South Mountain Friends Meeting  
State of Society Report

South Mountain Friends Meeting has been a vibrant Meeting throughout the course of this year. Committees have been active and engaged. It seems that Meeting for Business, and special first hour activities, often draw a substantial number of people for our small Meeting. For example, Adult Education sessions have been very well attended and enjoyed, often by more than ten members and friends. Hearts are being opened by our Uprooting Racism Focus Group, as our community has moved into the acknowledgement that racism is systemic and pervasive in our society and ourselves.

Our Ministry and Counsel committee is thriving and has been very thoughtful and spiritually grounded in caring for members and attenders via care committees, constantly considering the life of the Meeting, and creating rich reflection sessions. It also guided our Meeting through a discernment process which resulted in a decision to remove membership status from the directory, in order to promote inclusion of friends not drawn to become members. We were delighted to welcome a new member, Kathleen Hering, to our Meeting, this year. The spiritual life of the Meeting is also nurtured by our Circle of Light, which holds individuals and the Meeting in Divine Radiance on an ongoing basis.

A small but devoted group of f/Friends have continued South Mountain Friends Meeting’s outreach to the homeless. Every Sunday night, these volunteers have ensured that a hot meal is served for dinner, two individuals have stayed overnight, and breakfast has been served at the Ashland Winter Shelter. In order to fulfill these commitments, we have connected with many volunteers from outside the Meeting. The topic of Homelessness has been featured twice by the Adult Education Committee. Although we do not plan to coordinate a night next year, we will continue the relationships we have developed, and support it in a way that is right-sized for our small Meeting.

F/friends have been honest and tender to one another in Meeting for Business this year. When disagreements surface, we have spent extra time in worship. As needed, we have extended this by holding Spiritual Listening sessions, which allow us to worship-share for an hour on a specific topic. The solutions we create together while sitting in the Light, while sometimes unanticipated, have been far superior to those proposed by any one individual. Discernment of challenging issues has felt complete and has built intimacy among f/Friends. Frequency of messages during Meeting for Worship vary from week to week. F/friends are thoughtful about leaving space between messages, which have the spiritual foundation to linger with us throughout the week.

Just as Meeting was bubbling with so much excitement that we could hardly find enough first hours for all the activities we wanted to do, the Coronavirus made some major changes in the life of the Meeting. However, the flow of our community continued. Meeting for Worship in homes has proven to be a deep experience for many f/Friends, just as it has been throughout the year. Physical, emotional, and spiritual care of members who were recovering from surgery was uninterrupted. Our first hour session was moved to a query-based check-in on Zoom. Our worship has been held by members and attenders in their own homes at the usual hour, while the Clerk and one or two others have held space in the Meetinghouse.

There have been a few challenges within our Meeting. The ceiling of our Meeting room fell in the late spring of 2019, injuring one person who was renting the space at the time. Repairs were swift and complete, and the renter has thankfully recovered. At about the same time, it took much seasoning to find unity on our budget; our efforts paid off as this year, committees have had what they needed to do their work, and our budget is on-track. We lost two of our longtime members this year; we grieved the passing of Tim Wohlforth and Kathryn Roether with family members who joined us in worship.

We enjoy having new visitors and getting to know them over time. We have a welcoming website to help new them find us, and at the door the Greeters make sure to warmly welcome new faces and old with great enthusiasm each week. Our Meeting is small; however, it is
vibrant and lively, and many fi/Friends from out-of-town comment that they enjoy the depth of worship with us.