

Multnomah Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends
State of Society Report – 2017-18

While the past year has been challenging for many in the Multnomah Friends Meeting community as they have processed and responded to national and international events, our Meeting for Worship remains a grounding point from worldly chaos. The centering space draws members of the community together and provides collective support through the uncertainty. Week to week we seek out the Spirit, come back to the center, and respond within our capacities.

We are a lively and growing Meeting, strengthened by our children, young adults, and young families who bring commitment and energy to Meeting for Worship, First Day School, and a wide range of activities. One of our strengths is the range of opportunities for spiritual growth, including two Meetings for Worship each Sunday, weekly Bible study, and Quaker education, (although there is always opportunity for more). There is intimacy and sharing in both small and larger groups. It continues to be our intention to be a Meeting that is radically inclusive and mutually accepting of participants with a very broad range of spiritual and theological beliefs and understandings.

We are large enough that groups of individuals come together and grow together around common interests, whether sharing poetry or caring for our garden. We acknowledge growth in the various deliberate ways we provide mutual support to each other, including a 'Listener' available after worship, or faithful responses to requests placed in the Hold in the Light box. We are also pleased that we are able to meet the financial challenges of operating a large Meeting and maintaining and improving a welcoming building.

We continue to strive to understand and act on our testimonies. Our Peace and Social Concerns Committee has made great strides in considering and bringing important issues to the Meeting. We engaged in a multi-year process to become welcoming to people of all genders and strive to continue this awareness and effort. Our Friends for Racial Justice group has continued to educate us with speakers, films, discussions, and a racial justice minute. We approved a Sanctuary Pledge to support immigrants and advocate for their rights. Our excitement for the United Nations Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was tempered by the realization that mainstream media wasn't covering it. We passed a minute expressing support for the Treaty and sent it to Quaker meetings, churches and organizations across the country to expand awareness. Several Friends have ministries to the larger world that the Meeting nurtures and supports. At the same time, we worry about the adequacy of our response to ongoing social problems like the pressing needs of unhoused people. Paired with our outward public witness, we strive, not always successfully, to realize our intention that spoken ministry during worship arises from Spirit and not sociopolitical or ideological origins.

We have challenges and shortcomings. We are sometimes too busy among ourselves to welcome and include newcomers. We can struggle to find new energy for the everyday work of the Meeting rather than relying on the same people, and wonder if we could more creatively tap new energy for projects shorter than three-year committee service. The clamor of the world can drag us away from our spiritual center ... yet we remain hopeful that we can continue to find strength and grow in our commitment to each other and to the divine Spirit.