

Homewood Peace & Social Justice Committee
2017 ANNUAL REPORT
February 28, 2018

1. What are some of the main ways you spent your time during the past (calendar) year?

Major activities.

- Bail Reform: The Court Watch continued, anchored by Kathryn Munnell. This year the witness led to a formal research project conducted by the Office of the Public Defender, with which meeting members participated. Bail reform legislative advocacy: we conducted a public educational forum and offered call-your-representatives guidance to the Meeting community, in February 2017.
- We continued the Black Lives Matter theme of the Friday vigil; modifying banners and signs at some junctions to add, We Are All One People, Love thy Neighbor (no exceptions) and Baltimore Ceasefire
- Hosted Peaceable City conversation on Increasing the Peace on August 26. This brought together 40 secular and religious peace builders from around Baltimore City, to discuss the experience and disciplines of peace building. Planned and hosted by Rosetta Graham and Jo Brown, held in the Community Room of Heritage Run. Jo provided outreach and facilitation.

Organized support

- The committee facilitated Homewood participation and Quaker presence in the Women's March in Washington DC in January 2017.
- We developed specific budget recommendations to HFM for peace and justice donations to local, national and international organizations.
- The committee held coat drive for Tubman House in December. We were able to provide about 20 coats for children, youth and adults.

Ongoing Activities

1. Weekly Friday night vigil, with primary banners *Black Lives Matter* and *We are All One People*. Responses continue to be overwhelmingly positive, and appreciation voiced to vigilers in the form of waves, honks, called Thank you's and 'we love you', and several conversations with people who stopped to talk with us. We enjoyed the faithful participation of some Stony Run Friends and some new faces from Homewood from time to time.
2. Periodic Book Study groups: 8-10 individuals met for five sessions to discuss *THIS IS AN UPRISING* in the spring, and in November, 5-8 people met to read selected chapters of *FIT FOR FREEDOM NOT FOR FRIENDSHIP*.

3. *Baltimore Ceasefire and Peace Challenge* including coordinated vigil and film showings w Arts work group, first weekends in August and November
4. *BQPJC*: We continued the practice of meeting /working jointly with Stony Run committee as the Baltimore Quaker Peace & Justice Committee. The joint committee meets monthly, and augments the Homewood committee of 4 – 6 individuals with another dozen active members who together participate in:
 - a. court watch, make shared decisions re wicker basket/social order box (weekly collections for peace/justice work not in our Meeting budgets),
 - b. work on the projects of racial equity in criminal justice reform in Baltimore and Maryland (bail reform, solitary confinement, MAJR, community education and lobbying),
 - c. support to local organizations doing peace and justice work (Tubman House and Unified Efforts: anti-violence out-of-school for youth in Penn North)
5. *Addressing requests* for financial support and building use from the Meeting relating to social concerns.

2. How would you describe the spiritual state of your committee?

This year we have weathered difficult dynamics around committee direction.

All of our meetings begin and end with worship.

The Committee remains deeply committed to issues of peace with justice. We strive to move forward as we discern our collective spiritual leadings. We grapple with how we can be useful in building the beloved community as peacefully and racially just, as a still mostly-white faith group. In our meetings and our committee undertakings, we strive to sit with and learn from the discomforts, and to lift up and appreciate the enrichments, that come from acting on this deep concern. We find considerable joy in this process of discovery and (slow) change.

3. What were the major challenges you faced? Major strengths that helped you?

Challenges

- A persistent challenge has been to manage the business as the Homewood committee with our engagement as part of the joint committee. After a couple of years of being well-integrated with the Joint committee, we ended the year with less clarity about our collective focus. A retreat is planned for April 2018.
- The HFM committee have had difficulty meeting all together as a committee, in addition to the monthly BQPJC meetings, due to our schedules, travel, health and family care needs of all of the members.
- We are concerned about the deepening militarism in national discourse and policy, yet feel we lack the people-power to offer leadership to the Meeting community on these

core tenets of the Peace Testimony. Given our limited number we devote our focus to local matters where we think we might have some impact in concert with others. Thus we have opted to lift up FCNL and AFSC work at the national level.

Strengths

- The committee unite in clearness to focus on Baltimore City and the major problems of racism, violence and poverty, which we see as the 'seeds of war' to which the Peace Testimony is directed. We are mindful of the warlike conditions in some of the neighborhoods where our supported community programs are active.
- The members are seriously dedicated to living the peace testimony.

4. What are your hopes and plans for the future?

We hope to recruit additional members.

We plan to continue to participate in the citywide Baltimore Peace Challenge with Baltimore CeaseFire.

The Court Watch is considering in what ways to go forward, possibly with advocacy before the state legislature, perhaps with an extended investigation.

Responses/Reflections on the Meeting's September retreat on HFM purpose

To a significant degree, the responses collected from that retreat inquiry, What is Homewood Meeting for, were both inward-looking and outward-looking. We unite strongly with the sentiments that Homewood offers spiritual community with others, connecting with the Inner Light/ Divine, and that in doing so it provides opportunities for us to be challenged and transformed; the corporately-worshipping community supports our spiritual practices of seeking inner peace, and faithful courage for witness and action for peace and justice, corporately and in our individual lives.

Current Members of the Peace and Justice Committee:

Phil Furnas

Kathryn Munnell

Jo Brown

Louise Hopkins

Jody Hopkins

Barbara Bezdek (clerk)