

State of the Meeting
Sandpoint Friends Meeting
2020

Greetings from Sandpoint Friends Meeting in North Idaho!

This past year has been dominated by the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic and economic downturn. We adjusted to restrictions by temporarily discontinuing Meeting for Worship in person at our Meeting House. We instead shifted to gathering for worship each Sunday at our regular Meeting time, in our own homes. We maintained our connections by sharing messages and afterthoughts, as well as joys and concerns, during the following week through emails and phone calls. As a Meeting, we decided to not hold virtual worship since several members do not have adequate internet. Some individuals, however, have joined other Meetings via Zoom, enjoying fellowship with distant Friends. We are all eager to once again be together physically in our Meeting House for this vital sharing.

During last summer's warm months, we were able to meet together under our two pear trees in the Meeting House yard, wearing masks and spread out appropriately. With the green grass and the blue sky, what a joy it was to once again be together! It created a very palpable feeling of Spirit among us. We are looking forward to doing this again, once the weather allows.

Despite the challenges of 2020, Sandpoint Friends remain a strong and caring community. We continue with our bimonthly newsletter, to which members freely add their thoughts. This, combined with the monthly Clerk's letter, provides news and information, queries, inspiration, and sometimes a bit of humor. As questions arise among us, we seek input from each other to find solutions. It has been a time of missed hugs, holding hands, intimate conversations and group discussions, movie nights, bake sales, and, of course, our much-loved potlucks! Nonetheless, our bonds are strong and our community survives.

With all of this, life went on. After many months of planning, we gathered to assemble two Peace Poles, attaching language plaques on cedar poles we had stained white. A short while later, we "planted" these in our community, one for a branch of our local library and the second for the front lawn of our Meeting House. They proclaim "May Peace Prevail on Earth" in eight different languages. Sandpoint Friends had difficulty narrowing our language choices to just eight for our Peace Pole, so we added four additional plaques to the fence behind the pole.

Unable to host our annual bake sale, we held a successful drive within our Meeting to raise funds from individual Friends for our local Food Bank. Some of our members have been led to offer their time and energy by volunteering there.

We miss the gentle spirit of a long-time Meeting attender who passed away last summer from natural causes. He was 94 years of age.

We have found inspiration in reading, worship, walking, nature, and participating in online activities, but these are not the same as being physically present with each other. We all look forward to that time when we can once again join with beloved Friends in the warmth of fellowship, even though we do not yet know when that will be.

"Quakers in Masks"

Silent Worship.

*Under twin pear trees we sit six feet apart in plastic chairs.
No joining of hands at rise of meeting.*

*No hugs and no potlucks.
But still connected in spirit.
A pandemic can only temporarily alter outward action.
The inner light still binds us together in love and compassion.*

(Poem written by Bob Betts, member of Sandpoint Friends Meeting)

With Hope and Light,

Judith Clarke, Clerk
Sandpoint Friends Meeting