

Third Haven Friends Meeting
2023 State of the Meeting Report
Approved at the 12.10.23 Meeting for Business

Introduction

Third Haven Friends Meeting continues as a vital and meaningful Quaker faith community. Due to the deaths and departures of Friends our membership has declined. We are concerned about succession in key roles as clerks and committee members.

The meeting for worship continues to be nurturing for members, attenders, and visitors. We are recovering attendance as the COVID pandemic risks have declined. With season variations, less in 8th month, attendance at meeting for worship has risen to 35-40 in the meetinghouse and 8-12 on Zoom. As in the COVID pandemic, our meetings for worship have had less vocal ministry, more often completely silent.

We have 67 resident members 51 and non-resident members. A few of the latter continue to be engaged with the life of the Meeting, though at some distance. We have an increasing number on “inactive” members. Only 1 new member joined and 1 transferred in 2023. We estimate about that we have 100 attenders. A few of these attenders are engaged in the life of the Meeting, attending the meeting for worship and serving on committees. Most attenders, for whom we have contact information, receive our monthly *Newsletter* and weekly email announcements, but we do not see or hear from them.

Pastoral Care

This year 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. In April, we hosted a New Members and Attenders potluck lunch to introduce and celebrate new members who joined the community during COVID pandemic. There were no new members during 2023.

In May, we celebrated the marriage of Katie Claggett and AJ Rojas, in the manner of Friends, under the care of the Meeting, a joyous occasion for the families, friends and the Meeting community. In May, the Meeting held a memorial service for our beloved Friend Adrienne Rudge. We joined with the family and friends of Adrienne Rudge to celebrate her life and share our memories and sorrow for the loss of her Spirit and Meeting leadership.

The Committee is currently providing a series of informational and experiential programs *Aging as Friends*: Mapping Your Spiritual Journey, Housing Resources, Five Wishes and Advanced Medical Directives, Coordination of Care presented by Talbot Hospice, and Estate Planning.

Helen Womack died in December.

Worship and Ministry

Participation at meeting for worship has been increasing at Third Haven Friends Meeting as concerns about the COVID pandemic continued to abate this year. We often have over 35 participants in-person and 8-10 more on Zoom, as summer holidays end, and family members return to the area. Our meetings are hybrid. Vocal ministry is variable as Friends are moved by the Spirit but frequent and often inspired. Our Wednesday meeting for worship is small but attracts a dedicated group of participants, usually 4-7, with a few also joining on Zoom. Silent worship is profound but vocal ministry is rare at this meeting for worship.

Worship and Ministry is sponsoring a Quakerism 101 program. This was launched in September by a visit from Christie Duncan-Tessmer, General Secretary of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (PYM). We had a presentation on Silent Worship and Spiritual Practices in October. Upcoming talks will include That of God, Quaker Testimonies, Community and another session on Decision-Making in the Manner of Friends.

We are holding a series of discussions - Reading the Gospels as Friends - facilitated by meeting member Terry-Thomas Primer. These meetings are held monthly and attended by approximately 9 members and attenders. After initial discussions about the 4 Gospels, we are focusing on John, sometimes known as the Quaker Gospel.

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. There is a member who has offered to talk about the importance of nature in her Spiritual life this spring. We have a few groups that meet independently in the meeting facilities in ways that nurture Spiritual growth. These include a journaling and creative writing group, and a Jungian dream group.

There are hopes to start a Trust Circles group to build community and racial awareness through a worship sharing-like process. Training for this was largely completed in 2022. A refresher and launch of the discussions may start this spring.

First Day School

First Day School (FDS) connects with 15 families under its care. Except for summer months FDS is offered every First Day. Although attendance in person on Sunday mornings is sometimes sparse, families show up for special yearly events, celebrating the Meeting community.

The Third Haven mindfulness summer camp has been meeting annually in the summer on the Third Haven grounds for 6 years. Often there are 2 sessions, each a week-long, with full attendance at 12 kids in each session. The kids spend over 90% of the time outdoors exploring the Meeting grounds and learning of Spirit through nature.

Other annual FDS activities include - children's garden in the spring, moving up day in June, mindfulness camp in July, family fun night in October, wreath making in November, a Christmas craft show in December, and a holiday program for the Meeting, with a potluck lunch in December.

Testimonies and Concerns

The Testimonies and Concerns Committee (T&C) maintains interest in several key projects, providing community involvement for Third Haven Friends. T&C organizes a monthly dinner delivered to the Talbot Interfaith Shelter (TIS), through its partnership with Talbot Association of Clergy and Laity (TACL). T&C invites members and attenders to contribute food, prepare the dinner and deliver the meal to the shelter, feeding approximately 18 adults and children monthly. Friends also continue to donate food supplies weekly for local food pantries, including the Neighborhood Service Center. T&C supports Cynthia Quast and her work with Asbury United Methodist Church for the preparation and delivery of the annual Thanksgiving Dinner. Several members volunteered to provide food and to deliver over 200 dinners on Thanksgiving Day.

Around 10 T&C Friends provide library services to detainees of the Talbot County Detention Center (TCDC). The book lending and computer systems were updated this year and the collection of over 5000 books has been purged, with more current books added to the library. The maintenance of the library system is provided for by Quakers and other volunteers.

Many members of the Meeting volunteer with the Chesapeake Multicultural Center, teaching English as a second language, tutoring students and supporting other programs and events. The Chesapeake Multicultural Center celebrated 10 years of service to immigrant families and children on April 20, with a wonderful exhibit in Easton.

This year several Friends reached out to representatives of the Pocomoke American Indian Tribe to learn more about our early Quaker history and interaction with native peoples. T&C hosted a visit from the Southern Quarterly Meeting (SQM) Peace Team in May.

Our Meeting embraced several environmental initiatives throughout the year to improve our ability to buy bulk food, reduce waste and take better care of our grounds. Mary Yancey led many environmental initiatives including Meetings participation with Faithful Green Leaders training. Dona Sorce continues to monitor Quaker Voice on behalf of Meeting to keep us apprised of Maryland legislative issues. Meeting Friends continue to participate in a weekly Peace Vigil at the Talbot County Courthouse in Easton, led by John Turner.

T&C continues to make an annual recommendation to Meeting for Charitable Giving contributions and produces a Giving Guide that outlines local and Quaker organizations as suggestions for individual charitable giving in keeping with our Testimonies - Peace, Integrity, Community, Equality and Stewardship.

Outreach

The Outreach Committee continued to focus on ensuring that area residents and visitors know about the Meeting. Cards showing an image of the 1684 meetinghouse, listing meeting for worship times and other information, were posted on bulletin boards in post offices and other venues. Members of Outreach once again staffed at table at the Multicultural Fair and distributed relevant handouts.

Two other Outreach projects are underway: 1) Creation of a series of individual wooden sign boards, each naming a Testimony, to hang below the Meeting sign on Washington Avenue. The Meeting has approved this project, materials have been obtained and the first will be fabricated early in 2024. 2) Creating and placing an ad using text from the card mentioned above. As approved by the Meeting, placement will either be on the upper right-hand corner of the Sunday *Star Democrat*, the local Easton newspaper, or in the *Talbot Spy*, a county online newspaper.

Buildings and Grounds, and Trustees

Third Haven cares for 7 acres of land, with the majority unimproved by buildings or driveways. It is one of the largest green spaces within the Town of Easton. Stormwater from the property flows into a stream tributary of the Tred Avon River on the north side of the property. In 2023, the Property & Grounds Committee (P&G) and the Planning Committee have been looking together at long range needs and opportunities for the grounds. For assessment purposes, we have zoned the grounds into five areas: the entrance lane, the built area, the burial grounds, the meadow, and the woodland or dell region used for nature play by the First Day School (FDS) and Mindfulness Campers. Each region is characterized by large trees. The mature tree canopy is a defining attribute of our historic site.

We are experiencing impacts from higher temperatures, changing weather, and increased atmospheric carbon. Needs for our grounds include vine control, other invasive species controls, stormwater management, sensitive tree maintenance, some tree replacement, and reconsideration of our mowing practices. We have invested significant resources into control of invasive plants this

year and anticipate the effort to continue for at least 3 years. With their huge production of seed banks, invasive plants threaten both site ecology and neighborhood ecology.

Opportunities driven by our recent Master Plan include a canopy succession plan and accessibility improvements. A group of Meeting members and attenders has volunteered to survey the hundreds of trees on our grounds. Each is being identified by species, assessed for general condition and then measured for diameter at breast height (dbh), overall tree height, canopy spread, and percentage of canopy open. Locations of trees were previously geo-coded, opening the possibility of digital mapping for interpretive purposes and learning. Tree survey results will inform a professional tree succession plan. The tree survey has been fun. The activity has fostered community and new knowledge of our grounds, much like our twice-yearly grounds clean-up days.

In addition to the regular housekeeping and maintenance of our buildings and grounds, the inside of the brick meetinghouse (BMH) wall was repaired and repainted, and the drives and parking areas were top dressed, with blue chip stones. Grounds keeping received extra emphasis and work with landscape planning, trees surveyed, and vine removal. Following the advisement of our insurance carrier, we have checked and serviced the fire extinguishers and smoke detectors and added exit signs in the common room.

The Trustees have enlisted experienced consultants and contractors to repair and restore the 1684 (old) meetinghouse (OMH). This work has included stabilization of the plaster and lathe in the attic, repair of all windows and sills, repair and replace rotted siding, reducing the indoor humidity with a plastic tarp on the crawl space dirt floor, and improved drainage of rainwater away from the foundation. These OMH projects meet occasional challenges that are addressed by Trustees. The Meeting is very grateful to Bill Lane for his work, maintaining and protecting the historic OMH.

Budget and Finance

Third Haven Friends Meeting's finances are comfortably adequate to maintain the ongoing operations of the Meeting. Our balance sheet remains strong, with significant operating assets in cash, and restricted assets in longer term investments such as certificates of deposit or Friends Fiduciary. Our operating cash balance is \$82,000, representing slightly over a year's worth of normal operating expense. In addition, we have \$46,000 in an operating reserve fund at Friends Fiduciary.

Our restricted assets, which cover our Scholarship Fund and Building Fund total slightly over \$360,000, with \$157,000 in the Building Fund, and \$203,000 in Scholarship. The Scholarship funds consist of two smaller restricted funds totaling \$48,000 and \$155,000.

Current operating liabilities amount to slightly over \$5,000, consisting mainly of payroll taxes due for 2023 tax year, and some minor invoices due at month's end. Third Haven has no outstanding loans, debts or other financial obligations.

Our annual operating budget is slightly over \$77,000. We anticipate member and attender donations, as well as miscellaneous income from facilities use, to cover expenses fully in fiscal year (FY)23-24, July 2023 - June 2024.

While this represents, as stated above, a "comfortably adequate" financial position, Third Haven is facing the same headwinds as most religious organizations in the US. We have declining membership as current members grow older or move away, and fewer new families join. New members tend to be individuals, often retired or nearing retirement. The demographics provide little cause for optimism; our strong balance sheet should be viewed with caution.

To address these challenges, we have spent considerable time and money in an effort to identify the challenges and to find solutions. We feel the First Day School can be leveraged to

reverse the aging of current members, but we will require a very substantial investment to implement the Master Plan and grow Meeting membership. We have invested much thought and discussion analyzing our future and the alternatives.

Planning and Campaign

The Planning Committee met monthly throughout the year. This year we merged the Land Use Planning Committee into the Planning Committee (PC). The PC selected a team for the development of a long-term Master Plan for the Meeting property and grounds. Working with John Milner Architects (JMA) of Chadds Ford PA and Jonathan Ceci Landscape Architects (JCLA) of Baltimore MD, the PC met with the planners in-person and on Zoom several times. JMA and JCLA conducted 2 productive Meeting-wide workshops on the development and completion of the Master Plan. After a great deal of discussion, discernment, and refinement, the PC approved the master plan for presentation to the meeting for business.

The master plan provides clear, general, long-term direction for a building program and land use improvements. At the 5.14.23 meeting for business, the PC presented the master plan developed in collaboration with JMA and JCLA. The 5.14.23 minutes state “Acknowledging concerns regarding growth of the Meeting, financial issues and specific aspects of the Plan to be decided later, the REPORT was ACCEPTED.” - a landmark decision for Third Haven.

Since then, the PC and the Campaign Committee (CC) have worked on discerning the priorities, and sequencing projects for Phase 1, in implementing the Master Plan. At its 6.7.23 PC meeting, after thorough discussion and discernment, the PC reached agreement and approved 4 projects as the top priorities in Phase 1, for Master Plan implementation. PC presented 4 Phase 1 priority projects, to the 6.11 meeting for business, so that the PC and others could continue to work on design, cost estimates and implementation. The meeting for business approved 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 seek permits and estimates for the construction Projects 1 and 3 have been merged.
2. Renovate 2nd floor of the BMH for FDS use, safety, and related uses.
3. Accessibility ramp to the BMH: Design, seek permits, and seek estimates for the construction of an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant ramp. Projects 1 and 3 have been merged.
4. Tree succession plan: The PC will consider phasing and sources of funding. See Property and Grounds above.

The PC believes that these 4 Phase 1 projects need to be funded by Meeting financial contributions to the Building Fund, Trustee financial contributions and such grants as may be available. The PC will operate within the constraints of the Building Fund, Trustees’ financial contributions and grants. The PC will seek Meeting approval for construction and financing of all Master Plan projects.

This year, the Meeting Campaign Committee (CC) has worked on planning and preparation for the fundraising campaign - *Friends Light the Way* - intended to realize and fulfill the Third Haven Master Plan, over some long period of time to be determined.

For the last several years at least, the rate of making financial contributions to the Operating Fund of the Meeting has been consistently about 50% of resident members. Giving rates from non-

resident members and attenders is far lower. All who become members are told of the obligations of membership, including making annual financial contributions to support the Meeting's operations. This consistent relatively low rate of annual giving to the Operating Fund has been deemed to be an obstacle to the Campaign by the CC and various fundraising experts consulted by CC members. Accordingly, the CC Meeting Support Working Group has reached out and tried to contact all resident and non-resident members to contribute to the Operating Fund this fiscal year. A slight increase in the giving rate may be because of the decline in the number of resident members.

The CC believes that we need to fund Phase 1 projects from Meeting financial contributions and Trustees, before going outside the Meeting community for Campaign financial contributions.

Other Activities

Scholarship

The Scholarship Committee awarded scholarships to 4 students in the spring term of 2023 and another 4 in the fall term: Atticus Leibman, Zadoc Bond, Max McCall, and Lucy Bond. Atticus graduated, but then Serena Claggett began as a freshman at Lewis and Clark. A total of \$5000 was given each semester.

The Scholarship Committee paid the salaries of the teachers for the summer camp, which appeared to be a successful program once again. There were two sessions and each teacher received \$500 per session for a total of \$2000.

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 3 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. Hospitality is sometimes provided following memorial services if requested by the family.

This year we hosted several special occasions including the Friends Peace Team gathering, a picnic in collaboration with the First Day School Moving Up Day in June, and a Welcome Back First Day School breakfast in September after the summer break. These occasions help Friends to stay connected to one another to increase our sense of fellowship and belonging.

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 and do the important work of the Meeting's 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 great deal of work for the Meeting. With an aging membership, succession is becoming more of a challenge.

Facilities Use

Third Haven meetings are held in-person and on Zoom in our hybrid format. The Facilities 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. Clerks and members provide items and notifications with plans for meeting times, weddings, or memorial services. This ensures that each committee has reserved space and/or online time. Non-members leave a voice message for facilities' use on our answering machine or contact the web administrator. All such requests are forwarded to Facilities Committee.

Appropriateness of facility donations: The current system of categorizing meeting/event types had been working well and should be continued. These are listed on the webpage. Donations are forwarded by Facilities Committee and Friendly Presence to our Treasurer along with the event date.

Recommendations from the Risk Control Consultant from GuideOne Insurance were sent in September 2022 to the Trustees, which hold title to and insure the property. Property & Grounds Committee and Facilities Committee discussed these Safety Issues that applied to use of our buildings and property. We now require a Certificate of Insurance from all outside groups that are approved to use our facilities. These recommendations have been included in the agreement document that prospective users of our property sign.

Conclusion

Although our number of active members at Third Haven Friends Meeting is smaller than pre-pandemic times, we remain engaged in a Quaker Faith community that has great meaning and value to us. We are devoted to the stewardship of our property and grounds and look forward to an enduring future. We are engaged in our local community both individually and collectively. With the guidance of our Quaker faith, practice and testimonies, we hope to continue to thrive.

Tom Corl & Molly Brian

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