

Olympia Friends Meeting State of the Meeting Report for 2018

Approved March 11, 2018

The past year has been a vigorous and robust year for the Olympia Friends Meeting. We continue to face the blessings and challenges of growth and find our many concerns and activities more diverse than focused, while we continue to search for ways to talk with and to hear one another, seeking to understand our many hopes and fears.

Growth

The blessings and challenges of growth are manifest in many ways. Most obvious is the number of people attending our meeting for worship, at least 40, often more than 50 adults on any Sunday. We almost always have a handful of newcomers, whom we try to welcome as best we can and encourage to return. Many are in their 20s and 30s. Our First Day School program covers three classes from pre-kindergarten through high school, and we have hired a part-time Religious Education Coordinator to plan for all their activities. This year we have welcomed six new members (one through transfer), and lost one through death. We are pressed to keep track of everyone and have decided to hire a part-time Hearthkeeper to help with all the communication and coordination activities we need. As we grow, getting to know one another well becomes more difficult; our many activities help us do that.

Diverse Activities and Concerns

We have many activities within our meeting, many of which involve us outside the meeting as well. Some of these are served by our various committees and others by special concerns. Rarely are we all involved in one activity or concern; more often we follow our own interests, whether that be peace and justice, spiritual growth, or upkeep of our meeting house and grounds. Our calendars are full of opportunities both within and outside of the meeting. We have hosted Quaker Lobby Day, North Pacific Yearly Meeting Coordinating Committee, and the Friends General Conference Development Committee as well as Ward Miles' 95th birthday party. We have offered both Thanksgiving Day dinner and Christmas Eve dinner with large family participation. Monthly spiritual learning evenings have introduced us to the spiritual journeys of members and attenders. Our library has been completely re-organized to be more accessible.

Seeking Ways to Understand One Another

Throughout this year, often growing out of several concerns that were not resolved in meeting for business, we had one or two "Threshing Sessions" in an attempt to understand one another. Sometimes these have been difficult, bringing up past hurt.

In the spring of 2017, we were asked by a registered sex offender if he would be welcome at our meeting. As he and his wife had attended another meeting, members of that meeting were helpful all around. We developed a multi-faceted process which included an open session with the individual and a member of the other meeting, our own threshing session, confidential sessions for those who are survivors and their supporters, conversations with Church Mutual, our insurance provider, and a

support group for the individual. After several months, we approved a new Registered Sex Offender Policy. This individual and his wife are participating fully in the life of the meeting according to the terms of the policy. We are conducting a six month review of the policy.

The meeting could not reach unity on the welcoming all-genders minute that was being presented at North Pacific Yearly Meeting Annual Session. We are in the process of re-visiting it with a community discussion. We have a subcommittee of Peace and Social Justice Committee focused on transgender issues, and our worshipping community includes transgender people.

Our monthly book group has focused on issues of racism, spending six months working its way through *Fit for Freedom, Not for Friendship* by Vanessa Julye and Donna McDaniel. It continues to meet monthly to discuss relevant readings.

The Undoing Racism subcommittee worked to support the passage of Washington Initiative Measure No. 940 (I-940) with a proposed a Minute to Endorse, but the meeting was not able to come to unity on this or on endorsing legislation in general. We continue to consider under what circumstances the meeting will take a public stand on social justice issues.

Support of People

We have had opportunities to support members of our meeting through care committees. We have released Eric Maya Joy to follow his leadings about spiritual unification for all. We hold meeting for worship twice monthly in an assisted living facility to support a member who is medically fragile. We are participating with other congregations in Interfaith Works to develop a Sanctuary for potential deportees, including one of our attenders.

Monthly, we share together with no fixed agenda: everyone, including children, at a breakfast before meeting for worship; women over a Friday supper; and men at a Saturday breakfast.

We have reviewed and re-structured how we support other organizations financially. Olympia Monthly Meeting now tithes its general contributions monthly to a designated charity. At the beginning of the year, we identified 16 charitable organizations and assigned months to them, with several in December. Our contributions have risen significantly, and this has encouraged members to set up a monthly automatic contribution to the meeting. We have contributed much more financially overall than we had when we budgeted our contributions.

Members of our Undoing Racism subcommittee continued to support Andre Thompson, Bryson Chaplin, and their family through court trials, imprisonment, and a move out of our county. Andre and Bryson are two young African American men shot by an Olympia police officer on May 21, 2015.

The spiritual life of the meeting is full and searching, and many of us are engaged both corporately through the meeting and individually in the many issues confronting us in this ever-demanding and uncertain time.