

State of the Meeting 2024 Whidbey Island Friends Meeting

A sense of joy pervades our small community. We treasure our time together, whether it be for worship, our monthly “meetings for learning,” or special events. Highlights of those special events in 2024 include our second Peace Vigil gathering at a busy street intersection, followed with hot cider and cookies at a nearby church on a blustery January day; a boisterous Holiday party with good food in a warm home with games that had us laughing uproariously; and a first ever collective Memorial Meeting for Worship for all those who have lost loved ones in the last few years – such a tender heartfelt time together.

Vocal ministry in our meetings for worship has blossomed a little more this year, both in frequency and in depth. We have been blessed by several new attenders this year and welcome their fresh perspective and desire to deepen their spiritual lives. We all feel the uncertain and troubled times we are living in and recognize our need for the spiritual sustenance that our shared Quaker life offers us. We started the year still meeting online one Sunday a month but have been meeting in person every week since March. Midweek meeting on Wednesday morning is a half hour zoom worship and is a sweet and intimate smaller group.

Our monthly Meetings for Learning studied the Pendle Hill pamphlet on “Forgiveness: Freed to Love” through the spring and left the fall open to new leadings. This prompted a consideration of Quaker mysticism and continuing revelation, and of “resetting your anchor in stormy waters” after the election. Meetings for Learning tend to draw about half our regular participants but we find that our second Sunday meeting for worship/potluck often swells to 15 or 20 and we take a little time to explore a “Quaker tidbit” before our meal on that day.

We felt called as a Meeting to witness in several ways to the wider world. In November, at the time of the election, we put an ad in our local paper, beautifully formatted, with the message: “Love Thy Neighbor, No Exceptions” followed by our contact information. When we learned of a landback opportunity in California, returning the land most recently known as Sierra Friends Center to the Nisenan Tribe, we contributed financially to help make this a reality. Individuals in our Meeting are active with Sound Water Stewards, Greening Congregations Collaborative, Right Sharing of World Resources, Way of the Spirit, Whidbey Native Connections Initiative, Quaker Earthcare Witness and in lobbying efforts with the Washington state legislature.

When we reflected on what is lacking, or what we would want more of, several responses emerged. There is a concern for timely arrival to worship, a longing to have a more public face with the wider community, a desire to hear more requests for clearness committees which are not only a gift of vulnerable exploration for the focus person but a gift of service and deep listening for those who serve, and like so many meetings we long for more younger people.

We are a vibrant, seeking, growing, nurturing community, faithful in our commitment to one another and our shared spiritual journeys.