climate emergency and were inspired by College Park Baptist Church and Jamestown Friends Meeting, who had recently installed solar panels. This group formed the Solar+ Energy group and proposed solar panels for our meetinghouse as well as an outreach program to help local families make their homes more efficient. Solar+ Energy organized a called meeting to share and discuss their plans, and they raised money for the solar panels, which were installed in September. This group continues to do outreach and has partnered with Community Housing Solutions in Greensboro to help low-income families save energy and money.

In late 2019, Meeting on Ministry and Counsel began a several-month-long discussion about the importance of creating a safe, inclusive, and welcoming environment at NGFM for transgender people. After MM&C had some clarity about the issue, we supported meeting-wide education, including an Adult Forum and meeting for worship with visiting Friends minister, Brent Walsh, who shared his journey as a transgender man. In addition, some members of MM&C introduced the idea of pronoun stickers by attaching them to their nametags. Finally, we made stickers available at the nametag table for all members and attendees. We also provided information sheets to explain this important issue of inclusion and social justice and how it relates to the use of pronouns.

Also in late 2019, the New Ideas Group formed at New Garden as a clearinghouse for individuals who want to share ideas about improving our community that don't clearly fall under the purview of a particular committee. This group has done a wonderful job of hearing New

Gardeners' concerns and creative ideas, sharing that information with the appropriate person or committee, and reporting any developments or outcomes back to the community in our newsletter. When the group formed in 2019, we couldn't have anticipated how important this outlet would become when COVID-19 and social-distancing presented unique challenges to our normal, more informal ways of communicating concerns to one another.

**Response to Query 4:
How has your MM/WG responded to the growing awareness of racial injustice?**

In response to the death George Floyd and others and to our growing awareness of racial injustice, NGFM adopted the following Minute on Becoming an Antiracist Faith Community:

NGFM Anti-racism Minute

Responding to racial injustice evident in society, New Garden Friends Meeting commits to the goal of becoming an anti-racist faith community. In making this commitment we acknowledge that systemic racism and white advantage are embedded in structures of American society and in structures of our own New Garden Friends Meeting. Quakers and the Religious Society of Friends have too often ignored our own failings and the part we play in perpetuating racism and maintaining white institutional structures.

In committing to the goal of becoming an anti-racist faith community, we know that confronting our failures will be difficult and painful. Guided by faith and grace, we are willing to accept this challenge and to do the necessary work to discern the ways our meeting's structure and practices may be preventing us from achieving our goal. We see this work as essential if we are truly to live our Quaker testimonies and recognize that of God in everyone.

As one step in the work of becoming an anti-racist community, New Garden Friends Meeting will ask committees and business meetings to use the following queries when making decisions: **"Does the process we are using (or have used) to make this decision support New Garden Friends Meeting in its goal to transform into an actively anti-racist faith community? Does the decision we are considering (or have made) support NGFM in moving toward this goal?"**

Approved by Monthly Meeting 3/7/2021

In addition to drafting the above minute, in July we held a called meeting to discuss what actions we can take to become an antiracist faith community. Those actions have included training for committee clerks that emphasizes the importance of the question above (in bold) during all committee meetings and decisions. For example, using the guiding question above, our House Committee actively sought out and hired a Black-owned business to repair the damage to our meetinghouse after the tree fell on it.

Each week the Peace and Social Concerns Committee includes suggestions for “Antiracist Actions You Can Take” in our newsletter. These suggestions have, for example, included links to Black-owned businesses as well as reading and viewing recommendations. And recently, we put a Black Lives Matter sign on our property along New Garden Road and drafted a meeting-wide statement on Marcus Smith, who was killed by police in Greensboro in 2018 after being hogtied in a position where he could not breathe. We see these actions as growth towards a deeper commitment to becoming antiracists as individuals and as a faith community, but we know there is much more work to do.

Response to Query 5:

What kind of support would your MM/WG like to see from PFYM?

As noted above, we are reflecting on and discerning our relationship to the wider Quaker community. We would appreciate any guidance PFYM could offer us.

Response to Query 6:

Share any additional information that you would like PFYM to know about your MM/WG.

Like many faith communities, we are grieving the loss of many lives to COVID-19, grieving other, less tangible losses, and understanding racism and antiracism (as well as our roles in both) in new ways. But our pastoral minister may have known us better than we knew ourselves last January when she reminded us that love would accompany us on our journey and that we could do hard things. The challenges of 2020 have grown our meeting in unexpected ways and deepened our commitment to our Quaker values, to each other, and to our broader community and world.

Meeting Participation

What is your average attendance in a typical month for:

Meeting for Worship: 120-140 First Day School: ____
Other Activities
(before/after meeting for worship, e.g., forum, adult education): ____

How many members and attenders are active in the life of your meeting? ____

RALEIGH MONTHLY MEETING OF THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS
2020 STATE OF THE MEETING REPORT

Raleigh Friends Meeting is a small Monthly meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quaker) founded in 1926 and located at 625 Tower Street in Raleigh, North Carolina. We are members of Piedmont Friends Fellowship and Piedmont Friends Yearly Meeting, which are affiliated with Friends General Conference. We search for truth in a supportive community and attempt to follow our spiritual leadings wherever they may lead us.

Clerks Report

The 2020 State of the Meeting discussion was held during Second Hour, 12th month, the 6th, 2020. Many friends were present and participated in the discussion. Friends were asked to consider and respond in a worshipful manner to the queries as posed by Piedmont Friends Yearly Meeting (PFYM):

1. How have we experienced the working of the Spirit this year?

- a. In spite of the pandemic, and not meeting in person, including PFYM, PFF and FCNCL, we have been coming together. One benefit of meeting via zoom is that we have been able to include friends from a distance that otherwise would not be able to attend in person.
- b. We have been able to work together in light of the challenges of the pandemic.
- c. We experienced increased energy within the Meeting, as though there had been a quieting, a lull prior to this year. Now we find more energy and excitement in the Meeting
- d. Some sense a powerful clearing of old structures and ways of doing things. There is a beautiful sense of something important happening. "What can I learn? How can this different way of operating work for me?" We are balancing a sense of fear and a powerful sense of energy emerging.
- e. The Light is more apparent out of darkness; the spirit more visible, more apparent.
- f. Experiencing the spirit comes and goes, but that's not different from when we met in person

2. What challenges has our meeting faced this past year?

- a. We experienced a sense of loss caused by our physical absence from one another. We also feel the loss of being in the Meetinghouse. There are members and attenders who came to the Meetinghouse regularly, but who don't join the Zoom meetings for worship.
- b. We miss the spirit and special feeling within the Meetinghouse.
- c. We'd like continued connection to those from afar via zoom once we are back in the Meetinghouse
- d. We seek effective avenues to let people know that we are meeting via Zoom. We would like to reach those who might see our signs at the Meetinghouse and want to join our Meeting.
- e. Many of us were fearful that Meeting for Worship wouldn't "work" via zoom. We've become comfortable with it. We are grateful for the technology that enables this connection.

3. What leadings are we excited about, ambivalent about, or challenged by?

- a. We want to find ways to do more outreach and make our presence known.
- b. We want to be accessible for outreach online, yet prevent the risk of being "Zoom bombed." and thus lose the spirit of the meeting.
- c. We are considering the advantages and disadvantages of sharing our MFW via Facebook.

- d. We are very excited about the leadings we've been working with in our Meeting and other Meetings in the state and beyond with all the current issues. This is difficult, yet very important work for us.
 - e. Our work on reparations is exciting and meaningful.
 - f. Our work with Friends of Oberlin Village is very local and meaningful. Through FOV, we see clearly that many policies, laws, zoning decisions, etc., are not race neutral, or not harmful.
 - g. Our reading and studies have helped bridge gaps with people of color, yet we also realize that gaps with others exist.
 - h. We are challenged that the restrictions of the pandemic prevent us from joining meaningful events and work that are best conducted in person.
 - i. As individuals and as a collective, we can be a voice of equity issues. We are concerned about the potential hazards are for John Kane's proposed development in South Raleigh.
 - j. We are challenged by noticing an over-consciousness with all the struggles in the world. If we focus on all the things "out there", we may lose sight of relating in a caring way to people who are in our lives. What do we find the balance? We are not each responsible for holding the world together. *"Whatever you do may seem insignificant to you, but it is most important that you do it."* – Mahatma Gandhi.
 - k. Understanding what we are each called to do, doing it every day, full out. Friends in our meeting have different callings and are doing much in many ways.
 - l. We are challenged by the level of our outrage and disgust when thinking about our political situation, politicians, policies, etc., and ability to hold some people in the light; it's a challenge to uphold our Friends beliefs and integrity.
- 4. How have we responded to the growing awareness of racial injustice?**
- a. We are excited about the increased energy given to efforts to interrupt racism, yet we are challenged by the desire to make change more quickly. The growing awareness pushes us to be uncomfortable both in a good way and in a challenging way.
 - b. We hope that by this time next year, we will be more action oriented; that we are working on having a higher impact on racial injustice.
 - c. The time seems to have arrived that we can make some progress. It's a time for action.
 - d. Discussions within our Quaker community support our concerns; helpful to focus the energy in specific ways even while being aware of all that needs fixing.
- 5. What kind of support would we like to see from PFYM?**
- a. Helping our individual meeting understand and know what other Meetings are doing, especially in terms of timely issues (anti-racism, environmental concerns).
 - b. We wish to be visible in the state as a Quaker entity.
 - c. We are grateful for the program on anti-racism during the Yearly Meeting.
 - d. We are grateful for The Friends Committee on North Carolina Legislation's (FCNCL) ability to impact legislation in NC.
 - e. We are grateful to PFYM for starting the PFYM Young Adults group.
- 6. What additional information would we like PFYM to know about RFM?**

Piedmont Friends Yearly Meeting
Sixth Annual Sessions, Fourth Month 2021

- a. Raleigh Friends Meeting's Long-range Planning Committee grapples with issues regarding the Meeting house space and location. We have faced the challenge of options to meet parking requirements for some years and the immediate neighborhood is changing and further limiting the options. The Meeting is working to discern what the options are if we stay in the current Meetinghouse or if we should consider relocation.

7. How have we fared during the pandemic?

- a. We are faring as well as can be expected, despite the loss of meeting in person
- b. We added a worship sharing meeting on Wednesday evenings, which we weren't doing when meeting in person.
- c. We are learning a lot during the pandemic.
- d. We sense greater closeness within the meeting as Zoom calls allow us to see into friends' homes, the bookshelves, extended families, and our furry companions.
- e. We miss our monthly potlucks and movie night.
- f. Without the Raleigh Friends Meeting community iwe would not have fared so well individually during this pandemic.

Meeting Participation

What is your average attendance in a typical month for:

Meeting for Worship: 26 First Day School: N/A
Other Activities

(before/after meeting for worship, e.g., forum, adult education):

Midweek Worship Sharing: 6-8

Second Hour Following First Day Meeting For Worship: 12

How many members and attenders are active in the life of your meeting? 39

SALEM CREEK FRIENDS MEETING

In lieu of a more formal report, Salem Creek Friends submitted the following summary:

Salem Creek is continuing to worship together virtually and face to face outdoors. We are beginning discussion of resuming face to face worship. Our committees are meeting as called, our work continues, and our hearts are strong.

UPSTATE FRIENDS WORSHIP GROUP
2020 SPIRITUAL CONDITION REPORT

How has UFWG experienced the working of the Spirit this year?

When the Upstate Friends Worship Group needed to move to virtual meetings, we relied on Charlotte Friends Meeting for technical support which enabled the transition. Members of our small close-knit community feel that staying connected in this way has helped them cope with the stress and isolation of the pandemic. It has been especially important to include Friends at a distance and those with personal challenges. Using zoom has also expanded our ability to participate in the wider Quaker community. Several of us attended the annual Gathering and other types of virtual Friends meetings. We have felt Spirit led to engage in several service projects during this time including supporting the family of a DACA recipient, bringing supplies to a local food bank and holding a social justice vigil. These actions have helped us see the workings of the Spirit in others as well as ourselves.

What challenges have you faced this past year?

Though zoom has been a great asset, it also has been a hindrance. It stretched us to learn to use it. Some Friends are not comfortable with it for various reasons and have been missing from our virtual community. We try hard to stay in touch. But we sorely miss them and being together. Some of us have had life challenges that a loving community would normally be present for. Sending flowers was a poor substitute for the support we wanted to give.

Tell us of any leadings your group has that you are excited about, ambivalent about, or challenged by

We had a strong leading to hold a vigil for social justice during the pandemic. We labored over the details of how to do it safely. Because we allowed Spirit to guide us the event went beautifully. We continue to maintain a strong relationship with several of our community partners, Central Methodist Church, the Hispanic Alliance and the food bank to name a few. Our passion concerning immigration led us to unite in a minute on the subject as well as take local action to send financial aid to a DACA recipient's family suffering with Covid19 that was not receiving any stimulus assistance.

A few of our members felt personal leadings to participate in the recent PFYM Clerking Workshop.

How have you responded to the growing awareness of racial injustice?

Upstate Friends has always been an integrated group well aware of this problem. This inspired us to hold our vigil and attend those of other like minded faith communities. We continue to maintain a strong association with the Hispanic Alliance.

What kind of support would you like to see from PFYM?

Piedmont Friends Yearly Meeting
Sixth Annual Sessions, Fourth Month 2021

Upstate Friends would like more support designed for small worship groups and to be more included in conversations. At times we feel like a forgotten backwater especially because we are in South Carolina, not covered by FCNCL or other specific North Carolina issues. We would be eager to participate in zoom forums and workshops. Upstate Friends would welcome visitations from the wider PFYM community. It would be easy for Friends to join our 3:00p.m. zoom Meetings.

Share any additional information that you would like PFYM to know about your group.

During quarantine they have been busy helping a migrant family, donating supplies to Middle Tiger School, holding a peace vigil and publishing a letter to the editor about the January 6th attack on the Capital. Upstate Friends Worship Group is very grateful to Charlotte Friends Meeting for their assistance with zoom and on-going support.

How has your group fared during the pandemic?

Though many people we know have suffered and even died of Covid19 we have done surprisingly well. Most of us have managed to avoid the disease thus far. Staying connected as a faith-filled community has helped us cope with the challenges. By attending the Annual Gathering on zoom our Quaker world has expanded, bringing us additional resources and involving us in more issues.

Meeting Participation

What is your average attendance in a typical month for:

Meeting for Worship: 6 First Day School: N/A
Other Activities
(before/after meeting for worship, e.g., forum, adult education): 6

How many members and attenders are active in the life of your meeting? 8

Upstate has a mailing list of 40, but only 15 get the weekly update.