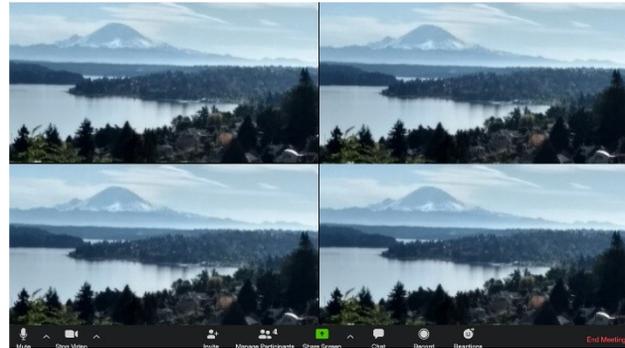


SOUTH SEATTLE FRIENDS MEETING

2020-2021 STATE OF THE MEETING REPORT

South Seattle Friends Meeting

“SSFM”) gathers for worship every Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to noon followed by a social gathering. Pre-pandemic, we met at the Central Area Senior Center (CASC) at 500 30th Ave. S, Seattle, WA 98144, supporting a facility for seniors in a diverse neighborhood, and enjoying breathtaking views of Lake Washington and Mt. Rainier. Since March 2021, we have met virtually, and expect to return to the CASC before the end of 2021.



Even as we appreciate the natural beauty surrounding our worship, we work to remember that we live and meet on land with a complex history that merits our mindfulness of the Coast Salish people, whose traditional home we share. In gratitude, SSFM and many individual members of our community support Real Rent for the Duwamish tribe.

When we meet in person, our meeting:

- Is wheelchair accessible and welcoming to all;
- Offers childcare/First Day school for our approximately 15 children; and
- Brings together 42 Members, and approximately 20-30 regular attenders.

In March 2020, SSFM had **transitioned to meeting virtually via Zoom** in response to the deepening COVID-19 crisis (and to comply with Governor Inslee’s state-wide order). All of our meetings - monthly meeting for business, standing committees, clearness/new member committees, and ARE sessions were switched to a virtual format.

An unexpected benefit of the virtual meeting offering was the ability of Friends to participate in worship who might be in inconvenient locations or

otherwise unlikely to attend in person. We have a core group of about 15-25 regular attenders via Zoom, including those from near and far – Seattle and surrounds, plus Mt. Vernon, North Bend, Kelowna (BC), and Honolulu, with occasional visitors from overseas. We have seen each other's pets, homes, children, and spouses. We have raised our voices in song together every week before starting meeting for worship, shared our experiences in isolation together, and members of our Community and Spiritual Life committee stayed on to provide social support and an extended social hour after our meetings.

It has been difficult to gain clarity on when to resume meeting in person. In August 2020, the Arrangements Committee hosted a formal survey to our community about which other meeting options (e.g., small, in-person, outside gatherings) we could offer to supplement the online meetings but, ultimately, the most popular and comfortable option has been the online group Zoom meeting every week.

Despite finding ways to connect and share, we have felt keenly this year the losses caused by **COVID-19** – the lost opportunities to connect in person, the burdens of isolation, and our grief over the loss of loved ones. Some of our members have lost jobs, and all have lost social connections.

As we enter March 2021, a growing number from our meeting have completed their **vaccinations**. We see the path opening to reconnections and hugs. It reminds us that “in the midst of winter, there is in me, an invincible summer.” (Camus) Our Arrangements committee will host an ARE session in April 2021 to further discuss when and how we can resume in-person meetings later this year. We hope to emerge strengthened with a meeting that offers simultaneous in-person and remote options.

February 2021 saw the launch of our **Community Gifts Bank**, seizing on the fact that even in these times of physical distancing (and perhaps never more beneficially), SSFM is a community rich in gifts to share with one another. We share our time, talent, interests, creativity, and energy. It is "This Little Light of Mine" meets "Buy Nothing;" where members offer blessings instead of stuff.

Our **Uprooting Racism Adhoc Committee** continued its work this year. Actions included a decision to send a financial contribution to the Ujima Peace Center in Philadelphia and to seek connections with African-

American community groups such as Rainier Beach Action Coalition. We had a discussion group around reading *White Fragility*. We also approved the creation of a **special fund for donations to support charities that work to address racism**, which both supports the values of our meeting and provides an active response to the growing voices over injustice against people of color.

Our meeting hosted an **Adult Religious Education (ARE)** session almost every month. Topics included social justice issues (Reparations), Quaker activism (Friends Committee on National Legislation on immigration), climate justice (No Arks and the Tree of Hope), Quaker history (discussing the book “Kendall Sparrow,” presented by the author, Barbara Schell Luetke), and the spiritual journeys from our members.

Of note, two copies of the *Kendall Sparrow* are now part of our **SSFM lending library**, conceived and maintained by our member Leslie Umans. Although our library (housed in the CASC meeting space) is in hibernation during the pandemic, Leslie kindly keeps the spirit alive with periodic reviews and announcements in our monthly SSFM newsletter.

Our **Older Friends** group and also a Death and Dying group, meet monthly after the meeting for worship.

Instead of a business meeting and a Christmas pageant presented by our First Day School children, we had a virtual – but no less festive! –

Christmas party. It included sharing favorite recipes and traditions, carol singalong, and a creative and fun Christmas pageant acted out with Lego minifigures (!) by our own Natasha White Marsh and her son, Micah. (This report would be incomplete without a special shout-out to the Lego Angel Gabriel!)



We were delighted to welcome five **new and transferred members** this year – Natasha White-Marsh, Susan Sweitzer, Hal Hamilton, Scott McJannet, and Judith Anderson. And we were also blessed with news of grandchildren and a request from two of our members for a clearness committee to prepare for marriage.

Beyond our meetings, the main ways that we maintain connection and communication with each other are through our email listserve and our informative and creative monthly newsletter (conceived, written and edited by our member Celia Castle). In September 2020, we refined the **guidelines for our SSFM listserve**, clarifying communication by categorizing communications (e.g., Hold in the Light, Business, Peace & Justice, and Personal), and helping remind everyone to “be respectful; remember that of God in every person” and to not “write anything you wouldn’t say in person.” As in all our work, we wish for “our mailing list [to be] a tool for cultivating and nurturing our community; written and read with respect, tolerance, and love.”

Our **financial health** this year has been stable; though our contributions have gone down, our expenses were also lower. Also, as is our custom, we gave 10% of our annual budget to four organizations doing work that aligns with our shared values. This year, we chose Got Green, Real Rent Duwamish, American Friends Service Committee, and the Friends Committee on National Legislation; collectively representing a blend of non-profits which are local and national, Quaker and non-Quaker.

Challenges for the year ahead: Our challenge going forward will be to identify when to best transition back to in-person meetings and, in doing so, to both reconnect to our members and attenders who attended regularly before weekly meetings went virtual, and to continue to facilitate virtual access for people who are unable to meet in person.

Goals for the year ahead: As vaccinations continue to roll out, the Arrangements Committee will identify when to restart in-person meetings on a schedule that is responsive to the members’ needs, and to research ways to maintain a virtual meeting option to complement our in-person meeting for people who are from farther afield or otherwise unable to attend in person.

In closing, SSFM is a committed and supportive community of members and attenders which covers a wide range of ages and is inclusive of all. We remember with love everyone who suffered in this year of COVID-19, and eagerly (but cautiously) anticipate returning to share our gifts and blessings together in person.