

Third Haven Friends Meeting
2024 State of the Meeting Report
Approved, 12th Month, 8th, 2024, Meeting for Business

Introduction

Third Haven Friends Meeting continues as a meaningful Quaker faith community to its members and attenders. We are concerned about succession in key roles as clerks and committee members, with aging members and departures. We are making progress on our funding and construction of Phase 1 projects.

The meeting for worship continues to be nurturing for members, attenders, and visitors. Following the COVID pandemic, with seasonal variations, attendance at meeting for worship has risen to 35-45 in the meetinghouse and 4-8 on Zoom. Meeting for business usually had around 25. Our meetings for worship have more vocal ministry, more often, enriching our worship experience together.

We have added to our membership with 3 transfers and 2 new members. In 2024, we have 125 members. We reckon that about 1/3 of these are non-resident members. We estimate that we have around 100 “attenders,” who receive our monthly *Newsletter* and weekly email announcements. Some of these attenders are engaged in the life of the Meeting, attending the meeting for worship and serving on committees. A few regular attenders are considering membership. We have an increasing number of “inactive” members.

Pastoral Care

The Pastoral Care Committee continued to meet monthly for the purpose of sharing news of members and attenders, with a focus on those in need of Spiritual support in the manner of Friends, and identifying attenders who might be considering becoming members.

The Committee provided a series of 5 informational and experiential programs *Aging as Friends*: 1) Mapping Your Spiritual Journey, 2) Housing Resources, 3) Five Wishes and Advanced Medical Directives, 4) Coordination of Care presented by Talbot Hospice, and 5) Estate Planning. Pertinent materials from these sessions have been added to our on-line documents.

In the spring, we organized the Friendly 8s gatherings, where members and attenders met for meals in their respective homes 3-4 times, about once per month. Feedback suggested that these were a great success. Friendly 8s will be repeated in the spring of 2025.

We approved and welcomed new members Amy Kimball and Beverly Martin. Sam Stephens transferred her membership to Third Haven. Matthew Gray transferred his membership to Third Haven from the Plumstead Meeting, Virginia. Kathryn and Clinton Pettus transferred their memberships from Stony Run Meeting in Baltimore, Maryland.

The Meeting honored the death of members with memorial meetings: Deborah Cox on 4.6.24, and Nancy Stanford 8.1.24. The Meeting hosted a memorial open house for the family of the late Dr James Giske. The Clerks of the Meeting and others conducted memorial meetings for Mario Tama and the Tama family on 6.22.24. The Clerk and others conducted a memorial service for Margaret Iovino, daughter of the Peck family on 6.8.24. Though not under the care of the Meeting, these were conducted in the manner of Friends, at the request of local families, well-known to the Meeting community.

Worship and Ministry

Participation at meeting for worship at Third Haven Friends Meeting has been about 25 to 35 members, attenders and visitors each week. We continue to hold hybrid meetings since the pandemic. Vocal ministry is variable, as Friends wait to be moved by the Spirit. Ministry seems to have become more frequent since the Committee started reading excerpts from the queries during each meeting for worship. Our Wednesday meeting for worship attracts a dedicated group of participants, usually 4-7, with a few also joining on Zoom. Silent worship is profound.

We are holding a series of discussions - Reading the Gospels as Friends - facilitated by meeting member Terry-Thomas Primer, now focused on the Gospel of John. These meetings were held monthly, attended by 5-7 members and attenders in the first half of 2024. These will resume in 2025. We have

largely run through the members who are willing to discuss their Spiritual Journeys, with some having presented more than once for this popular program. We have a few groups that meet independently in the meeting facilities, in ways that nurture Spiritual growth. These include a writing group, and a Jungian dream group.

In October, we began a series of 4 programs on building and maintaining relationships across perceived differences in the manner of Friends. These are led by Clinton and Kathryn Pettus. The first was for Third Haven Friends. Subsequent sessions are based on the experience of other meetings, including Alexandria (Virginia) Friends Meeting in November.

First Day School

First Day School (FDS) meets each First Day from September to June. We have 10 families under our care. Curriculum centers around the 6 testimonies as well as Godly Play, and Faith and Play stories shared every month.

Attendance is sometimes scarce on First Day mornings. We have larger turn outs for our special yearly events. These are the welcome back breakfast hosted with Pastoral Care Committee, Family Fun Night in October, Christmas celebration with entire Meeting, planting children's garden in spring-and Moving Up Day, celebrating rising graduates in June. The FDS families create holiday wreaths for the meetinghouses.

There is a subcommittee working this year on preparing and implementing our summer nature camp held in July. We hope to hold a 2-week session in 2025, and see it as a means of outreach. The camp is held on the grounds of Third Haven.

Testimonies and Concerns

The Testimonies and Concerns Committee (T&C) began the year with an update to the Charitable Giving Guide and Recommendations for a \$3,000 distribution to five local groups at \$400 each: Multi-Cultural Center, Mid-Shore Council on Family Violence, 4 All Seasons, Life Time Wells and Choptank Habitat for Humanity. The remaining \$1,000 was directed to Palestine Peace Teams and to the Ukraine for aid through the American Friends Service Committee and the Red Cross.

T&C continued our work with the Talbot Interfaith Shelter in 2024, preparing approximately 18 meals for adults and children on the 17th of each month. This year we extended an invitation for members to help us purchase food items and cook the meals together in the Common Room. We had some successful gatherings including the preparation of a turkey dinner in November. We realized that commitment and expense was too big and laid down the donation of dinners in 7th month. T&C members, Mary Yancey and Beth Mufson, continue volunteer with Sarah Sayre and Kristina Herold at Talbot Interfaith Shelter once a month.

We initiated Conversations on the Queries in January, and in honor of Susan Dickerson, who hosted "Conversations with Susan" successfully for many years to initiate conversation on topics of interest. We prepared and served biscuits and jam to those who joined us on the 4th First Day and continued the practice for 6 sessions with some heart-felt sharing. By the 6th month the biscuits were much improved.

T&C wrestled with the war in Israel-Gaza, and in April offered the American Friends Service Committee minute on the Israel-Gaza war to begin a discussion. We learned we were not in unity on the matter and discussed and edited a Third Haven minute over several Meetings. A minute, informed by the work of Baltimore Yearly Meeting, was finally approved at the 6th month meeting for business.

Through the efforts of Jonathan Williams, Mary Yancy and Beth Mufson, T&C became active with the GreenHands, a local initiative with Town Parks and the Presbyterian Church, to plant summer community gardens and begin a recycling initiative. Meeting members were enthusiastic about organizing recycling efforts in the common room kitchen. Several members contributed items from their homes. A celebration of the gardens was held in late summer. Bill Shreves, President, Bay Hundred Community Volunteers, and several members, visited Third to share their mission to help improve the living conditions of poorer residents of Talbot County and to raise awareness for the need for adequate, safe, affordable

housing. The nonprofit needs volunteers. T&C will send the Bolivia Quaker Education Fund \$1,000 from the Shoffner Fund.

We enjoy the opportunity to connect members with projects in our community and encourage everyone to consider an area of work where they might donate some time as Friends: Habitat for Humanity, Detention Center Library, Peace Teams, Talbot Interfaith Shelter, Multi-Cultural Center, Quaker Voice of Maryland, Food Link, NAACP of Talbot County and GreenHands.

Property and Grounds

The Property and Grounds Committee (P&G) provides hands-on care and oversight of our buildings and grounds. We work to maintain our buildings in good repair; plain, pleasing, and unpretentious; with quality materials (eg the brick meetinghouse doors); and safe. The Meeting, through P&G, provides for our caretaker and pays the utility bills. The committee is instituting a change to remove the trash pick-up from the Town of Easton's operation to us doing it in-house, at some cost savings to the Meeting. P&G oversees and spends about half the Meeting's annual budget.

We have Meeting-wide semi-annual clean-up days in the spring and late fall with the usual efforts to mulch the beds with rake leaves, weeding and vine pruning, mowing, and general cleaning of buildings. The 1684 meetinghouse was given a thorough dusting since most of the restoration work has been completed. It was recognized that some persons couldn't make the clean-up days but were able to come at other days. There is always much to do.

Vines continue to be a growing problem. Patrick Kelly was hired to administer herbicidal treatment on heavy vine and phragmites infestation in the meadow. After the die back, our caretaker, Clay Owens, keeps the vines and weeds somewhat in check with mowing. Vines and understory growth along our entrance drive have been attacked by Meeting members as well as our neighbors. P&G, with support of the Planning Committee, continues to work with Patrick Kelly and other professionals to help with our removal of vines and other invasives.

The big P&G investment in 2024 has been a new riding lawn mower. The Trustees have participated in paying for the mower and a service contract. Clay puts the mower to good use, but also uses the old, smaller mower for special areas and tight spaces. The Committee has enjoyed providing hospitality after meeting this month - ice cream cake a hot breakfast!

Budget and Finance

Third Haven Friends Meeting is financially secure with slightly over \$101,000 in operating funds on hand to support and annual budget of \$72,000. We anticipate that member and attender contributions, aided by income from facilities use and assistance from the Trustees of Third Haven on major expenses, will be sufficient to balance the budget by the end of our fiscal year on June 30, 2025. Third Haven also holds \$216,000 at Friends Fiduciary. These assets consist of a Scholarship Fund, additional operating funds, and 2 small bequests earmarked for environmental and educational uses.

Through our members and other friends, we raised and set aside \$285,000 in the Meeting Building Fund, for an external stairway to the 2nd floor of the brick meetinghouse (BMH), an access ramp to the BMH, and renovations to the second floor of the BMH. The 2nd floor is used by our First Day School, and will provide for an office, which has consisted of a closet in our common room. The Trustees of Third Haven have pledged \$150,000 to assist with these projects, which are estimated at \$325,000

Operations at Third Haven benefit from an ownership arrangement created some 50 years ago, whereby the buildings and grounds are owned and supported by a separate independently funded entity. This entity, the Trustees of Third Haven, funds major maintenance and capital improvements of the buildings and grounds. Thus, Third Haven Friends Meeting is effectively a tenant, free of rent, and is only obliged to fund routine operating expenses such as utilities, maintenance of the buildings and grounds, and repairs incidental to Meeting operations.

Planning

The Planning Committee (PC) met regularly, mostly monthly, throughout the year. Following the long-term Master Plan for the property and grounds, “accepted” at 5.14.23 meeting for business, the PC continued to work with John Milner Architects (JMA) of Chadds Ford PA and Jonathan Ceci Landscape Architects (JCLA) of Baltimore MD, meeting in-person or on Zoom several times.

This year, the PC focused on the 4 priority Phase 1 projects (see below), approved at the 6.11.23 meeting for business. The PC identified and met with general contractors for construction, to assess the firms and get estimates for construction. The PC selected Harper and Son as the general contractor. On 9.8.24, the Meeting approved financing of \$323,400 from the Meeting Building Fund, including a \$150,000 contribution from the Trustees, and authorized the PC to proceed with permitting, construction and implementation of Phase 1 projects. The PC continued to work on the 4 Phase 1 projects:

1. *External stairway to the 2nd floor of the brick meetinghouse (BMH)* for First Day School (FDS) access and safety, and other uses. For the purposes of permitting and construction Projects 1 and 2 have been merged (see 2 below).
2. *Accessibility ramp to the BMH*, compliant with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The PC continued to work with JMA and JCLA on design, code compliance, safety, drainage, historic preservation, preservation of trees and plants, and cost. With the revision and completion of the required permitting drawings, members of the PC and Trustees presented the proposed projects and drawings to the Easton Historic District Commission (HDC). The HDC approved “the application as submitted” on 10.29.24. Harper has submitted the drawings and applied for a permit for these 2 projects. JMA, JCLA, Lane Engineering and members of the PC continue to support the permitting process. The PC and the Meeting are especially grateful to Priscilla Sener and Steve Meixner for all their excellent work on advancing these projects. The Easton Fire Marshal just reported “no objections” and “no further comments from a fire protection standpoint at this time.”
3. *Renovate 2nd floor of the BMH* for First Day School (FDS), safety, and related uses. The PC has met and discussed the needs and plans for the renovation of the 2nd floor of the BMH (BMH2). The scope and content of these BMH2 plans continue to evolve, in functions, present conditions, and permitting issues. The PC and Harper will finalize designs, drawings, permitting and a contract, separately from projects 1-2.
4. *Tree succession plan* working group has completed the survey of the species, size and condition of the trees on the property, our valuable canopy. The tree group applied to the Chesapeake Bay Trust (CBT) for a related grant and was rejected twice. Somewhat surprisingly, approval for a CBT grant for \$14,000 came through recently. With Meeting approval for Phase 1 project financing, the tree group and the PC will contract with JCLA to complete the (very) long-term Third Haven tree succession plan. The PC and Meeting are especially grateful to Mary Yancey and the tree group for all their excellent work on advancing this project.

This year, the Meeting Campaign Committee did not meet and is deemed to be laid down. Nevertheless, the Meeting Building Fund grew to \$430,000 from generous members and attenders in 2024.

Other Activities

Scholarship

The Scholarship Committee of Third Haven Friends Meeting, clerked by Marsie Hawkinson, met in mid-July to review the list of applicants for the fall term and prepare to mail out checks to them. In the past the checks have all been sent by the Committee’s treasurer. This year the Committee decided to take a more personal approach and Committee members each had one student to write to with the appropriate check included.

Students receiving Meeting scholarships for the Fall Term are: Zadoc Bond, senior, Haverford College; Max McCall senior, Vanderbilt University; Lucy Bond, senior, University of Maryland (final term); Serena Claggett, 2nd year, University of Leiden, Netherlands; and Maeve Mufson, freshman, Bates College.

The current Scholarship Fund has significant assets in its Friends Fiduciary operating fund, and Friends Fiduciary endowment fund.

Communications

The Communications Committee provides several means of recording and reporting on the activities of the Meeting. Specifically, these include a monthly *Newsletter* and twice-weekly announcements, circulated via e-mail. A few printed copies are available at the Meeting.

We maintain a website <https://www.thirdhaven.org>. We maintain and update address, email, and phone listings of members and attenders. These are recorded both in the website directory and in a printed directory, issued annually in January or February. The Meeting telephone records all incoming messages, which are promptly heeded. In the past 4 years, the tech support team members have continued to enhance the audio and Zoom features at meetings for worship, meetings for business and other meetings, making participation available in-person and on Zoom.

Hospitality

The Hospitality Committee, assisted by members and attenders, continues to provide coffee and snacks in the common room following the First Day meeting for worship every week. The nourishment and fellowship help maintain and strengthen the bonds of the Third Haven community and serves as a testament to our caring and support for one another. We coordinate the provision of food on special occasions including holiday gatherings, potluck meals and educational events in coordination with other Meeting committees. This year we hosted several special occasions including the Moving Up Day picnic in June, and a First Day School Welcome Back breakfast in September, both in collaboration with the First Day School. These occasions and others help Friends to stay connected to one another and to increase our sense of fellowship and belonging. Hospitality is sometimes provided following memorial services if requested by the family.

Nominating

The Nominating Committee makes its final report in December. The Committee surveys clerks, members and attenders, to determine committee needs and identify Friends to serve on, clerk and do the important work of the Meeting's many committees. The Meeting and its committees depend heavily on about 40 Friends to do most of the work of the Meeting. A portion of that group do a very large share of the work of the Meeting. With an aging membership, succession in key roles and committees is becoming more of a challenge.

Facilities Use

Our focus is on safety of all meeting members, attenders and guests, as well as our buildings and grounds. Third Haven meetings are held in-person and on Zoom in our hybrid format. The Facilities use Committee schedules meetings and Zoom use on the on a paper calendar in the common room, synchronized with the online calendar on the Meeting website. The Facilities Use Committee works with members and non-members to schedule the meetings of the Third Haven committees that use the common room, the old meetinghouse (OMH, 1684), the brick meetinghouse (BMH, 1880), and the grounds of the Meeting. The Committee is often the first to welcome non-members to Third Haven. It receives requests such requests for memorial services and catering, weddings and catering, organization meetings and other activities. A member of the Committee meets with the person(s) to understand their needs and how Third Haven can meet these needs, to make the event meaningful to them. Safety procedures are explained. If large numbers of people are expected, parking is discussed with the Caretaker who will organize that. During the event, a Facilities Use Committee member opens the building; and is the Friendly (but unobtrusive) Presence at the event. When everything is in order and the buildings and property are secured, the buildings are locked, and Facilities Member goes home.

Conclusion

We remain an engaged Quaker Faith community that has great meaning and value to our members and attenders. Our meetings for worship are well attended and nurturing. Our meetings for business are proportional and productive, conducted in the manner of Friends. We seek to improve participation in our First Day School, but we are challenged by other claims on families' time on First Day. We need more and younger members to help do the work of the Meeting, as clerks and members of committees. We are devoted to the stewardship of our property and grounds. We look forward to an enduring future. We are engaged in our local community both individually and collectively, as Quaker witnesses. Guided by our Quaker faith, practices and testimonies, we continue to thrive in a challenging environment.

Tom Corl

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