

Dear Friends,

The Witness Funds Committee requested grant proposals during January and February of 2025. We met in April to go over the many interesting proposals. We had requests totaling \$107,500 – \$117,500, but unfortunately only have \$100,000 to disburse over the course of the year. This meant that we had to make difficult decisions about how to divide these limited funds. The Quarter has also recently changed our Committee's mandate so that we no longer limit the number of years people and groups can request funds for the same project, thus increasing the amount of money that we are being asked for over time. Through worshipful deliberations we decided on the funding amounts for 7 proposals and asked 3 proposals to resubmit modified proposals in the summer, if they choose to.

These are the groups we were able to fund (mostly partially) again this year:

NYQM African Education Committee to help with the support of more Kisangura students going on for further vocational or academic education. This is the third year of making a grant to this committee. The amount was \$11000.

Davanga Friends School, Kenya: "Since its inception in 2009, Davanga Friends School has stood as a testament to the collective effort and generosity of our Quaker community. Currently, with six classrooms, a teacher's common room, essential water infrastructure, and an administrative office, Davanga Friends School serves over 300 students ranging from Pre-K to 9th grade. We are seeking to add a new classroom to alleviate the strain on existing resources." This is the second year of funding this project. The amount was \$11000

Juri See "is a newly formed data driven watchdog organization, with a mission to uncover judicial corruption in civil court proceedings, using data at scale to drive grassroots investigative journalism and to empower victims in their fight to protect fundamental rights. This application is made by Barbra Masters (the founder of Juri See and a member of Brooklyn Monthly Meeting).

Juri See currently operates as a collective of professional human rights workers, lawyers, journalists, technologists, community organizers, and investigators organizing affected individuals; conducting in-depth investigations and providing data-at-scale to enable evidence-driven reporting and transparency in our shared fight against civil court corruption. We are focused on NY, NJ and CT initially. Though, we expect our platform to be valuable US-wide; and to be available as source code for use for similar international efforts. This is the second year of funding this project. The funding amount was \$10000

These are the new programs we were able to fund (mostly partially):

Food for the Immigrants Rights meetings: this is a project managed by Carl Blumenthal of Brooklyn Meeting to provide meal support to the immigrants' rights advocates who meet weekly to discuss ways to protect immigrants rights. The plan is to provide meals twice a month for this weekly group. The funding amount for the year is \$500.

New Sanctuary Coalition: This grant is primarily to invest in rebuilding the initiative. Some of the things the NSC will focus its efforts on are reestablishing community contacts and a network of volunteers around the work of the NSC. The funds will be used as well to invest in updating and maintaining the NSC website and social media presence. The NSC will have legal training for all volunteers, ensuring they can provide legal support through the reestablished clinic among other things. The NSC does not provide legal advice. The contact people are Lucy Buckman and Lena Parker. The funding amount is \$10000

Brooklyn Soup Kitchen: The Peace and Social Action Committee of Brooklyn Monthly Meeting has noted a leading among the membership to better utilize their facilities in providing direct aid to local folks in need. Committee members are organizing a volunteer-run warming center/soup kitchen which plans to serve simple meals out of the community room. The long-run goal is to operate a rolling lunch and dinner service all week long, with a rotating kitchen staff of 2-3 volunteers. The funding amount is \$10000.

Migrant Solidarity Walk: A solidarity walk from Flushing, Queens to Washington , DC to express the support of the Quaker community for individuals and communities that have been unfairly and unconstitutionally targeted by the new administration. The starting point was chosen to draw attention to the 1657 Flushing Remonstrance, a plea from European settlers of Flushing, Queens to Peter Stuyvesant saying that their Quaker neighbors did not deserve the persecution they were subject to under his administration. The project is being led by a group of regular attenders (and some in the membership process) at Brooklyn Meeting. The funding amount is \$5000.

We decided that the needs of these groups were sufficiently important to fund a total of \$57000, more than half of our budgeted funds for the year. Very few of the groups got the full amount requested. We asked three proposals to reapply with modified proposals for the fall. We told three of the proposals that we could only fund half of their request for the year now and asked them to reapply in the fall as well.

We are now requesting that the Quarter increase our budget line for this year by \$50,000. The Quarter's decision to change the Committee's mandate so that there is no limit to the number of times groups can request fund, means that we will be having many more grant requests with a very limited fixed amount of funds. The requests for this half of the year were significantly more than our annual budget. The political situation in our country right now is causing a great deal of hardship to the most vulnerable members of our society. Friends are being asked now to continue the tradition of Matthew 21:35-40 "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me". "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me".

We look forward to gathering more proposals in June and July for our Fall disbursements. We are thrilled that Beverly Archibald from Manhattan Meeting has joined us. We would be delighted to have members nominated from Monthly Meetings not already represented on the committee.

The Witness Fund Committee

Beverly Archibald, Ed Elder, Jonathan Fluck, Margery Cornwell