

**FIFTEENTH STREET MONTHLY MEETING
RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS**

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Dear Friends,

The last 6 months has been a learning experience for Fifteenth Street as we have moved our gathering experience from in person meetings to primarily virtual meetings. From January through March 15, Friends met each First day for Worship at 9:30 AM and 11:00 AM. Beginning on March 8, we changed our practice of shaking hands at the rise of meeting due to the covid-19 pandemic and found new ways to greet each other. We held our last Meeting for Worship in the Meetinghouse on March 15. Beginning March 22, Friends learned how to worship and continue our sense of community by holding activities virtually over Zoom and ministering to each other remotely. Since then we worshipped every first day at 11:00 AM. Our attendance at Meeting has increased due to having one meeting for worship and due to Friends rejoining us from around the world. We continue to welcome visitors who come to our zoom meetings just to experience a Quaker meeting. Our First day school met through March 15 and after a brief pause resumed on April 11 meeting virtually every first day at 10:00 with a few children. It is harder for our young children to meet virtually.

Our membership has had a number of changes over these past 6 months. We have welcomed five Friends into membership. Carmen Hendershott, Mary Grimes, Dorothea Jean Coiffe-Chin, Steve Capra Greechie, and John Thomas. We transferred the membership of Michael Smith to Wilmington Monthly Meeting, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. We also remembered Ellen Margaret Deegan, Arthur Berk, Gloria DeNard and Beatrice Williams-Rude's husband Alan who have passed. On June 25 we held a virtual memorial for Gloria DeNard. On July 11th, we held a virtual memorial for Arthur Berk that was planned and co-clerked with members from Ohio Yearly Meeting (Conservative). Our virtual memorials have been a time for us to reenvision how we hold our memorial meetings virtually. Both meetings started with an hour of silent worship followed by an hour for worship with vocal ministry.

Last year, we approved of joining NYQM in a year of Jubilee. Friends were asked to consider the work that occurred in their committees, allow space for more fellowship in committee meetings and more queries in our Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business. This new focus allowed us to change our Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business and open with 30 minutes of worship, queries and advices from Faith & Practice, Readings from Rex Ambler's The Quaker Way and a query on forgiveness. This gives us the space we need to allow more healing in our meeting. We held our Meetings for Worship with a Concern for Business as usual on February 9 and March 8. At our March 8 meeting, Friends discerned that with the day some call a holiday called Easter and a reduced agenda, we did not need to hold a Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business in April. This gave us space to prepare for the heavy lifting in the following meetings. On May 10, we resumed our Meetings for Worship with a Concern for Business virtually and continued to meet on June 14, and July 12. These meetings have been deep with ministry on difficult issues.

Over the past two months we began to focus our efforts on laboring together on issues of racism in our community and in our country. We worked together to see how Friends were led to confront these difficult issues. The meeting heard a minute from Brooklyn Monthly Meeting and read excerpts of a statement from AFSC. We wrestled with these topics and endorsed the Brooklyn minute. We heard the call from Brooklyn to commit ourselves to working on these issues and in July formed the Ad Hoc Committee on Racial Justice. This committee will "work on the development of racial justice both in and out of Meeting through individual actions, study groups, joint action with other Meetings and community groups. This group may also create supportive minutes for the Meeting to consider. This group will work on a statement in support of the AFSC minute..." We will continue this work. We heard a reading of the Friends General Conference People of Color Epistle, which is attached to this report, and listened to ministry in response to the epistle. We acknowledge the work to come. An artist, who is a resident at the Penington House, asked the meeting to co-sponsor an exhibit of portraits of people wearing a mask on the fence of the property and hold a silent vigil for the opening of the exhibit. We highlighted the importance of this exhibit and our Arts Committee, Peace and Social Justice Committee, and our Property Committee continue to work with the artist to have this display in August. We will keep the Quarter informed of this project. The meeting approved holding a Silent Quaker Vigil for Healing and Racial Justice. The vigil takes place on Wednesday nights at 6:30 in

the courtyard of the Meetinghouse, approximately 8 Friends attend the meeting each week. The meeting also approved a minute on the 13th amendment to the constitution, which is attached to the report. We ask the Quarter to endorse and adopt this minute and to forward the endorsement of the minute to the yearly meeting and send letters to our congressional delegation. We see the work that is in front of us and have committed ourselves to continue these efforts.

Our community continues to meet changing needs through these challenging times and understand how to move forward. In May, we heard a moving report from a Friend who travelled the world physically and virtually building connections among Friends. We heard how this work continues but now the work continues exclusively virtually. The work of this Friend has helped many communities adjust to meeting primarily virtually and continue to connect with each other. On March 24, the Shelter Committee discerned that it would stop taking guests during the pandemic due to concerns for both guests and volunteers. The committee instead donated food and funds to Main Chance, the drop-in shelter that brings guests to the Meetinghouse. In May, we formed an Ad Hoc Committee on Reopening. Members of the Property Committee, the Ministry and Worship Committee, the Shelter Committee and the Clerk compose this committee, which is tasked with learning how to reopen the Meetinghouse. The committee is working with Trustees and Friends Seminary to learn how the communities will reopen together. As we look to reopen the shelter, the Shelter Committee is working with the Property Committee, the NYQM office and The Trustees Committee to address concerns of safety. We are also looking to give the shelter its own dedicated space in the basement of the central building. We have not committed to a date to reopen the buildings, but are looking at ways the community can meet together both virtually and safely in person. We will reopen the meetinghouse when we are led.

During this time we continue to stay in community with each other and support each other. We have virtual committee meetings with each other. We speak with each other. We come to the assistance of each other with medicine, medical supplies and trips to doctors. We continue to learn how to be a more loving community.

In Friendship,

Glenn Josey
Clerk, Fifteenth Street Monthly Meeting