

Annual Report 2020

This report covers things since 2018, since we've been derelict regarding writing reports.

After 2017's year of research, we wrote up the results of our research into best-practices and published them on QuakerOutreach.com, on the basis that yearly meetings ought to share their findings with each other. (There've been contributions to that site from members of New England and Britain yearly meetings, as well.)

Each year, the committee coordinated participation of 8 local meetings in DC's Pride festivities. In 2019, Trans Pride was added to the list (along with Capital Pride's Parade and Festival and Black Pride). We continued to have rainbow temporary tattoos with the words "cherish that of God in everyone." In 2018, we added a button maker with pre-printed templates with sayings such as "this little Light of mine" and "I see God in you," which people could color with colored pencils before assembly. This was canceled in 2020 due to the pandemic.

We have not received many requests from meetings to visit and talk through outreach strategy. We did visit Nottingham QM in 2018, where we talked about narrowing in on what your meeting does especially well and ways of making the meetinghouse look less empty (since emptiness can be off-putting).

We have been in touch with Mid-Ohio Valley Friends Meeting about their interest in joining BYM. We had been coordinating with them about the process for transferring meetings from another yearly meeting. We'd also planned on their visiting Interim Meeting in March, before the pandemic hit. Things have generally been set aside at the moment on this front.

We continue to have a concern for the BYM's website. A space for already-Quakers to find information on committees is needed, of course, but the website doesn't serve potential-Quakers well. The web address is difficult to remember, and the size of it is overwhelming. We wish we could have a second, seeker-focused website, but we know there are barriers to doing this. For one, we'd need to figure out what memorable thing to put as the web address. (This brings to memory the old discussion about yearly meeting renaming, or in this case something milder and less-legally-binding: rebranding, just as NEYM brands themselves "Quakers in New England" and the other BYM brands themselves "Quakers in Britain.") Second, building a website can range greatly in price, depending on how much work the vendor is putting in prior to design, such as keyword research and copy writing, and on whether a brand (colors, logo, voice, etc.) have been established. Going by what NEYM spent, it would be a relatively large expenditure to do it right, and budgeting for website refreshes over the course of several years might be called for. We consequently feel the committee can only advocate for the need but not actually do anything about it at this point (especially given pandemic budgeting).

We have discussed the possibility of Zoom-based webinar-style (single-session) inquirers classes, which would end with helping people find their local meeting. Actually writing up a script/slideshow and choosing a presenter hasn't occurred yet, though. Now that everyone is accustomed to Zoom, this seems like a good time.

We had started on a plan to provide pin-back buttons at annual session, which people could take and wear out in public in hopes of inspiring questions from seekers. In an era where everyone stays home, this plan has been back-burnered.

We believe making it easy for people who are already interested in Friends to find the local meeting and then stay (that is, welcoming them well!) is even more important than advertising schemes. What's the point in bringing people in once, if they're put off on their first visit? Consequently, we've had someone ex-officio at Growing Diverse Leadership meetings. The Working Group on the Civil & Human Rights of Transgender and Non-Binary Persons, seeing a need to ensure our own meetings are pleasant atmospheres for gender minorities, asked to be taken under the care of Advancement & Outreach. We approved.

In June 2019, we also took under our care the Growing Our Meetings Working Group, charged with facilitating discussions around attitudes toward growth within monthly meetings.

The internet communications working group, which is also under the care of our committee, is not currently active due to lack of clarity about the interest among monthly meetings in receiving advice about internet communications.

In our new era of all-Zoom-all-the-time, it seems we have an opportunity to visit more meetings more easily, if they'd like to hear from us.