

Corvallis Friends Meeting – State of Society Report Spring 2021

The COVID-19 pandemic has kept us from meeting in our beloved 6-sided Worship Room since March 2020. We have adapted in several ways, often using Zoom, to maintain connections with each other and do meaningful work together. Our Wednesday Digest email notices have been more important than ever. We continue exploring the quality of our worship.

Many were surprised at how effective the Zoom platform is for Sunday Meeting for Worship (M4W). Some find it more intimate than in a room with closed eyes, seeing each other's faces and homes. One member, originally hesitant to try online worship, wept to realize that the presence of each other and the Spirit is so palpable. We are blessed with regular attenders and visitors from afar – Alaska, Arizona, Canada, Colorado, Washington, and Oregon. It has worked well for some who are alter-abled. Meeting for Business, and even our monthly “potluck” turn out to be focused, informative, lighthearted and enjoyable via Zoom.

Many of us meet in a park at 8:30 AM Sundays for Walking for Worship. Masked, we walk on trails along the Willamette River in silence, observing subtle changes in the seasons. Midway in the hour, we stop for worship sharing, and then walk back, concluding with announcements. The walking group attempts conscious overlap with the Zoom group, so that announcements are mutual. This group has made Quakers “visible” to regular dog walkers and joggers.

Spiritual Care Committee hosts M4W and has been attentive to special needs of individuals. During good weather small groups met outside the residences of four elderly Friends who could not manage Zoom or walking. Visitation responsibility falls on all members. Other assistance, including moving house, has been given to several aging Friends. SCC also set up phone triangles whereby, groups of three people form a call tree to check in with each other on a periodic basis.

Adult Religious Exploration programs are designed to uphold the commitment and spirit of the NPYM's Uprooting Racism minute. We learned from our District Attorney that education is the biggest factor in preventing jail time. Ann Mbacke led a Deescalation Training, getting us to stay grounded in our hearts. For followup we used that Quaker superpower of Worship Sharing to further explore her queries: How do we keep from “othering” people, and expand our sense of “we?” Scott Smith presented on Conflict Resolution. Late winter we began exploring Decolonization.

Circle for Third Age Living is in its 3rd year. We gather monthly to grow personal connections with meaningful sharing about resources and our challenges and gifts in the major life phase after parenting and career achievements.

We find ways to sense and respond to the promptings of God for action in an unjust world. We have helped refugees from Latin America and people displaced from fires in neighboring counties, and encouraged engagement in democracy. We increased our donations substantially this year, and labored over how to distribute them. The meeting chose several new recipients: a local foundation addressing pandemic needs of the poor, a Diversity in Nursing scholarship at the local community college, and local groups coordinating food banks and shelters. The FCNL Advocacy team is active lobbying, hopeful about these issues: 1) Repealing the Authorization of Use of Military Force; 2) Rejoining the Iran Nuclear Deal.

We wish we had more ways to support our children during the pandemic. Several adults have engaged with the three families that have children, inviting them for special outside projects. Children assisted with our Christmas food drive for local Food Banks.

In early 2021, beloved Friends Ruth McNeill and James Kimball passed away.