

State of the Society Report

Tacoma Friends Meeting

February 2021 for 2020

2020 was a transformative year for Tacoma Friends Meeting. The global Covid-19 pandemic caused us to transition from meeting in person to virtual meetings, which proved to be surprisingly meaningful. Our sharing at rise of meeting became deeper and more authentic as we came to know each other better. Our community grew and embraced newcomers warmly. The shocking murder of George Floyd made us examine our hearts, acknowledge our privilege and called us to action. Many committee meetings and programs followed, leading us to a new level of citizenship and social justice work. In short, we expanded into becoming more active Friends in the larger community.

We did not feel moved to create a meeting minute or public statement against systemic racism as did many other Quaker meetings and organizations, though we witnessed with horror the ongoing violence and brutality. Instead, we delved into a period of necessary inner work and personal growth which led to an active commitment to put our faith into practice.

Our Peace and Social Concerns Committee changed its name and became the Peace and Social Justice Committee to reflect its work more accurately. Many people who had acted individually on social justice issues found others of like mind and the work became lighter with many hands. The committee meeting was re-scheduled to be a regular 2nd hour program when it became apparent that the work of the committee had much to do with the life of the meeting as a whole.

Our 2nd hour discussions took on an impressive vitality with guest speakers on topics ranging from climate change to organizations like Quaker Voice, American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), and Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL). Many of us participated in webinars sponsored by AFSC or Pendle Hill. We started a monthly Quaker Conversations group that explored Quaker publications, leading to enriching shared experiences.

We joyfully welcomed the membership transfer of Tom and Noell Krughoff from Indianapolis First Friends Meeting. Their experience with national-level Friends organizations and commitment to citizenship dovetailed with the call to activism we felt was mandated by current events. The meeting was also enlivened by new sojourners and attenders who brought fresh insight and energy. We shared with Vashon Friends Worship Group the loss of Kate Hunter, survived by her beloved Jim Hauser.

Overall, our experiences in the last year added depth to our meeting and our commitment to each other. We strived to create a safe environment where we could be vulnerable and supportive of each other as we did the hard work of acknowledging our part in past and present systemic injustice. Now, we extend trust toward each other and the traditions we hold dear as we move forward to take our place as active Friends in the community.

Below are contributions from members and attenders that share their experience at a personal level. Following that is a brief description of some the significant events at Tacoma Friends Meeting in 2021.

Individual Submissions for State of the Society at Tacoma Friends Meeting:

Chris Ferguson –

I'm a convinced Quaker of recent years. This past year I became more deeply rooted in the meeting by growing into roles and responsibilities that contribute to the life of the meeting, and by nurturing my Quaker spirituality through listening and learning from the vibrant mixture of spiritual voices and perspectives that is our community.

Judia Gallinger –

Tacoma Friends

The calling of the clerk

The running of the Zoom

The beckoning of the words

The service in silent worship,

All culminating in the enrichment of my soul

I am most grateful to be a part of this beloved community that cares for one another and is not blind to the suffering of the masses outside our reach. The winter days are short but the desire to help others through works of charity and volunteering is strong. I appreciate all the works and good wishes for support flowing from our Meeting. The days of waiting for COVID to clear are so long, they bear down on my sense of connectedness. Wellbeing is restored on Firstday mornings when gentle folk dedicate their time to strengthen our fellowship, encourage good deeds, and celebrate life just as it is.

Marlene Warfield –

My experience this year as a new member to the Quaker Family on the hill in Central Tacoma.

I have had many "Firsts" this year, which is unusual for a fifty seven year old. It is scary to live alone after living with a spouse for thirty four years. I have had a great amount of supportive energy from attending the Sunday meetings. It is hard to imagine that sitting quietly in front of a computer screen with eighteen other individuals could bring such peace, but this has been my experience. When I join the Zoom meetings, it is never with an expectation or prejudged opinion. I come to the meeting with an open mind and heart. Energy is freely passed both ways. I send energy and receive energy. At the close of the hour I better understand my meaning in this whole life/cosmos process.

Angie Alexander –

Changing to on-line meetings because of the pandemic seems to have brought us closer in some ways. Members and attenders, who live at a distance or for other reasons cannot be at meeting when we are at the meetinghouse, have been able to join us. We also are sharing in deeper and more poignant ways.

Appendix - Events and Comments for 2020 State of the Meeting

We Engaged and We Built Community

We Engaged:

FCNL, Quaker Voice, AFSC

- Participated in Quaker Lobby Day (2/3/2020)
- Participated in discerning priorities to contribute to the FCNL priorities for the 117th Congress (April)
- Bobby Trice from FCNL spoke on, “Speaking Truth to Power: Storytelling as Advocacy” (10/25/2020)
- Susan Cozzens and Caroline Wildflower spoke in 2nd hour on American Friends Service (May 17, 2020)

Environment

- We had two Traveling Friends speak on Climate Change
 - Paul Christiansen – spoke on “No Arks and the Tree of Hope” (5/24/2020)
 - Steve Olshevski – spoke on the impact of economic and population growth on the climate (11/22/2020)

Racism

- We engaged in training on relationship building and reconciliation with people of other races and indigenous peoples
 - Several of us took AFSC’s multi-week course, “Radical Acting in Faith for White People” (7/9/2020 - 8/27/2020)
 - “Ancestral Waters” documentary on construction of a LNG plant on ancestral Puyallup tribal land (8/30/2020). The video was viewed online individually by Friends prior to the discussion.
 - “Two Rivers” documentary on a reconciliation process between white and Native communities in Methow Valley (8/23/2020). The video was routed and viewed individually by Friends prior to the discussion.
 - Bystander Intervention training, provided by AFSC’s Lucy Duncan, hosted by Tacoma Meeting, and jointly offered with Associated Ministries, who provided the webinar platform (9/24/2020). Over 115 participants from local faith communities and Friends meetings in the region.

- Two members participated in the Pendle Hill six-part seminar, “Working Toward Right Relations with Indigenous Peoples”. The Ministry and Counsel Committee provided a scholarship for one person.

Peace and Social Justice Committee

- We felt the need to make engaging in social issues more accessible to the meeting and rethought how we would address them. The Peace and Social Concerns renamed itself Peace and Social Justice and moved its meetings to the 3rd Sunday 2nd hour time slot.

Volunteerism and Activism

- Many of us were actively involved in volunteer service welcoming detainees being released from the immigration detention center, Hilltop Urban Gardens, maintaining housing for low-income households, various efforts to assist people experiencing homelessness, ...

We Built Community

- Transfer of Membership – We welcomed Tom and Noell Krughoff’s membership transfer from Indianapolis First Friends Meeting (March 8, 2020)
- Virtual Potluck – In lieu of monthly spreads of veggie trays and casseroles, we shared our artistic creations online
- A Friend facilitated the distribution of DVDs, which enabled later discussion, on the documentary, “Two Rivers” – a wonderful story of reconciliation between current residents of Twisp, Washington and descendants of the Methow Tribe that lives primarily on the Coleville Indian Reservation. The 10 discs were a gift from the Methow Valley Interpretive Center, to which the meeting responded with a cash gift to aid the Center's ongoing work.
- Quaker Conversations – Another Friend in the meeting made a generous contribution of 10 copies of the Pendle Hill pamphlet, “Spiritual Gifts, The Beloved Community and Covenant” by Emily Provance. This pamphlet became the first choice for a newly-formed monthly reading group – Quaker Conversations (started 9/28/2020). Quaker Conversations came out of a Friend’s vision for building community through the reading and discussion of enriching books and pamphlets on Quaker thought and practice. The practice of Quaker Dialog quickly became the preferred format.

Miscellaneous Items Regarding the Meeting House and Caretaker

- Major roof repair - July
- Moved the library into the main meeting room and made the old library space available to the caretaker
- Reviewed our relationship with the caretaker and formalized a revised caretaker agreement. Caretaker Committee formed 4/12/2020 business meeting minutes
- We maintained our close relationship with Hillside Community Church
- We said goodbye to the old church organ that had occupied the front of the meeting room, silent for many years