

## 2017 State of the Meeting Report for Port Townsend Friends Meeting

This year we decided to respond to the following queries for our State of the Meeting Report rather than a chronology of activities.

*What has it meant to be faithful in our Meeting this year?*

*What do you consider to be the spiritual infra-structure of our Meeting?*

*How do we engage friends in the deeper aspects of seeking?*

*How does Truth fare with our Meeting?*

*Think of an image that represents the spirit of our Meeting this past year.*

“An image of a teeter-totter springing up and down between regular life with all its negativity, fear and anger and living in and spreading the Light - living life on two levels as Thomas Kelly has described.”

“An image of the Meeting a peony unfolding because of our spiritual practice which is both collective and individual.”

“I see our Meeting as a big bus that is slowly moving along familiar streets. The bus makes no stops but the door is always open. You jump on when you’re ready. Find your seat. Sit in the front and help steer. Sit in the back and enjoy the view. Our destination is not known or concerning. Some people get off. The bus goes on. Big circles. Not too far in any direction. Safe.”

“An image from a trip we took to England many years ago when a Cotswold man, standing in middle of a bridge, turned to us and said, ‘be still and know that I am God’. We are at a bridge point in life of Meeting. We can see where we’ve come from and have some sense of what lies ahead.”

“An image of an eco-system, a living body that we need to nurture. Nourishing ourselves regularly is a deliberate process. We are interrelated and depend on one another. We support one another when one is lost or compromised We are exploring and learning how to be a source of deep connection with the Spirit and one another. There are lots of layers to the Meeting just as there are in an eco-system.”

“An image of the Meeting as a tangerine with a protective layer of skin. Some parts of the tangerine are really juicy, some are hard and brown. What are those hard pieces? They’re seeds and they grow to new fruit if they can go into the world and sprout.”

“There are more than just tangerines in our fruit basket; there are coconuts, apples, and other fruits.”

“An image of bees, pollinating the world with social, political, economic, racial and environmental justice.”

“The Meeting is a spiritual practice, the Light under my life, sometimes beyond words. Religion is kindness. There are so many Friends who have brought generosity of spirit into my life. I’ve learned that humans can be kind to each other and give of themselves without the obligation of immediate reciprocation.”

“To me, being faithful to the Meeting this year has been informed by our Spiritual Gifts retreat and what has flowed from it: how our gifts fit with the occasions of the meeting; how we fit with the life of the meeting.”

“There are gifts in diminishment, loss and aging, giving us an opportunity to say no, to be grateful for what we’ve experienced.”

“I would like to note that our work with the Gifts of the Spirit is guiding me in self-understanding, and has become a language for all of us to use to further the direction, maintenance and health of the Meeting.”

“Our individual gifts work together, contributing to Oneness in the Meeting.”

“We give our gifts of the Spirit to one another, the Meeting, the community and the world.”

“Our meeting has been blessed by having many participants in Way of the Spirit. That and the Gifts of the Spirit retreat have born a lot of fruit.”

“In past years Way of the Spirit has provided opportunities for the deeper aspects of spiritual seeking. Our Spiritual Nurture groups and book groups do that now, but the basic way to engage Friends in seeking is to encourage them to do some kind of active spiritual practice at home—reading, a daily time of silence—every day.”

“The Meeting is important to me; it’s a spiritual path and songs often come through me. I’ve learned how important it is to be kind because everyone is carrying a heavy load.”

“In this difficult year the Meeting has been a life ring helping me continue. I’ve spent a lot of time on the Safety Plan. A lot has been expressed on how we get along, not just ‘I wish we could get along’ but real brass tacks addressing the issue. I’ve been spiritually tested this year AND the safety plan has required a lot of discussion and planning.”

“The Meeting has gone through a long and careful discernment process about safety and how we want to respond to unsafe scenarios.”

“Our work on the safety plan has incorporated the gifts and talents within our Meeting and in the greater community, in an exciting and deep appraisal and study of issues that are certainly rising in the world. This is an exciting time to look beyond the mechanics of just our own Meeting and see how we can pragmatically prepare to interact with people who have no knowledge about Quaker comportment and who may come with issues and potential violence.”

“What does it mean to be faithful? It’s not about perfection or goals; it is simply risking and being faithful in the process. It’s important to remember that the spiritual journey is to love and be loved.”

“My word for the Meeting is “genuine”. I’ve been in spiritual communities all my life and I never found such genuineness until coming to the Friends. Friends trust enough to share what’s deeply in their soul and spirit.”

“I sense that the spiritual life of our Meeting has slowed down which is a good thing in that it allows the Light to surround us. “

“In these troubled times the Meeting has offered a surprising structure for my anger, dismay, and despair. That the strength of each individual and the manner of their own responses has helped me deal with negative reactive and un-Quakerly thoughts and impulses. I have been buoyed by our community, faith and hope. For me, as always, it is the shared perspective that has carried me spiritually.”

“When we come together in worship, we are whole.”

“Silence is so important so that we can listen both to each other and to the Spirit.”

“Quakers may be silent but they are hardly quiet!”

“I am of two minds. First, how could I have skipped all those years since having been introduced to Friends at college? Second, I’m having a wonderful time with all that you’ve given to me. I look forward to meeting for worship all week. What is going on? I don’t know but I’m loving it.”