

Port Townsend Friends Meeting State of the Meeting Report for 2020

Port Townsend Monthly Meeting found 2020 to be a year of immense challenges especially with the pandemic and political upheaval. Throughout this difficult year, we found that Spirit has held us fast, and our connections remain strong.

In a quick response to the locally-developing pandemic in the Salish Sea area, Port Townsend Friends Meeting decided to close its Meetinghouse to all gatherings on March 7, 2020. After much discussion, some of it contentious, on the use of new technology, we felt led to respect the expertise of and accept the advice of our tech support group and began to hold Meetings for Worship, Meetings for Business and committee meetings virtually on Zoom. We continued to have an average of 25 attendees at Meetings for Worship.

A particularly positive outcome of all of this is that we have had new and old friends attend Worship, including members who had moved away and friends and relatives from afar. Some attenders with different needs, or spiritual connections or opinions on this change in Worship format refrained from joining us virtually. These Friends regularly received cards and phone calls, or were otherwise remembered and kept within the circle of the Meeting.

Other ways that Friends have maintained the faithful community include socially distanced walks on Sundays before Meeting for Worship, and midweek Meeting for Worship on a Friend's porch. Our spiritual nurture groups, anchor, and clearness committees have regularly met, virtually or in distanced, outdoor settings. PTFM developed a listserv to allow us to share thoughts, readings, inspirational poems and videos.

Port Townsend Friends lost one beloved member of our circle prior to the pandemic. We held goodbye parties for two households (3 members) that moved away from Port Townsend, celebrating the time they have been with us and wishing them well even as we feel the loss of their presence among us. We welcomed one new member with great anticipation of their deeper involvement with us.

We created a native garden in front of the Meetinghouse with a beautifully carved peace pole, topped by a dove made by Craig Jacobrown.

Our Adult Education Committee oversaw an early in-person worship sharing on Vocal Ministry and produced three (one a month) virtual gatherings to discuss racial justice in the context of Quaker experience in the Fall and Winter.

Members of Peace and Social Concerns guided our Spirit-led action through participation in events commemorating the 75th anniversary of the Hiroshima bombing and facilitating security and de-escalation training at a local BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, & People of Color)-led Black Lives Matter event. The Meeting held worship-sharing discussions on racism and produced a Minute on the Rejection of Violence and Racism.

Friends' generosity allowed us to meet our budgeted expenses despite the loss of rental income. The Meeting was able to make our annual donations to the Jefferson County Foundation's Covid Relief Fund and to Quaker Voice, our state Quaker lobbying effort. We also transferred all collected monies from our own Carbon Tithing Fund to initiate, in part, the Foundation's Olympic Carbon Fund, a project to take biochar from our local paper mill and compost it for return to local soils.

Friend Caroline Wildflower was called to a Traveling Ministry under the care of the North Pacific Yearly Meeting and NPYM's Outreach Committee on "Knitting Us Together" that highlights, amongst many subjects, "widening the welcome" and also PTFM's purchase of our Meetinghouse.

We are very grateful for the physical and spiritual health of our Meeting members and attenders and we spiritually supported those who had family and friends who were lost or challenged by Covid-19. We know that the Spirit is moving among us, strengthening and upholding us, gathering us together even during this very stressful time.