

Bellingham Friends Meeting

State of the Meeting report for 2021

Despite the challenges of another year with COVID in our midst, our Meeting has survived and thrived with new attenders on Zoom, and new people joining for midweek worship outside and other worship gatherings. The health and energy of Meeting was recognized and affirmed by supporting one another through illnesses, injuries, and difficulties caused by local flooding, and in the ongoing work of our committees.

The Pastoral Care Committee was the linchpin coordinating much of the activity with attention to personal details, but it was clearly the work of the entire community “being there” for each other that enabled the loving care when it was needed, with meal trains, running requested errands, and even providing gifts to a few Friends who were spending the holidays alone.

We recognize and value the work of the Meetinghouse Committee in securing The Majestic as our new Meeting location, making it possible for us to have a couple-month trial of hybrid worship. It was a tremendous amount of work, and a few Friends gave generously of their time and money, to pay for the necessary technology, to figure out how it works, and to be there every Sunday to manage hybrid worship. It was wonderful that we were able to have in-person worship indoors for a while. Even though many Friends didn't feel comfortable attending in person, the experience of hybrid worship was valuable, and it was special to see the faces of Friends who had not been attending on Zoom but who attended in-person worship. One newer Friend said how impressed she was by the resilience and resourcefulness of our community, figuring out how to be together on Zoom, and how to deal with hybrid worship. Our ability to meet in a hybrid manner gave us hope that we will soon be able to connect in person as well as virtually.

We as a meeting have grappled with how best to care for everyone's needs to be safe and to take care of ourselves and one another. Whether to require vaccination and whether and how to meet safely in person during these times of COVID, while still being welcoming, has been a challenge.

Our Worship and Ministry Committee arranged several significant second hours. Friend Fred Koster, MD, from Albuquerque (NM) Friends Meeting, answered questions and helped us understand the current COVID-19 situation. Laurie Childers of Corvallis (OR) Monthly Meeting, engaged with us in how Quaker testimonies can lead us to better learn about and uproot racism in our society. There has also been appreciation of our second hours where we explore our monthly queries and issues brought by Social and Environmental Action Committee.

Letters were sent to our local Bellingham and Whatcom County officials about taking emergency action to help with the homeless shelter needs. The Social and Environmental Concerns Committee was instrumental in informing and encouraging our Meeting to show up to support Native Americans, oppose gas pipelines that threaten nature and indigenous territory, and other issues of social and environmental justice.

Our meeting's youth are all 16 and older, so our Children's Program is focused on young adult concerns. Weekly Youth Zoom meetings have been an ongoing feature throughout this past year, with cherished

connections being maintained. This committee keeps faith in the potential to have youth and families of a diverse age range participate in our meeting during 2022.

A summary by our Finance Committee stated that there was definitely a “charitable spirit” in the air in 2021. We’ve had a couple of large donations from individuals, which, combined with lower expenses and investment growth, made for a good financial year.

Nominating Committee expressed their appreciation to all the Friends who volunteer their time to help our community function so well. Despite our decreased attendance, committees and representative roles have been filled.

Respectfully submitted, Bellingham Friends Meeting, Mary Ann Percy, Clerk