Sandpoint Friends Meeting
State of the Meeting Report
for 2019

It has been a quiet year for Sandpoint Friends Meeting here in beautiful North Idaho. Following the pattern of recent years, attendance at our Sunday morning worship ebbs and flows with the seasons, dropping in the late fall as some Friends leave for warmer climates and then increasing again when Friends return with the warm spring sunlight. In addition, snow and icy roads keep some Friends homebound for part of the winter.

While our numbers rise and fall, the Light remains constant. As we settle down and quiet our busy minds, a gentle peace surrounds us and holds us. Individually we may feel restless, but collectively the Light offers calming reassurance and love. We are grateful to share this experience.

Historically, Sandpoint Friends have been a largely silent lot. To encourage deeper worship and more vocal ministry, we frequently have one person read a short quotation or selection of their choice toward the beginning of worship. These readings may come from the teachings of various religions or from secular sources, but they often spark thoughtful sharing from Friends and enrich our worship.

We have a cozy room, known as the Nest, that is set up for First Day School. While we welcome families with children and do our best to accommodate their needs, we have had little need for our Nest in 2019. We will continue to offer childcare options for families and hope to attract more to our Meeting.

Our current reality is that Sandpoint Friends are mostly older folks, generally healthy and full of joy although without quite the same energy we had forty years ago. We lost Joe Wythe, our sole surviving founder, in October 2019, just three weeks before his 99th birthday. According to our Meeting’s Creation Story, when Lois Wythe asked Joe what he would like for Father’s Day, he suggested a Quaker Meeting. This led to the founding of Sandpoint Friends Meeting in June 1980, and we honor the legacy of Lois and Joe every year on Father’s Day.

Sandpoint Friends are not only Quakers but also just plain friends. We strengthen the bonds of friendship by sharing meals, discussions, work, and fun. The first Sunday of each month features a potluck meal after the rise of Meeting for Worship. We have plenty of good food to share and enjoy getting to know our visitors during these meals. On all other Sundays, we share snacks during our Second Hour Meetings for Business and discussion on various Quaker topics. We share seasonal yard work in the spring and fall, tending to the lawn, flowers, and fruit trees on the Meeting House property. Occasional movie nights, with brown bag suppers, break up the monotony of North Idaho winter evenings. These communal activities are an important part of the life of our Meeting.

We enjoy our connection with the wider world of Quakers. Several Friends from Pullman-Moscow Friends Meeting visited us last spring, sharing worship and visiting over a potluck lunch. We usually send at least a small contingent of Friends to Pacific Northwest Quarterly gatherings in Ellensburg. Our Meeting worked with Tacoma Friends to put on the Fall Quarterly, providing both the overall theme, “Peace-ing Our Lives Together,” and the keynote speaker. In addition, we welcome visitors, newcomers, and sojourning Friends of all ages.
We continue outreach to our local North Idaho area. Two years ago, we donated a Peace Pole to the Sandpoint Library. Three of the plaques, in English, Salish, and American sign language, had the message, “May Peace Prevail on Earth.” The fourth plaque had a series of animal tracks since the pole was intended for the children’s garden. This past year we expanded the Peace Pole project with plans to add four additional languages to the Sandpoint Library pole, make a pole with eight languages for the library in nearby Clark Fork, and make a pole for our Meeting House garden. The librarians selected the languages they wanted and Friends chose the eight languages for our pole. In typical Quaker fashion, this latter task was much harder than it sounded and we were unable to limit the number. We finally narrowed our selections to our top eight to go on the pole, with several other plaques chosen to display on the fence behind the pole. Several Friends worked to sand and stain the cedar poles. We plan to assemble and “plant” these Peace Poles later in 2020.

In addition to the Peace Pole project, we held our annual bake sale at the Farmers’ Market in August. The sale offers us a chance to interact with people in the community, talking and passing out information to those interested. All of the money raised was divided among three organizations, two in Sandpoint and the third international.

As we finalize our State of the Meeting report now in the spring of 2020, we find our Meeting, our lives, and our world have all been disrupted by the global pandemic of Covid-19. We have replaced our Sunday worship at the Meeting House with communal worship from our homes, sitting quietly every Sunday from 10-11, and following with a sharing of any afterthoughts via email. Despite the social distance, we are finding this a comforting and enriching routine.

The impact on our lives thus far is minimal, more an inconvenience than anything else. We recognize, however, that millions of people around the world are not as fortunate, and we pray for their health and safety. We hope that long term healing will come to the earth and that we all will begin to recognize our interdependence with each other and with all of Creation. May the loving Light heal our world.

In peace and love,

Nancy Foster Renk,
for Sandpoint Friends Meeting

April 2020