

Eastside Friends Meeting

STATE OF THE SOCIETY REPORT for 2023

Approved at Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business, 3/12/2023

We are delighted that several new attenders have found Eastside and are fast becoming part of our community. This is a true joy. First-Day attendance is gradually increasing, typically around 20 people in total. Our formal membership number remains steady.

We are sad to announce the death, in 4/2022, of longtime member, Carol Heywood. Carol was completely devoted to family and extended that warmth and caring to our Meeting family. Her attention to detail kept our membership on track, from financial records, Meetinghouse maintenance, and Pastoral Care to recognizing birthdays.

We are more than delighted to have children attending again – between one and five kids on any given First Day, age range 3 to 13. Adults volunteer to lead activities such as games, books, arts and crafts, and nature walks. Each session starts with weekly “joys and concerns,” incorporates some discussion of the Advices and Queries for the month, and closes with a mindfulness activity. On the last Sunday of the month, the kids participate in the EFM community by helping set up the monthly potluck.

We continue to hold hybrid meetings for worship, meetings for worship for business, and second hours. We have added auxiliary microphones to improve the sound quality for Friends participating remotely. We will continue to tweak as necessary to integrate in-person and remote participation as fully as we can, and we will continue to practice patience when the Zoom link drops out. One of our newer attenders has become part of our tech team, for which we are very grateful!

Last year two long-time Eastsiders began an online “Quaker Basics” group for new attenders or anyone with questions or a desire to go deeper into Quakerism. “Quaker Basics” has now evolved into a twice-a-month discussion group, open to everyone, which explores a variety of Quaker issues and experiences. Our Friendly Bible Study also continues to meet once a month, in hybrid format; that group has spent the last year working through the Book of Job.

Eastside Friends remain active in a number of peace and social justice concerns. Our pattern is to support individuals in their own volunteer service rather than try to settle on one or two Meeting-wide causes. Eastsiders give their energy in many directions. Quite a few of us participate in Quaker Voice on Washington Public Policy activities, especially during the

legislative session. Members and attenders also volunteer for hospice, food banks, and other organizations serving those in need in our communities. EFM members continue to work toward racial justice through teaching and through community dialogue with local police. There have been significant changes at the Monroe Correctional Complex (MCC), and we are glad that the Alternatives to Violence Project will be able to start up again at the Twin Rivers Unit there. One Eastsider is an AVP facilitator. The closure of the Washington State Reformatory at MCC, however, has forced University Beyond Bars (UBB) to change the focus of their service to prisoners from providing college education on the inside to providing reentry services on the outside. UBB has a new, formerly-incarcerated director who will bring lived experience to the work, but this is a drastic change for UBB, and it is unclear what future role former Eastside volunteers might serve in the new organization.

We continue to use our Land Acknowledgement at Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business and other gatherings. One Friend has been researching Indian Boarding Schools; two Friends recently took part in “Healing Haunted Histories” and will continue to explore local tribal history and advocate for indigenous issues. We share what we learn.

Eastside Friends are leaders in the Yearly Meeting, including clerks of the Peace & Social Concerns Committee and Youth Committee, and rising clerk of Annual Session.

Although Eastside Friends Meeting is thriving in many ways, one significant exception is our financial position. Contributions to EFM have fallen off in recent years. During this fiscal year it seems likely that we will for the second time have no meeting funds available for donations to charitable causes. (Individuals contribute to many of the causes, and we have also been taking a monthly special collection for certain organizations.) We have some modest reserves and are not in dire straits yet, but we remain concerned that we are barely able to meet a considerably reduced annual budget. Another major concern is that our building systems are aging and need maintenance. We have begun discernment around ways to improve our financial stability and sustainability while following the leading of the Spirit.

As we adapt to changes and challenges, Meeting for Worship remains the center of our community spiritual life. Expectant worship is a haven of peace for many. Vocal ministry is rich and deeply grounded. We have developed a new tradition of asking a sharing-prompt during introductions at the rise of meeting, for example ‘What am I taking away with me from this meeting?’ Or ‘What is one thing that I am grateful for this morning?’ This practice helps us build community between oldtimers and newcomers and between online and in-person participants.