

## **Lopez Island Friends Meeting State of the Meeting Report 2020**

### **To Friends Everywhere:**

Greetings and blessings from Lopez Island Friends Meeting (LIFM) located in the heart of the Salish Sea of Washington State, on the ancestral lands of the Coast Salish people.

We are a vibrant meeting of some 30 people with members of our meeting on Lopez Island, San Juan Island, and Orcas Island (and as far away as the Big Island of Hawaii!). Our report highlights our communal and spiritual journey in this time of COVID-19. We send this to you along with our wishes for the health and safety of your community.

### **Everything Changes: A Tale of Two Newsletters...**

A review of our monthly meeting newsletter headlines from January and February 2020:

***Film/Discussion Night! Next Potluck January 19 All Islands Meeting on Orcas March 22***

...and then COVID concerns reached our archipelago. Our first online meeting was held Sunday March 15, and the newsletter headlines track the emergence of a new reality:

***See You All on Zoom! Zoom Security Zoom Links Protocol Zoom Tips!***

***April 12 Kids Program on Zoom COVID Resource URL's Want to Help by Making Masks?***

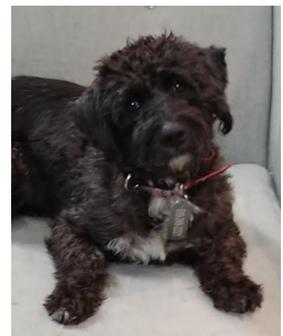
### **LIFM During COVID: A Grounding and Supportive Place During Difficult Times**

We moved quickly to online meetings as our county health officials recommended suspending in-person gatherings and were fortunate to not miss any of our Sunday worships. As well, we have shifted many of our regular activities online including: committee meetings, children's program and intergenerational Sundays, book group, anti-racism discussion group and even our annual Silent Retreat.

The move to an online environment has had its challenges. While online meeting attendance has been robust, we are seeing less of our younger members at our online meetings, including families and children. And we miss and long for in-person fellowship and connection at our pre-COVID activities such as our potlucks, picnics, monthly Singing Sundays, the annual apple cider pressing, and discussion groups.

That said, the online environment has provided us with some gifts. Most of all, being a worship community spread across several islands of the San Juan Archipelago, our zoom meetings have allowed all of us to gather together in one virtual meeting room, greatly enhancing our connection across our multi-island community. As well, our canine members can attend too!

Our online worship and ministry has been deep and rich. Many report it as being of great comfort and support during these trying times. Rise



Glimpsed behind one of our members during many Meetings for Worship – Maizie.

of meeting has allowed us extensive opportunity to share joys and concerns and check in with one another, each of us in our own zoom box on the screen. Members have commented: “The sharing we do at rise of meeting is a good reminder that I am not alone.” “It is important that I be there on Sundays.” “I feel a very strong connection [online] to you all.”

## **Our Work in the World Continues**

Albeit in full keeping to COVID-19 precautions, the work of the meeting and its participants in the world continues.

Many in our meeting have been involved in our local Black Lives Matter movement dealing with racism within our own local community. We’ve also hosted an ongoing anti-racism discussion and action group and have members who regularly attended the FCG White Friends Confronting Racism weekly worship.

Several of our members have been directly involved in local COVID-19 relief, prevention, and vaccination efforts, one as the president of our local hospital district. And as a meeting we are supplying financial and even technological support to our local health and community organizations. One of our members organized a dinner sign up to provide meals to our dedicated, overworked, and beloved pharmacists and team members.



LIFM member at a Black Lives Matter vigil on Lopez Island.

Of note this year, meeting members helped form a San Juan Islands FCNL advocacy team. They are focusing their efforts on national issues, particularly military/foreign policy, and seeing progress from their lobbying efforts. We also continue to support a number of regional and national Quaker organizations both with participation and financial support. And to our testimonies of equality and integrity, many of us participated in get out the vote efforts encouraging everyone to claim their voice through their vote in the important elections of 2020. Members wrote over 1,500 Get Out the Vote letters to various parts of the country and made numerous phone calls.

## **Discernment to Affiliate with Friends General Conference**

Led in part by our work with FGC’s Ministry on Racism, our meeting undertook study and discernment on the question of affiliating with Friends General Conference. Typically, this is done at the yearly meeting level, but we belong to an unaffiliated yearly meeting. Given our use of FGC resources and appreciation for the work it does, we felt it was rightly led to explore this option. A working group consulted with FGC, our yearly and quarterly meetings, and other monthly meetings who have explored affiliation. Findings were discussed at monthly business meeting and a threshing session was held at the end of the year.

That work identified a number of insights, questions, and senses. Key senses supporting affiliation were our recognition of FGC’s important and faithful work and our desire to expand our horizons and share our gifts through participation in the wider world of Friends.

Concerns raised were caution around spreading the human and financial resources of our meeting too thin and an acknowledgement of our yearly meeting's historical sense of itself as an 'independent' or unaffiliated yearly meeting. We continue to discern and hope to reach unity in 2021.

### **“In the Times of COVID” Vignette and Longings for the World to Come...**

Our meeting holds a meeting for worship with a concern for singing each month, otherwise known as Singing Sunday. It is one of the things we have most missed during these COVID times as we have discovered that group singing is still beyond the technical capabilities of Zoom! So, when a beloved and active member of our community requested and was accepted into the Religious Society of Friends, we realized we had a need and a reason to safely meet in person to celebrate them and their membership (and hopefully to safely sing!).

Under the supervision of the several medical professionals in our meeting, we masked up, socially distanced, and gathered outside in the courtyard of the goat barn at Sunnyfield Farm, the 'real' home of our Quaker meeting and Sunday worships. Through our masks and under our umbrellas during a drenching downpour, for the first time in months we sang together. The setting itself inspired the imagined song “Rain on Umbrellas and Goats Chomping Hay...” (set to the tune of Our Favorite Things).

As we sat in the rain, accompanied by bemused goats, amidst our love for one another, we allowed ourselves to dream of a world of love restored with hugs, and songs, and fellowship together – a time for which we patiently wait and passionately fight.



LIFM Quakers at the Sunnyfield goat barn celebrating a new membership.

### **Our Journey Forward**

Lopez Island Friends Meeting remains strong and committed to our Quaker spiritual practice and our community of seekers. We have made plans and preparations for resuming meetings in person as soon as it is safe to do that. We are pondering how to continue to include virtual access as a part of our in-person meetings as we have come to so value those connections from across the waters, narrow and wide, that surround our island home.

In Peace and Light,

Lopez Island Friends Meeting