

Ministry and Worship Annual Report 2022

The Ministry and Worship Committee (M&W), made up of members of the Religious Society of Friends, supports the spiritual life of the Meeting. It also fosters understanding of Friends' principles and practices, in collaboration with other committees.

Since our last annual report in December 2021, COVID-19 variants transmitted in Orange County have continued to constrain our ability to gather in person for worship and fellowship. In consultation with Buildings & Grounds, Hospitality, and Children and Youth Education committees, the Ministry & Worship Committee continues to offer options for worship and religious education on First Days: early meeting for worship in the meeting room at 8:15, Forum via Zoom at 9:30, late meeting for worship in the meeting room at 11:00 with window fans enhancing ventilation, worship outside when weather permits at 11:00, worship online at 11:00 via Zoom, worship at Carol Woods at 11:00, and First Day School at 11:15 on the school building porch and playground. Masks are lovingly requested on Meeting property and social distancing has been practiced. Friends attended the meeting offerings with which they were comfortable, with health, safety and well-being in mind.

Meanwhile, the Zoom subcommittee, under the care of M&W, has consistently supported online meetings for worship on First Days, committee meetings, and events on the Zoom platform. Their service to the Meeting has been invaluable.

The Ministry & Worship Committee (M&W) carefully considered ways to enable all of us to worship together, understanding that many Friends are not able to attend meetings for worship in person. M&W has heard members and attenders lift up visions, values, opportunities, and concerns about worship and community.

The Zoom subcommittee has regularly informed M&W about evolving opportunities for blending online and in-person worship, informed by experiences of other Friends Meetings across the country. The Zoom subcommittee tested equipment and held four trial meetings for worship that successfully blended Zoom participation with in-person attendance in the meeting room. The subcommittee applied borrowed equipment to achieve blended worship, and identified the best technical components to recommend for purchase by Chapel Hill Friends Meeting: computer, web camera, monitor (TV), microphones, and tablet. Those components were purchased in September.

M&W sat with the blending opportunity for months, with attention to the quality of worship and the quality of our Meeting as a welcoming community. In August, M&W reached unity to recommend that the Meeting purchase the equipment recommended by the Zoom subcommittee to enable blended worship. M&W recommended starting in September by holding blended meetings once a month for four months, with technical support from the Zoom committee. After four months, M&W plans to revisit the recommendation regarding the frequency of blended meetings and requirements for a technician to operate the equipment in

the meeting room. This recommendation was approved by Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business in August.

For ongoing responsibilities, the M&W Committee:

- Oversees the quality of Meeting for Worship and Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business (MWAB), mindful of the living silence and vocal ministry.
- Opens and closes each Meeting for Worship and organizes announcements.
- Stimulates reflection through queries, with one read each month at MWAB, during Meeting for Worship once a month, and printed monthly in the newsletter.
- Arranges activities (with other committees) to enhance the spiritual life of the Meeting, including small discussion groups, worship groups, retreats, and workshops.
- Supports Prayers for Healing/Holding in the Light on the second and fourth Wednesday evenings a month, with gratitude to the Care & Counsel Committee for assuming responsibility for this ministry.
- Provides responses to questions about the Religious Society of Friends and arranges clearness committees as requested by individuals seeking clearness on spiritual issues.
- Receives letters requesting membership, convenes the related clearness committees and reports recommendations to MWAB. This year we led a clearness committee for Karen Jessee and recommended membership, approved MWAB.
- Attends to the needs of visitors and new attenders in collaboration with the Hospitality Committee.
- Participates in clearness committees organized by the Care and Counsel Committee leading to the marriage of couples under the care of the Meeting.
- Nurtures other committees as they do the Meeting's work; examples in 2022 were outreach to Peace & Justice and Buildings & Grounds Committees.
- Plans (with other committees) celebrations of significant events in the spiritual life of the Meeting. These include our annual Christmas Eve Worship, Worship Sharing with Attention to Animals; Meeting for Worship with Attention to Graduating Seniors (Sutton King in 2022).
- Holds the annual Clerks' Retreat, attended in person on the school house porch in September. The retreat's agenda is created in collaboration with the Clerk of the Meeting with ideas from Committee Clerks on topics of interest. Focus is on helping old and new clerks renew or gain skills in the process of discernment and clerking a spirit-led meetings.
- Organizes the annual Spiritual State of the Meeting gathering, attended virtually by 15 in October. This is an opportunity to reflect on issues while sharing deeply with others on queries selected by M&W and from the Piedmont Friends Yearly Meeting and Fellowship (Piedmont Friends). The committee reports the results to MWAB and PFYM. The report to Piedmont Friends includes a count of the overall number of Friends and attenders in attendance at Meetings for Worship, Forum, and First Day School throughout one month. This October we averaged 6 inside at early meeting, 40 inside at late meeting, 25 on Zoom, 8 at Carol Woods retirement center, and 6 in First Day

School. We note, sadly, the absence from worship of attenders from Orange Correctional Center, though we are heartened by attendance by returned citizens.

- Consults with the Zoom subcommittee, formed in April 2020, under the care of M&W.
- Oversees some of the meeting's annual expenditures on affiliations, services, and benevolences. This year M&W recommended expenditures of \$200 to Friends Journal for listing CHFM among monthly meetings in North America and support of QuakerSpeak video production, \$350 to the Piedmont Friends Yearly Meeting and Fellowship (not including leadership development support for attendance at in-person events), and \$600 to Friends General Conference as a monthly meeting affiliation contribution. For benevolences related to ministry, M&W recommended gifts to two organizations:
 - \$150 to the School of the Spirit, with which CHFM has a longstanding relationship (schoolofthespirit.org). The School of the Spirit Ministry serves all those who wish to be more faithful listeners and responders to the work of the Inward Teacher.
 - \$100 to Friends for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Concerns (FLGBTQC, <https://flgbtqc.herokuapp.com/>), the North American Quaker faith community that affirms that of God in all people, draws sustenance from each other and from the Spirit for work and life in the world, and learns that radical inclusion and radical love bring further light to Quaker testimony and life. CHFM has supported FLGBTQC for years, affirming CHFM's practice of joyfully embracing the Light within all, made visible through the participation of all people, no exceptions.

M&W expresses gratitude to Publications and Communications Committee for the ongoing maintenance of the Chapel Hill Friends Meeting website, weekly e-news, and In the Light messages.

With great appreciation, we thank Madelyn Ashley and Alice Carlton for their faithful service on M&W. We are grateful for new members Susan Inglis, Jennifer Leeman, and Jasmine McKewen who began serving in July.

Jeff Brown, clerk for the Ministry and Worship Committee, Matt Drake, Dottie Heninger, Susan Inglis, Jennifer Leeman, Jasmine McKewen, Carolyn White, and Ann Miller, *ex-officio*.