

2018 State of the Meeting Report - Missoula Monthly Meeting

In mid-April the Missoula Monthly meeting invited Friends from throughout Montana to celebrate 25 years of stewardship of our Meeting House and 75 years of Friends in the state. We welcomed over 50 Friends for a weekend of homestays, fellowship, great food, Meeting for Worship, and a series of Montana Gathering of Friends (MGOF) meetings. An evening of impromptu multi-generational Quaker-themed comedy sketches, fabulous fiddle tunes, and a slide show with decades of memories helped us reconnect, make new (F)riends, reminisce, and laugh together.

In addition to the April celebration, we felt led to engage in discernment around the current morale and spiritual health of our Meeting. While there is great appreciation for our community and (F)riends and attenders over the years, our Meeting is smaller than it was 25 years ago and has recently experienced difficulty filling needed roles within our community. Some of the more active Meeting participants had stated that Meeting had come to feel like a job. To engage around these concerns, we gathered this spring for a worship sharing threshing session, which focused on two queries:

Query 1: What is the 'State of the Meeting' from your perspective?

Query 2: Given this (what has just been shared and has been shared in other venues) are we led to do anything?

The threshing brought up some very practical suggestions for addressing the burn-out some feel as well as creative ideas for outreach, not only to our Meeting House neighbors but to the Missoula community writ large, as well as to members and attenders who have not been to Meeting for Worship in a long time.

Notes were taken throughout the threshing and later shared with the Meeting. This exercise in discernment allowed session participants to bring voice to hopes and concerns and yielded new opportunities that helped to energize the Meeting.