State of the Meeting Report

Olympia Monthly Meeting State of the Society Report for 2022 and presented in 2023. Approved on March 12, 2023. Olympia Monthly Meeting continues to thrive despite its struggles with unity. We delight in corporate worship together even though we are still struggling with the various issues that have beleaguered us over the past six years. During this past year, much energy has been put into renewing our commitment to one another. Throughout the year we have participated in workshops, threshing sessions, and listening to one another. We seek a community of love, respect, acceptance, and harmony.

Our Healthy Community Committee has guided us through the past pandemic era. After the governor of Washington no longer placed restrictions on faith communities, the committee continues to monitor the pandemic and advice to reduce risk. We mask at Meeting, we eat out doors, or, if planning an event where we will eat together indoors, we ask that everyone test beforehand. We are prepared to do our own contact notification if needed. No spread of COVID has occurred from our Meeting.

Over the past year the hospitality committee has been able to start having coffee, tea, and beverages with a few snacks at the rise of meeting. We have also had two potlucks and we provided food for Meeting for Worship with a Focus on Business. We are moving to have a regular potluck monthly between Meeting for Worship and Meeting for Business to help hungry people stay for business meeting. Everyone on hospitality and others have commented on how good it feels to once again share food with friends.

With the knowledgeable help of two attenders, it is good to report the successful advance of blending Meeting for worship with Friends in person and on Zoom. Worship and Ministry committee is thankful that this has united our spiritual community. Our hope is to progress with technological needs while being guided by our spiritual needs. To support peace in our community our committee utilizes the Greeter as the monitor for safety for all. See our Registered Sex Offender Policy for guidelines. Please know that these guidelines are still being worked on for unity. We provided participation in World Quaker Day on October 2,2022 to promote our presence locally and internationally. Many of our members visited Lower Columbia Worship Group (currently in our care ) throughout the year.

We continue to open our arms to new Friends, old Friends, and disenchanted Friends. We have hope and faith that way will open to move us united in our fellowship. Many heartaches are felt at the separation of dear Friends seeking peace outside of Meeting. Changes in our administrative body left us saddened by the stepping away of our long-time Friend as our Hearthkeeper. We have been blessed with the tender help of our new Hearthkeeper. She has seen to the care of internet needs, newsletter, and facility support. Also a helpful service has been the hiring of a rental manager, which happened in September.

Composting for Renewal committee has done fervent work throughout the year. Because of the painstaking care provided by them we have the following skills to practice in our community. First is to listen, acknowledge other perspectives, and ask questions with curiosity. Second is to jointly explore goals without blaming, criticizing, or holding to a position. Third is to reduce the pace, allow a space to reflect, and separate between the person and the behavior instead of labeling people.The committee supported our contracted facilitators in directing Olympia Monthly Meeting in the structural / cultural relationship work. This included learning and

identifying specific areas where we lack unity; better understanding of the decision-making structure we want to have in place; and supporting the role of continual learning and education to ensure that decisions are well informed. Our meeting started exploring the many queries members posed which are noted at the end of this report.
An educational highlight was in February when a long-time member provided a three-session class on " Engaging with Gandhi: A Self-reflective Inquiry". In October, three Newcomers classes were provided by another long-time Friend.

The Children's program has experienced a lot of change in 2022. As the COVID pandemic became less severe and more manageable in our county, First Day school transitioned from remote to in person activities. A few families that had previously attended Meeting returned and several new families have begun to attend in person Meeting for Worship. This has been a great joy. In March, two committee members and one paid childcare staff member stepped off the committee. This was sudden and unexpected. It left one committee member who has been supported by volunteers and one paid staff. The Children's Committee wishes to offer deep thanks especially to the one volunteer that consistently shows up and to our paid staff person. In addition to providing a weekly First Day program based on the Quaker SPICES testimonies, the committee has hosted several family oriented events throughout the year including an Easter potluck and egg hunt, a spring potluck,the summer campout after a two year hiatus, a harvest festival and a Christmas craft night. One of the parents shared the following : " I have sincerely appreciated the Children's Committee and the First Day School volunteers for generously sharing their time, energy, and enthusiasm with the kids and parents. Everyone has gone out of their way to welcome my family .We appreciate the family focused community events like the Egg Hunt and the Harvest party. We enjoyed attending quarterly meeting with a few other Olympia Friends Meeting families in spring and fall. The only challenge for my kids is that the children's program is small, so my kids can't rely on there being kids of a similar age to interact with at First Day School. Aside from that challenge, we have had a very positive experience". The Children's Committee drafted a program description for the Children's Program which includes a brief introduction to Quakerism and the Olympia Monthly Meeting, behavior expectations, and safety policies. This document is near completion but unfinished.

Upkeep has kept the gutter clean, the septic system functioning, and responded to vandalism at the meeting house by instituting the necessary repairs.

Our Outreach Committee attended the Olympia Farmers Market monthly during the warmer months. This provided an outdoor presence of welcoming with smiles, flowers, and friendly conversation to any one interested in mingling with Friends. Our well stocked library continues to offer Quaker resources and many soul searching topics.Several donations have been added over the year.

Over the last several years the Meeting has been challenged to find people to serve on committees. Childrens, Safety and Welcoming, and Finance committees have all been operating with only one or two members. The Meeting has also been without a treasurer for an extended time period. Despite these gaps, members and attenders have continued to care for the Meeting's needs.

Just like all families, Olympia Friends Meeting has experienced heartache, disappointment, and personality differences, but the core of each soul returns to the bond of love. Let us

remember the March 2022 query, " In times of uncertainty and anxiety, how can we open our hearts, return to Spirit with love, and move forward with openness and courage?"

As presented to North Pacific Yearly Meeting, we have a count of twenty five members with an attendance count of sixty five. Children attendance is around eight.

We are physically and spiritually present at our meeting house and on Zoom for one another and those who cross our paths with visitation. May the Light guide our way on.

Topics for Olympia Friends Community Workshop October 2022

Primary Topics for the Workshop

1. How can we define the balance between confidentiality and transparency - when to use confidentiality and when to be transparent?
2. How do we welcome a previously identified sex offender without continually labeling and stereotyping, while ensuring community safety?
3. How do we respond in a loving way while being clear about what actions or behaviors do not belong in our community?

Additional Topics From the Community

4. How do we foster cooperation when people are holding onto positions? What can we do to move on/progress to discussing different goals and interests?
5. Do we keep or replace the 2019 Minute about RSOs? And if we replace it, what should we do next?
6. How do we identify a person's needs and the appropriate place to find and meet needs?
7. How do we welcome a previously identified sex offender without continually labeling and stereotyping, while ensuring community safety? How do we separate the person from their previous SO to grow spiritually along with us like everyone else? How do we recognize and encourage change rather than viewing people as fixed? And acknowledge the difference in what a person did in the past & what he does today? How do we make a decision in a topic like this most of us are not experts in and how do we create openness to various approaches to integrating RSO in a community, including traditional and nontraditional approaches?
8. Is a Quaker Meeting the place to provide "help" to those who need more than what the community can provide? Example: we can provide a safe place for all to worship, but we cannot make people feel safe.
9. What structure for decision making and leadership will serve the Meeting in the present?
10. What is the individual's responsibility to deal with their own needs and what is the responsibility of the community?
11. Can/should the community be held responsible for individuals' emotional states?
12. What is the difference between Member and Attender, both in general and regarding decision-making? What are the privileges and the responsibilities of each?
13. Should one person be able to block decisions if the rest of the group is of one mind?
14. Who are we - what do we believe - as a religious community?
15. How can we build on these common threads together?
16. How do we use these common threads to create new agreements that serve all?
17. How can we be holistic and not separate the spiritual part from the worldly? We can't be therapists for the whole community.

18. What can the meeting do to help people participate in a positive way?
19. What is the best way for a community to handle difficult behavior?
20. How does the Meeting address different perceptions of people, such as a perceived male dominant behavior? How can a Meeting provide both - support for those who perceived dominant male behaviors while protecting those who are perceived this way by others? What are respectful ways to address various perceptions and behavior? How can we avoid accusations and deal with such concerns constructively and ensure ALL feel respected and safe? Can we use the tool of separation between people and behaviors in such issues to constructively deal with them to avoid labeling and blaming the people themselves?
21. Can Safety and Welcoming address general concerns for those who observe or experience unacceptable behavior?
22. What does ‘good faith’ look like in our community?
23. How do we protect the OMM reputation and deal with possible harm caused to OMM by Friends telling new families with children that the community is unsafe?