**Baltimore Yearly Meeting Spiritual Formation Program**

**Annual Report for 2024**

The Spiritual Formation Working Group (SFWG) continues to care for the Baltimore Yearly Meeting (BYM) Spiritual Formation Program (SFP) in partnership with the BYM staff and the many Friends who participate in the program’s annual retreats, local meeting groups, and the monthly program offered via the Zoom videoconferencing platform. In all its manifestations, the SFP continues to grow and connect more Friends to the experiences of personal spiritual deepening in, with, and for community.

During the 2023-24 program year, we offered our fall and spring retreats at the beautiful Claggett Center in Adamstown, Maryland. Our September retreat drew 29 Friends from 10 local meetings. In May, we welcomed 47 Friends from 16 local meetings for a weekend of worship, personal reflection, sharing in spiritual friendship, singing, and time in the beautiful natural setting. We gathered for our closing session in the circling Elm Dance, choreographed by Anastasia Geng and carried through Joanna Macy’s “Work that Reconnects.” The dance and its accompanying song connected us as spiritual beings honoring interdependence, healing, and resiliency. At retreats, and in other program experiences, we seek a widening array of voices and experiences that deepen our understanding of Spirit and how Spirit manifests in our own and others’ lives.

Beyond these twice-annual retreats, the number of local meetings hosting year-long monthly programs expanded. Herndon Friends began a new program, while Homewood Friends renewed their program. We also visited with Deer Creek Friends at their invitation. Members of the SFWG help local meetings to start their programs through information sessions and mini-retreats, which can be offered in-person or via Zoom at the meeting’s request. As we close this program year, we are welcoming Midlothian Friends to the SFP. Friends from Sacramento Friends Meeting (Pacific Yearly Meeting) also reached out to us after learning about the SFP and will be launching their local program in September with our support.

In May, we celebrated the close of the third year of our monthly program offered via Zoom to Friends across–and beyond–the geographic reach of BYM. Just over 30 Friends connected with one another through this program format, enjoying monthly fellowship as a “large group” and a second time each month in smaller spiritual friendship groups. This program format continues to meet a great need among Friends who are geographically isolated or whose meetings cannot support a local group. We will continue to offer this format in the coming year.

We have a vibrant working group caring for the SFP, drawing upon the gifts of many Friends who sustain this ministry. We continue to welcome other Friends to join in this ministry to help support the program’s ongoing evolution. The program connects us in our deepening lives in community, honoring differences and lifting up that which unites us. In all this work and learning, we are grateful for the support we receive from the General Secretary and the entire staff of Baltimore Yearly Meeting.