

Approved April 2014

Bellingham Friends Meeting, State of Society Report 2013

During the last year, Bellingham Friends have endeavored to live and nurture our multi-dimensional faith both inside and outside of meeting for worship, while deepening our relationships with one another. Within our worship community, we continue to seek balance and inclusiveness between Christian and non-Christian Friends. This remains a work in progress. Fortunately, our community has both deep trust and loving acceptance that encourage us to continue seeking together.

Overall attendance increased to an average of 22 or 23 people per Sunday in 2013, (compared to about 19 or 20 per Sunday last year) though average attendance for children declined to fewer than two children per Sunday. Overall, however, we are enjoying the first upswing since 2010. We have celebrated the return of several familiar faces, as well as new attenders in recent months.

Joys, Sorrows, and Support

- In May 2013, we experienced the tremendous loss of one of our vital elders, Doris Ferm. Collectively we supported Doris and her family in Doris's final months, and then joined with the larger community to celebrate her life at a memorial service. She is deeply missed.
- We welcomed long-time BFM attender, Rob Dillard, and two Lopez Island Preparative Meeting Friends, Jerry Graville and Karen Gilbert, as new members.
- Bellingham Friends rejoiced in the clearness for marriage and October wedding of Brianna Richardson (daughter of long-time members, Allan and Susan Richardson) and her fiancé John Rossi, in care of BFM.
- BFM supported Friends who underwent surgery or had other medical problems, as well as one family as they struggled with releasing a teenager into foster care following detention.
- We wish well to Marty Walton, a BFM founder who transferred membership to her home Meeting in Maine.

Spiritual Nurture and Deepening Friendship within Meeting

- We have used our second-hour programs following worship to explore the universalist principles of Quaker practice, bridge the diversity in our theologies, highlight the connections between our faith and our actions in the world, and recognize that inspiration comes in many forms. Presentation topics included: vocal ministry, worship sharing, The Bible (with members Rob Stoops and Howard Harris), mindfulness practices, and FCWPP efforts.
- Monthly advices and queries are read at Meeting and shared with Friends in our monthly newsletter.
- We enjoy vibrant weekly fellowship time at rise of meeting.
- Our ongoing spiritual study and book groups gather monthly in Friends' homes.
- Our annual retreat was November 2013 with Steven Matchett on "Reading the Bible with Friends."
- The vitality of our children's program ebbs and flows, but we are enriched when children are present.

Our standing committees and some ways they work to integrate faith and action:

- **Ministry and Counsel:** In addition to the behind-the-scenes work they do, committee members have recently begun introducing themselves at rise of worship to invite questions or concerns. Our Outreach and Welcoming Group subcommittee spearheaded a BFM presence at the Bellingham Human Rights Film Festival in February, the WWU Student Information Fair in September, and the Alternative Holiday Market in November.
- **Social and Environmental Concerns:** After a period of dormancy following the loss of long-time committee clerk Doris Ferm, SEC has a new clerk and is experiencing rejuvenation in its work of witness on issues such as opposing a proposed local coal port, protecting local Lummi Nation lands and culture, and participating in weekly peace vigils at the Federal Building.
- **Finance:** to better align with our spiritual and social values, BFM Finance has shifted investment resources into Friends Fiduciary Fund.
- **Hospitality:** Bellingham Friends have been blessed by a cheerful, efficient and reliable group who week in and week out provide coffee, tea, and treats, as well as cleanup and setup. Wow!

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In the larger community—faith in action:

- BFM, assisted by two Friends from Lopez Island Preparative Meeting, planned and hosted the spring 2013 session of Pacific Northwest Quarterly Meeting.
- In collaboration with Bellingham Unitarian Fellowship and Paula Palmer of Boulder Friends Meeting, BFM co-presented for the community “Seeking Right Relationship with Native Americans,” an experiential consciousness-raising program to help non-Native Americans appreciate the experience of Native peoples.
- Minute was approved, supporting Lummi Nation Treaty Rights and sacred areas in the face of the proposed coal shipment terminal and related excavation work.
- Several Friends attended the FGC Gathering in Greeley, CO, and BFM opened an ongoing discussion of officially strengthening ties with FGC.
- Individual members are active on issues including coal trains, environmental concerns, social justice, Death Café, and health care.