

## **Friends Meeting of Washington (FMW)**

### **Report of the Religious Education Committee for June 2015-June 2016**

#### **Presented at the June Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business**

**Committee members:** Kim Acquaviva (Clerk), Michael Beer, Betsy Bramon, Jane Connor, Anita Drever, Nicole Else-Quest, Carl Johnson, Carrie Mitchell, Virginia Avanesyan (Youth Program Coordinator and *ex officio* committee member)

The Religious Education committee cares deeply for the spiritual lives of the children in our Meeting and we rejoice in how much they bring life and Spirit to our Meeting. FDS and youth programs at Friends Meeting of Washington have continued to grow and deepen in the twelve months since our last report, thanks to the ongoing commitment of our community. The following describes our progress and programming during the period from June 2015 through June 2016:

#### **Nursery – Head of Nursery: Makai Kellogg**

The Meeting offers child care to our littlest attenders – those from birth through 4 years of age - each week during 10:30 Meeting for Worship as well as during the monthly Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business. Our nursery continues to serve a growing body of Quaker families and visitors to FMW, thanks to the ongoing leadership of Makai Kellogg, Childcare/Nursery Coordinator. Makai supervises all staff in the nursery and ensures the hygiene and physical safety of the nursery environment in addition to welcoming families in the sensitive and warm manner we have become accustomed to. Our nursery is well staffed a rotating team of paid caregivers providing care to a growing number of young children in the Meeting. We continue to provide skilled childcare for special events at FMW and are grateful to the Meeting for approving the Religious Education budgets that have made this possible. We are also deeply appreciative of Makai Kellogg for her work as Head of Nursery. Her energy, enthusiasm, and commitment to providing exceptional care to the Meeting's children are priceless gifts.

#### **Lower Elementary – Coordinators: Carrie Mitchell and Anita Drever**

The Lower Elementary, the “Quakes”(LE) class at First Day Program supports the religious education of children ages 4 to 7 years old. This group has an average attendance of 10 children of FMW members and attenders, as well as parents of School for Friends. Many parents join the sessions. There are always two teachers for each class. We start our program together with Upper Elementary by lighting a candle and having a silent worship in a circle. We typically have introductions and then engage in activities. Stories often serve as an anchor with craft/art projects that follow.

#### **Upper Elementary – Coordinators: Michael Beer and Virginia Avanesyan.**

The Upper Elementary (UE) group focuses on the religious education of children ages 8 to 11years old. Attendance has averaged about 4. There are always two adult leads/teachers for every First Day, and we continue to have a number of volunteers who help make the UE class a

dynamic and Spirit-filled learning community for our youth. Activities this year included making a video on climate change, inventing a game called Quaker Bingo, exploring ethical values, baking every third Sunday and leading the birthday celebration for the meeting, watching videos about Quaker history, learning and performing songs, yoga, and making cards.

### **Overview of Programming in Lower and Upper Elementary Classes**

Programming for elementary and pre-k children was rich and varied. Yoga, Quaker history, Music, Service Projects, and making films on Climate change, peace and inventing a Quaker board game. A longer list of activities is available at the end of this report. Our youth benefited greatly from the knowledge, experience, and passion shared by our special guests, and we are deeply appreciative of the gifts of time, talent, and Spirit each of them shared with our youth.

### **Junior Young Friends/Tweens & Teens – Coordinator: Kim Acquaviva**

This year the Junior Young Friends group (AKA “Tweens and Teens”) invested considerable time and energy into getting to know one another more deeply. In the third-floor “teen lounge” where we meet, the Tweens & Teens engaged in a multi-week “Philosophy for Quakers” workshop facilitated by Carl Johnson, learning how to pose and answer philosophical questions. One week, the Tweens & Teens spent First Day morning at DC Central Kitchen preparing food for local institutions (including homeless shelters, senior centers, and schools). This year the Tweens & Teens also: played board games to build community; talked about consent, sexual assault, and the significance of these issues to youth as Quaker; discussed ways to share their gifts and energy with the Meeting as a whole; talked about the testimony of integrity, swearing oaths, and telling lies; participated in outdoor Meeting for Worship; assisted with the Easter egg hunt; volunteered at the Shoebox Project; and learned about the Peace Tax Fund from J.E. McNeil. Although there are always two or more adults present, the Tweens & Teens Group continues to evolve toward being a youth-led experience. It’s been a joy to watch the tweens and teens grow in their quest to figure out who they are, how they fit within the world as a whole, and how they can use their gifts to make that world a better place. The Tweens & Teens give particular thanks to the steadfast volunteers who have given their time, energy, and enthusiasm to the group throughout the year.

### **Multi-generational Meeting for Learning.**

Every 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of the month, all kids joined a multi-generational meeting for learning. Events included: a neighborhood clean up and nature walk, Coins for Quoins to raise funds for the meeting, making cards to hold people in the light, and singing a song for the Meeting.

### **Baltimore Yearly Meeting**

Our Yearly Meeting (BYM) continues to have a very active youth program that includes regular weekend retreats at Monthly Meetings throughout BYM for those in 6<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade – Junior Young Friends – (see <http://jyf.bym-rsf.net>) and those aged 14-20 – Young Friends – (see: <http://yf.bym-rsf.net/>). The BYM programs enable the teens to get to know other younger

Friends from all over the area while practicing lived Quakerism through the regular retreats they have. The next gathering for both Young Friends and Junior Young Friends is Annual Session (<http://www.bym-rsf.org/events/annualsession>). It takes place from August 3<sup>rd</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> Hood College. Rising 6-8th graders stay in dorm rooms with their parents, but gather throughout each day for various activities. Rising 9th graders have the choice of participating in the middle school program or the high school program. Rising 10-12th graders and FAPs stay in rooms all on the same floor, and build a lived community like a conference. If they are 18 years old, high school graduates have the choice of participating in the high school program, or the Young Adult Program (18-35 years old). Friends may contact Alison Duncan, BYM Youth Programs Manager, at [youthprograms@bym-rsf.org](mailto:youthprograms@bym-rsf.org) for more information.

### **Adult Religious Education Study Group – Coordinated by John Scales**

During the past 12 months, the study group met generally once or twice a month on Sundays before the Meeting for Worship. It benefitted by the contributions of new, as well as long-standing members, as they shared in their readings and led discussions.

Over more than a decade of its meetings, it has considered a wide range of topics of interests chosen to enhance appreciation of contributions Quakers and others make to individual spiritual growth and society. Sessions over the years have addressed Quaker history and Quaker leaders (e.g. George Fox, John Woolman), social activists with Quaker backgrounds (e.g. Lucretia Mott, Susan B. Anthony, Bayard Rustin), and writers with Quaker influences (e.g., James Michener, Thornton Wilder, Walt Whitman). Religions such as Hinduism, Judaism, and Buddhism have been considered in terms of their tenets and differences and similarities to Quaker beliefs and approaches. Since June 2015, led by members of the study group, we have focused on the history of Nantucket Quakers and the life activities and extensive writings of Rufus Jones, Quaker teacher, writer, mystic and activist.

### **Youth Programs Coordinator**

The Religious Education Committee is very pleased with the work Michael Beer has done this year in his role as Youth Programs Coordinator. The First Day Programs continue to grow under his leadership and coordination, and his organizational skills have been critically important to the success of the First Day Programs this year. We are grateful to Michael for all that he has done for the children of FMW and we look forward to his continued work in the role of Youth Programs Coordinator in the year to come. Michael's passion for high-quality First Day programming combined with his deep understanding of and commitment to Quaker values makes him a treasured asset in his role as Youth Programs Coordinator.

### **Summer Plans**

This summer, FMW will offer play for the elementary grades as well as nursery care for the youngest friends.

## **Discussions Regarding Future Programming**

The Religious Education Committee has been exploring the possibility of incorporating the Unitarian Universalists' "Our Whole Lives" human sexuality education program into our First Day Programs. If FMW were to do this, it would comprise the entirety of the First Day Program for Tweens & Teens for a year and would require an investment of time and money from the Meeting in having adult leaders trained. Before moving further down this path, the R.E. Committee sent two surveys – one to Tweens & Teens and one to their parents – to assess their interest in this and other programming possibilities for the coming year. The survey is still open but the results so far are pretty revealing:

We asked tweens and teens the following question: "If the program for the Tweens and Teens group for 2016-17 consisted of twenty-eight (28) one-hour sessions of "Our Whole Lives: Lifespan Sexuality Education," how would this affect your attendance at First Day School?" So far, 100% of the Tweens & Teens who responded to the survey answered, "I would DEFINITELY come to First Day School LESS OFTEN than I do now." When asked, "If Friends Meeting of Washington offered twenty-eight (28) one-hour sessions of "Our Whole Lives: Lifespan Sexuality Education" AFTER First Day School (from 12pm to 1pm), how likely would you be to sign up to participate?," 100% of tween and teen respondents answered "Never going to happen!" In-person discussions with the tweens and teens have indicated universal opposition to coming to First Day School if the focus were shifted to human sexuality education for a year, with several of the youth saying, "this shouldn't be like school."

In light of the strong feelings among tweens and teens regarding shifting the First Day Program to a focus on human sexuality for a year, and in light of the strong interest from several adults on Religious Education to offer Our Whole Lives to FMW, the Religious Education Committee will be exploring the possibility of paying to send several adults to get trained so that they can facilitate an "Our Whole Lives" series for adults (both parents and non-parents).

## **Conclusion**

The Religious Education Committee is excited about the progress and programming in FMW's youth and adult programs over the past 12 months, and we look forward to another vibrant year of religious education. We remain grateful to the Meeting for its generous financial support of our nursery, First Day Program, and staffing. Thank you to all who have made our programs a success during the 2015-16 year!

**2015-2016 A partial list of activities and topics accomplished through the FMW Religious Education Program – Submitted by Youth Programs Coordinator Michael Beer**

**Quakes, Ages 4 through 7**

William Penn's story  
Lucretia Mott's story and song  
John Woolman story and choices  
Miss Rumphius story  
Chinese New Year and making lanterns  
Allen Jay and the Underground Railroad' and poems from Ogden Nash.  
Jesus of Nazareth birth story  
Valentine's Cards  
Mother's Day Cards and Roses  
Scars, injuries, and healing and resilience  
George Fox and non-cooperation  
Obadiah and Rachel.  
Making Videos for Peace on International Peace Day  
Eric Carle's 'A House for Hermit Crab', particularly good for talking about transitions to new homes  
Music/singing: George Fox, Simple Gifts, Magic Penny, Love round, Sending You Light, This Little Light of Mine  
Decorating Stepping Stones for the vegetable garden.  
Milestones

**Upper Elementary, Ages 8-11**

Improvisational theatre, mostly led by the kids  
Quaker Bingo, Invented and developed by the kids  
May Day baskets and the power of giving  
Sharing our scars injuries and working towards healing and resilience  
Valentine's activities for those we love  
Yoga  
3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday Meeting Birthday celebrations with the baking of Cupcakes, cake, cookies, pumpkin bread, monthly  
Parable of the Leaven  
Sparkling Still Story  
Music...singing... George Fox, Simple Gifts, Magic Penny, Love round, Sending You Light, This Little Light of Mine  
Burning our names onto wooden nametags  
Ukelele 101  
Quaker Monteverde Community presentation by special guests  
Skype talk with Friends Peace Teams in Nepal after the earthquake  
Making videos to send to Climate Summit  
Milestones

**Tweens, Teens, AKA Quaker Ukulele Collective**

Skype talk with Friends Peace Teams in Nepal after the earthquake

Quaker Monteverde Community presentation by special guests  
Philosophy 101 series. Guest Presenter  
Discussions on Conscientious Objection, Guest presenters  
Discussions on topics of health, relationships, death, and much more mostly determined by the kids  
Central Kitchen Service Project  
Photo Display for Folks in Meeting

**Multi-generational Activities**

Introduction to Quaker summer overnight camps  
Syria coat drive for refugees  
Accessibility as a human right, as a value, and also about appreciating our different abilities.  
Pushing wheel chairs around campus. Guest speakers.  
Planting vegetable seedlings.  
Camp Catoctin Retreat  
Cooperative Parachute games  
Collecting and sorting Coins for Quoins to support the Capital Campaign  
Shoebox project for the Homeless  
New Years activity for the entire Meeting focusing on new behaviors  
Super Bowl Sunday retreat to White Tail for Skiing and Snowboarding  
Neighborhood Clean-up and Nature Treasure Hunt  
Easter Eggs