

Bridge City Friends Meeting State of Society Report Spring 2018

“Close your eyes if you like. Hold Bridge City Friends Meeting in your heart. Picture the Meeting in your mind’s eye. Out of the silence, share the image or color or sensation that comes to mind, without editorial comment or explanation.”

Once again this year, this exercise, during our February Meeting for Business, is how we generated raw material to begin our State of the Meeting report. The images that emerged from individual members included:

“A dark night and a circle of people sitting cross-legged around a campfire, singing, feeling oneness with everyone present. The fire in the center is the Light. The love we have for each other is shared.”

“A circle of trees in the woods, off the beaten path, with lots of old growth and some new growth. There is a rich filtered green light, very moist.”

“A grey coastal mist swirling around, with little lights like fireflies within that flash and fade out. Sometimes there is a brighter light that sends rays to the other lights, which increases the activity. But then that light fades out too. I am feeling warm and comfortable.”

One Friend said, “I see the Meeting looking at the Meeting rather than at the world around us,” adding, “This is a joyous experience.” And another said simply, “I love how we love each other.” We also heard of feelings of safety, spiritual home, warmth, shelter, a feeling of home and refuge as well as a search for truth, and a sense of quietude and expectant waiting in the Meeting. Another Friend expressed a sense of dissatisfaction and disconnection leading us to keep trying and persisting in our efforts to connect with God, connect with each other, and to be part of the community.

Alongside this intuitive portrait, we add a few facts to help Friends understand the state of our Meeting. We are a spiritual home for several dozen people in the Portland area. We support, formally and informally, the ways that individual Friends share their gifts with a world in need.

Meeting for Worship typically gathers about 20 people, and Meeting for Business often has more participants. We sing from the FGC Hymnal for our first fifteen minutes together, before settling into about an hour of waiting worship, sometimes including spoken ministry. Two children are among us in the summer, but other than that we are typically a gathering of adults. We welcome and are ready for more participation by children.

Participation in committee work is limited at times by health concerns; by major commitments elsewhere, including other Quaker organizations (i.e., FWCC, AFSC, FCNL); and by travel related to family, recreation, service or in preparation to move out of the area. We continue to be very pleased with the space we began renting more than five years ago. We see people living on the street on the corner where we meet and are reminded of the ever-presence of homelessness in our city.

We are tied into North Pacific Yearly Meeting and Willamette Quarterly Meeting through the individual Bridge City Friends who take on responsibilities of leadership and committee work as well as active participation in sessions. Bridge City is one of the four meetings and churches sponsoring Quaker Voluntary Service Portland. We initiated the formation of an FCNL Advocacy Team in the Portland area and many Bridge City Friends are active on that team. We have members active in WQM Men’s Retreat, PNW Quaker Women’s Theology Conference and Convergent Friends. We offer loving care and upholding of local Friends Church communities as they realign themselves, and tenderly hold their pain and uncertainties for the future.

Approved at Meeting for Business 4/15/18