

Abington Quarterly Meeting

Second month Fourth, 2017 at Gwynedd Meeting

Abington MM 8: Byberry MM 0: Gwynedd MM 25: Horsham 3 + 2 children: Norristown MM 5

Plymouth MM 9 + 1 child: Richland FM 2: Unami MM 3: Upper Dublin MM 4: Foulkways 0:

Pottstown WG 1: Guests 14

The meeting opened with worship at 9:05 AM., with 60 Friends, 14 Guests, 3 children present. The clerk thanked Gwynedd members for their sensitivity in arranging child care for the morning and for their pastoral care offered during meeting for business, and additionally, for lunch. The clerk asked for approval to put the **AQM clerk's annual report** forward to the next business, as well as the **AQM Worship and Ministry** report; the meeting approved.

The clerk summarized a **concern of Upper Dublin Meeting** regarding one of their members, who has appealed to the Quarter in regard to her release from membership. This session, as named in Faith and Practice under the member's right to appeal to quarterly meeting, focused on Avis Wanda McClinton's perspective. As clerk explained, it is presented as a necessary opening with further conversation to continue in forthcoming venues. Avis Wanda McClinton, who has been a member for seven years, is the only Friend of color in her meeting, She believes that Upper Dublin has chosen to be a white meeting, and that this is unacceptable. She feels that she has been subject to abuse and cruelty. She is following a leading to protect the remains of unknown African Americans in Upper Dublin's burial ground, and stated that God has not released her from this leading. She wants to worship in the place where her ancestors are buried and doesn't want to be anywhere else. She expressed deep hurt at what has happened. She asked for a YM committee to be established to sort out how things have proceeded at Upper Dublin.. Another speaker expressed the opinion that sometimes we have difficulty hearing each other, and that our young people are not staying with us because they have given up on us to work on the issues of today. She believes that Avis is a mirror who shows us ourselves, disrupting our sense of white supremacy. Our tendency to say "we can't do anything" is an excuse for our unwillingness to take risks. Rather than Avis being released from membership, this Friend believes that it is Upper Dublin that should be released.

The meeting for worship with a concern for business resumed after meeting for worship. Heads and representatives of Friends schools who had been invited to speak ceded their time to continuing consideration of Upper Dublin's concern. We thank them for their sensitivity and grace. The clerk asked for a return to prayer.

One Upper Dublin member believes that lack of understanding of our process has led to misunderstanding. More time may have been taken in Upper Dublin MM for acquainting Avis with Quaker process. Avis stated that she had been told to sit in the back of the room and that blacks are less civilized than whites. She maintained that Upper Dublin. is run by one man. She returned to the meeting in good faith after its sabbatical, and was sent a letter withdrawing her

membership. She stated that the other members had signed a declaration that they wanted a white meeting, and that Upper Dublin members stole money from her ancestors (a collection taken for maintaining the burial ground). A new member remarked that she has seen a willingness on part of Upper Dublin to try to find a way forward in peace. A member believes that unhelpful media have taken over the situation.

A visitor stated that the media exposure and the vitriol previously referred to are her responsibility; she felt that much silencing was going on and posted to Facebook page to counter it: Quakers Speaking on Racism. She stated that Upper Dublin had told Avis she should go to mediation or she would be removed from membership, and Upper Dublin was not willing to participate except for one person. She continued that the meeting changed the locks on the doors and called the police on Avis, and that it decided to stop giving money to members to attend events like the FGC Gathering or PYM sessions. She wants Upper Dublin to be censured. She asked us to invite Crossroads Ministries, a Mennonite group that focuses on racism in churches, to meet with the Quarter. A man: Ayesha said that ministry in worship is not silence.

The clerk of Upper Dublin stated that she has never wanted the meeting to be all-white, and that she doesn't think the cloak of racism should be put onto it. She spoke of her work in racial and socio-economic justice, including prison work. The clerk of another meeting reminded us that we do have a process to resolve disputes; this is a challenge we all need to participate in. Something is broken. Typically things are threshed out in a smaller meeting. Another commend: we can't go on not responding to people who are in pain. They can't get rid of their anger if we don't listen. The person who shakes us up should be treated with respect and honor, and it's not the end of the world if our meeting is disrupted and doesn't hear beautiful platitudes all the time. Hurts will come to the surface. It's part of the process. Two members voiced that this is not all about racism, there are other interpersonal concerns. An issue was voiced: if the member were "white", Friend said, the membership release would go forward. Another: can the Quarterly Meeting override Upper Dublin's decision? Clerk explained that the Quarter is a support for conveying our work in the Divine. A monthly meeting's decision is final with the prayer that we are all moving together within the Divine. Another: we have to own up to being broken; so that the conversation can begin equally, without a sense of superiority. We are not perfect people. He stated his opposition to someone having to leave the community for there to be peace. We can't dialogue with anger. Another: the process will be painful for all of us, from all perspectives. A visitor pointed out that her meeting uses a threshing session. It seems as if that is what we need. The clerk asked if Friends would be comfortable with allowing more time to work through the situation, and the meeting agreed. The following minute was approved:

The Quarter requests that Upper Dublin not move forward within the customary time frame of a release from membership while we are considering this matter.

Two visitors offered that we need an audit to help us look at ourselves more closely. AQ Clerk confirmed, as did YM clerks, that in fact Crossroads Ministries is in conversation with YM for carrying forward an institutional audit. To further clarify: PYM has contracted with Crossroads Ministries to provide anti-racism training for our three governing councils, Nominating, Quaker Life and Administrative, as well as the Granting committee and Personnel committee. PYM is in the process of creating a steering committee to oversee an institutional audit. The steering committee will select the consultant who will lead it.

We agreed to separate session to thresh the conflict at Upper Dublin. This current business session was necessary to Avis's right to appeal. The threshing session will be under the leadership of a dedicated group of facilitators that would be genuinely representative and skilled in facilitating situations of racial as well as other interpersonal conflict. Another recommended that there be some articulation of standards made clear before the session, in announcements and in print, and that we aren't going to get anywhere unless we create a space that is safe for everyone.

Amelia thanked Friends for voicing their thoughts and reactions, including the expressions of pain and asked that all continue to carry forward in discernment from this meeting.

Junior and Middle Friends Conferences: Karen Shanoski reported that a contract is being worked out with Westtown School, which can let us have the space we need (difficult for George School because of their summer program). Westtown will cost more. The following minute was approved:

At its session held Second Month fifth, 2017, Abington Quarterly Meeting approved support of the Abington Quarter Youth Conferences' application to the Abington Quarterly Meeting Fund for \$3000.00 to support the Junior Friends and Middle School Friends Conference and Faith and Leadership programs. The meeting approved an application to the Yearly Meeting Membership Development Fund for the same amount.

The meeting approved the appointment of Russ Bishop (Gwynedd) to the Quarterly Meeting Trustees, and we minute our appreciation for the service of John Gist thereon.

The clerk asked that we close with a moment of prayer for where we are and for how we will move forward in the Light.

Amelia Diamond, Clerk

Judith Inskeep, Recording Clerk