

Bellingham Friends Meeting
State of Society 2012

The year 2012 has brought Bellingham Friends both blessings and challenges. Among the blessings were retreats and conferences with other Friends in the area including our own retreat on the theme of “What Quaker Values Inspire You?” We have faced a decline in attendance, and consequent problems in carrying out all the work of the Meeting and filling vacancies in our committees and representative positions.

Some highlights of the past year:

-Overall attendance at Meeting for Worship has decreased to an average of 20 adults (compared to 22 in 2011 and 24 in 2010) and fewer children (3.5 compared to 4.3 in 2011 and 9.3 in 2010).

-We have adjusted to our reduced pool of nominees by combining committees, temporarily turning over committee responsibilities to a coordinator in one case, and leaving some positions unfilled.

-We were privileged to host a talk by author Naseem Rakha, on her book, *The Crying Tree*, which deals with issues of forgiveness and capital punishment.

-We rejoiced in the transfer of membership of Joanne Cowan and the return of Allen Stockbridge after a long illness and time away. We are enriched by the wisdom and vibrant Quaker history of elders in our Meeting, including Howard Harris, Tom Hall and Doris Ferm.

-In addition to the opportunity to open our own annual retreat to other Friends in the region, we were enriched by our members attending wider Quaker events, such as the FGC Gathering; the Women’s Theology Conference; and the Clerking Workshop on Whidbey Island. A sizable bequest has enriched our Meeting by enabling more of our members to attend such events. Bellingham Friends who benefited from the bequest have graciously shared their experiences with the whole Meeting.

-Our Spirit Group meets monthly to explore Quaker writing and spirituality.

-Our outreach and welcoming subcommittee has revised our pamphlets, instituted a practice of wearing nametags to help newcomers feel more comfortable, and looks for ways to become more welcoming.

-We are planning and hosting Quarterly Meeting for Spring 2013 in conjunction with Lopez Island Preparative Meeting. We continue to be enriched by our contact with Lopez, which is under our care.