

DRAFT Full Proposal to the Thomas H. and Mary Williams Shoemaker Fund
For a multi-year project between November 2022 and November 2025
Submitted by Byberry Monthly Meeting October 15th 2022

9.24.2022

Objective: With the help of the Shoemaker Fund, Friends have begun the work that will be required to transform Byberry Friends Meeting – and subsequently other regional meetings -- into sites of spiritual and social power, beginning in Northeast Philadelphia, Lower Bucks and Lower Montgomery Counties.

Two years ago, a grant from the Shoemaker Fund supported great initial progress forward for Byberry Monthly Meeting. A consultant was hired who updated the meeting’s Website, Newsletter, Hospitality practices, and email access. The consultant understood the vision of growth and took tactical measures to increase our visibility. They added Quaker signs to our perimeter fences, mailed postcards to neighboring zip codes as well as to new attenders and visitors. Despite this early momentum, the pandemic intervened and for the sake of health and safety, the consultant contract ended early. In an effort to maintain the momentum gained by having a staff “organizer,” Byberry MM began to partner with Upper Dublin Monthly Meeting in various ways. Although UDMM endured their own set-back when a tornado caused devastating damage to their property, the two meetings combined their hybrid weekly worship, making the experience richer and fuller for both congregations.

So, despite its long and significant history, and major steps forward thanks to The Shoemaker Fund, Byberry was unable to finish the “launch” stage of their development journey. Over that time, membership has hovered at around 17 people, 8 of whom are active in worship and the business of the Meeting. For them, and for several other meetings in Abington Quarter, there is a “struggle.” The struggle is in wanting to grow while not having enough members to embody a community of faith and populate the service roles (volunteers) needed for traditional Quaker processes (Clerk, Recorder, Treasurer) and provide the programs and amenities to be expected from interested members, attenders, and visitors (children’s program, Bible study, website with fresh and helpful information).

- The Pandemic showed us that Byberry and Upper Dublin, operating together, expanded the reach of both and curbed isolation. Zoom Meetings for Worship, “Unplug and Recharge” mid-week meals together, and outdoor worship at both sites helped with this. This partnership also included the following:
 - Philadelphia Interfaith Walk for Peace and Reconciliation—both meetings participated on the Steering Committee.
 - Urgent Call to Friends to Save our Democracy— both meetings participated in the launch of this enormous effort to mobilize Friends in the United States.

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While all of this was taking place, Byberry Friends continued to work on its relationships with area institutions and continued with the renewal of its historic infrastructure. Examples of these efforts include:

- Northeast Philadelphia History Network--A proposal was submitted to the Philadelphia Semi quincennial Commission for a joint project to be completed in 2026.
- PA Historic Preservation and Museum Commission—a Planning grant awarded in 2019 and Byberry Hall’s first phase construction grant was awarded for 2022-2024.
- Preservation Alliance of Greater Philadelphia—Requested Byberry MM to apply for an historic preservation award in 2023.
- Bi-partisan Letters of Support were received for our efforts from the Philadelphia Historical Commission, Philadelphia City Council Representative, Brian O’Neill (R), PA State Senator James Dillon (D), and PA State Representative, Martina White (R).

Over the course of the past year, Byberry elders have worked with support from a Quaker consultant to refine the original vision. They have had deeper interactions with and have convened conversations with Upper Dublin Friends, Abington Quarterly Meeting, and Friends working at other sites that value Quaker visibility (Arch Street Meetinghouse, QVS, PYM). Byberry now aims to reinstate our earlier momentum and incorporate what we learned about the benefits of partnership to navigate adversity. Over the coming three years, Byberry intends to:

- Double the number of weekly attenders at Byberry Friends Meeting from 4 to 8 and increase membership from 17 to 20.
- Using our model as one example, work with Upper Dublin Meeting and Abington Quarter to explore and create models that will work for them, and to collect from us all a list of supports we could ask for from Philadelphia Yearly Meeting.
- Present our outcomes and ideas to Philadelphia Yearly Meeting; ways that Yearly Meeting can better help small and struggling meetings.
- Using Byberry’s historical/cultural resources as a foundation, develop a plan for addressing our full history with Native American and African American communities, and seek responsible ways to heal and go forward.

With financial support for 3 years from the Shoemaker Fund, Byberry Friends Meeting will enact this plan of action:

- Hire a staff person to fill an expanded role, to hold our vision in care and apply the tactics that we have learned are so important for growth. (Job Description attached) \$150,000

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- Support Upper Dublin Meeting's planning process to create their own strategic model that will grow their meeting's membership, spiritual experience and influence, and community presence. \$30,000
- Collaborate with Abington Quarter to help them explore ways and means that they might help their small and struggling meetings grow and borrow from our outcomes. \$20,000

Next steps:

- Consult with Quaker centers at area colleges such as Haverford and Swarthmore, plus Guilford's Quaker Leadership, and the Earlham School of Religion's Center for Congregational Leadership to bring ideas, resources and models to Philadelphia Yearly Meeting and its constituent Monthly Meetings.
- Begin the search for a "Community Engagement Coordinator" to hire so that we can get back on track with our growth trajectory.
- Partner with Upper Dublin Meeting as they create a strategic planning process that will lead to growth and spiritual influence in their region.
- Partner with Abington Quarter to determine how our endeavors might help serve their small and struggling meetings.

We hope that Shoemaker Trustees can see the three-year development steps and outcomes above and share our excitement. In an ideal world, the interactive support, worship, and conversations among area Meetings facing the same challenges will generate plans and models that we have not yet imagined.