

## State of Society Report for Salem Friends Meeting 2020-2021

As it was for the rest of the world, 2020 was an exceptionally difficult year for our Meeting. The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way we experience community. We grieve the loss of our in-person weekly worship and the ability to hug, laugh, and share meals with each other. We grieve the lives lost as a result of the pandemic, and are appalled by the systemic injustice and police brutality endured by people of color, the ongoing violence in the streets of our cities, our state capital, and the acts of insurrection perpetrated on our state and federal legislative bodies. However, we are hopeful. We are convinced that our Quaker witness and presence in the Salem community is more important than ever.

Our usual attendance at Meeting is now roughly half (eight to twelve) what it was before the pandemic and we rely on Zoom for meeting safely. Since some Friends are not comfortable with Zoom, we opened the Meeting House for Friends who wished to worship in person with safety measures in place. When Friends indicated they would no longer be meeting in person, we are worshipping exclusively by Zoom. Meeting by Zoom has afforded some unexpected benefits. Friends from afar have been able to join in our Meeting for Worship. This has brought joy to be able to worship and visit with Friends who would not otherwise be able to make the journey to join us in person. We have no youth attending, so have suspended our children's program. We have a good relationship with our neighbors and our Little Free Library in front of the Meeting house continues to be used by the community. At the same time, our sporadic experience of homeless individuals using our covered areas as a place to sleep and rest has caused concern by a neighbor. We have tried to find a balance of hearing and responding to our neighbor's concern while not wanting to send another homeless person "packing".

We continue to provide a meal on a quarterly basis to local houseless families being supported through the Family Promise program. We have taken steps to ensure that the Meeting House and its grounds remain in overall good repair. The community can no longer use the Meeting House, so we no longer have the rental income we had prior to the pandemic. However, our income through donations is sufficient to meet our expenses. Our newsletter keeps Friends apprised of the worship schedule, Salem Friends' interests and concerns, and news of the wider Friends' world. Our committee structure has been streamlined: Ministry & Care and Finance are our sole standing committees. Individuals serve as "point persons" for Peace & Social Concerns, Property, Library, Communications, Newsletter. The Clerk of Meeting is also serving as Recording Clerk. Over the past year, Salem Friends Meeting has taken a second worship group (Friendsview in Newberg, OR) under its care. We also had a meeting for clearness to welcome as a new member, a long time attender of Central Oregon Worship Group. Attenders of both these worship groups joined Salem Friends in a second hour retreat facilitated by NPYM Traveling Minister, Caroline Wildflower accompanied by her elder, Jay Thatcher. In the manner of worship sharing, Caroline provided the structure and deep listening as Friends responded as led to three queries concerning the challenges and the supporting strength, we experienced over the preceding twelve months and our hopes and concerns for our faith communities. Friends expressed gratitude for this opportunity to share and deepen fellowship.