

SOUTH SEATTLE FRIENDS MEETING
2017 STATE OF THE MEETING REPORT

South Seattle Friends Meeting (SSFM) is a welcoming community for new and returning attenders. SSFM has 44 Members and approximately 20 regular Attenders. Meeting for worship is usually attended by 15-20 adults and 5-10 children. Our community includes significant age diversity with families with young children and older folks.

We continue to gather to sing at 10:45am and for worship every Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to noon in a light-filled space looking out towards Lake Washington and Mt Rainier at the Central Area Senior Center, 500 30th Ave. S, Seattle, WA 98144. Our organizing committees include Community Spiritual Life, Arrangements, Education, Faith-in-Action, Finance and Nominating.

SOUTH SEATTLE FRIENDS MEETING STRENGTHS

As a community we lean towards inclusion of people and relatively easily move forward with new ideas. Our theme for 2016-2017 was Gifts and for 2017-2018 is "Focusing on effective ways to address racism as a community" at the encouragement of NPYM's Peace and Social Concerns Committee. Additionally, SSFM approved NPYM's minute on 'Welcoming Transgender and Gender Nonconforming People' and followed up by approving the use of nametags at Meeting, encouraging members and attenders to wear them and to include their preferred gender pronouns, as a way to welcome all.

We actively encourage members and attenders to volunteer as able, guilt free. We emphasize that being a member of a committee is not a requirement to be a beloved part of our community.

This year our Community Spiritual Life Committee (CSL) introduced the idea of a "Table Talk" during the social hour. Friends are invited to lead discussions about issues of Quaker life and values. Our monthly Adult Religious Education topics included QUEST – the Seattle Quaker Intern program, Being Jewish and Quaker, Transgender Issues, AFSC - 100th Anniversary, individuals sharing their spiritual journeys, and Storytelling.

For the third year under the guidance of CSL, two representatives attended the Ben Lomond Quaker Centering Consultation in October and brought back renewed energy and ideas for enriching the spiritual life of our Meeting.

SSFM with great joy took its first marriage under the care of our Monthly Meeting.

Our First Day school offers children a play group as well as an elementary program and the older youth connect with Friends via a combined local Meetings group. A particularly delightful part of SSFM is hearing from the children after worship about their activities during Meeting including art work, games, songs, and discussions around Quaker themes.

Our worship sharing group meets monthly. We have explored on line spiritual sharing groups.

The Older Friends (over 60) meets once a month for brunch and functions as an informal care committee.

Men's and Women's groups also meet regularly.

Both formal and informal support is being provided for members of Meeting in the form of rides to Meeting, rides and accompaniment to medical appointments, and emotional support.

We have busy and vibrant lives together grounded in Quaker values. We recognize that there is a continuing need for deepening of our spiritual lives.

We continue to be blessed with generous contributions throughout the year to balance our budget. Our Finances are eased by renting rather than owning our Meeting space. We allocate an amount equal to 10% of our operating expenses for corporate giving which in 2017 went to FCNL, AFSC, Real Change, Chaplains on the Harbor, and the Central Area Senior Center. The Finance Clerk and Treasurer also enjoyed a visit this fall from Eston Griffin of the Friends Fiduciary Fund.

Members of SSFM actively participate in the wider Quaker world including NPYM Coordinating Committee, Pacific Northwest Quarterly Meeting (PNQM) Continuing Committee, PNQM Ministry and Oversight, and Quaker Voice formerly known as Friend's Committee on Washington Public Policy Steering Committee. Attending gatherings and serving on committees has helped to deepen our Meeting's relationship with these organizations.

SOUTH SEATTLE FRIENDS MEETING CHALLENGES

Attendance has decreased this year. We have had some long-time active members and attenders leave our Meeting for a variety of reasons, and we are grieving those losses.

Although we adopted the Racism minute from NPYM's Peace and Social Concerns Committee in the fall, we have made slow progress addressing this issue but remain committed to moving forward with additional resources.

Volunteer fatigue is a significant issue.

The nominating process is an act of faith that the spirit will lead people to make the necessary commitments to do the needed work of the meeting community. Sometimes people unexpectedly come forward to meet a need. Finding ways to ask people and at the same time allowing them to say no and still feel welcome, is a sensitive issue. Last year Nominating Committee began to use spiritual discernment to help us find volunteers, as described by the Strawberry Creek Friends Meeting. We found this to be helpful with this challenging process.

Several committees have struggled with how to carry out their tasks for various reasons. We are considering a more active use of ad hoc committees to help share the load as well as connecting with other Puget Sound Meetings around shared concerns.

As a group we tend to be easy going and conflict averse which can be both a blessing and a concern. We reach unity relatively quickly but are Friends feeling welcome to express disagreement?

We have an aging community which brings new challenges.

South Seattle Friends Meeting continues to feel blessed to be the spiritual home for our vibrant questing community.