

## **State of Society Report 4/2017-4/2018**

Salem Monthly Meeting, Oregon

In the last year we as a Meeting have grappled with both individual and societal challenges. Issues of health, racial injustice, and the rising level of hatred and violence in our community and the world weigh heavily on our minds. Nevertheless, the spiritual health of our Meeting is good and while we often have lively discussion, we are a cohesive body and hold each other in the Light.

Within the last year, we have made some decisions to relieve us of tasks associated with the Meeting. We have considered changes to our committee structure and have hired a cleaning service to take on some of the basic upkeep of our Meeting house. This has allowed us more time for spiritual reflection and focus. Our attendance has been more consistent with about fifteen people attending on average Sundays. Our increase in attendance is perhaps partly due to people's need for spiritual support given recent societal events. We have also had members from other Meetings retire here in Salem this last year. These individuals have brought experience and new perspectives to our Meeting.

Three practices we have recently added or are continuing we feel contribute to the spiritual health of our Meeting. At the end of worship on First Day we regularly hold individuals in prayer who are suffering. Many with whom we are in contact are aging, and we have experienced more health crises among our membership, our families, co-workers, and friends. At times our clerk asks attenders to share what is currently happening in their life which helps us to know one another better. While our youth are not always in attendance at Meeting, we have a youth interactive program scheduled every first Sunday of the month at the rise of meeting for worship. Feeding people struggling with food insecurity at South Salem Friends church is one of our youth activities. We have a monthly potluck as well. Recently we established a Peace with Justice room which currently has an exhibit of our Quaker Meeting's history as a resource for ourselves and for the community.

Our peace and social justice work continues to be a center point for the Meeting, deepening our sense of oneness with life and awareness of our call to be stewards and advocates for a just and safe world. Although we are a small group, we have been able to offer modest financial and volunteer support to other churches and groups doing social justice work and feeding the homeless or disenfranchised. We have sought to educate ourselves with outside speakers, such as Pedro Sosa, the director on immigration for AFSC in the Northwest. He and his wife shared the moving story of their experiences in Guatemala during the Civil War there. We have contributed as individuals and as a group to addressing issues such as food insecurity, homelessness, racism, prisons, attacks on immigrants, and the degradation of our environment. While the problems facing our city and our world seem overwhelming at times, we have found spiritual renewal and hope through addressing these challenges in small ways.

Each of our regular attenders contributes a lot to this Meeting. We are trying to do a better job of sharing the responsibilities among us so that no one person becomes overly taxed. We feel the Spirit giving us the energy and resources to meet the challenges to come.