

STATE OF THE MEETING REPORT BOULDER MEETING OF THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS (2020-2021)

Regardless of how many times it's been said, it remains true: it has been a difficult, most unusual year! Confusion, sadness, loss, and the ever-so slow dawning of hope for a return to a "new normal" have challenged and changed almost everything about how we lived and operated before the pandemic. So perhaps the most remarkable aspect of this year is that our Boulder Friends Meeting has found Way Opening to allow us to remain Friendly in our Faith, creative in our methods, and faithful in our work.

For the health and safety of our community, we closed our Meetinghouse to all in-person activities in March 2020. Worship, committee and small group meetings were all conducted via Zoom for the entirety of this committee year. And yet, the 14 committee reports attest to the fact that, while deeply affected by the implications of the past 12 months, we have remained vital, vibrant and confident of the Light.

Ministry and Worship Committee in consultation with others, helped initiate online meetings and developed Zoom meeting protocols to create as worshipful an experience as possible for our 40-60 attenders. Technical hosts were recruited to minimize meeting disruptions and offer fellowship in small break-out rooms for those wishing to experience a more intimate social time. Small informal outside meetings as well as Zoom Quaker check-in groups were created to help maintain personal connections and relieve isolation. A Christmas Eve program was held with music via Zoom.

With other committees, M&W discussed the topic and protocols needed to safely open and conduct in-person meetings, but so far it has not been safe to re-open the building. O&M has agreed to assess when they believe in person meetings will again be possible. Program hours and spring potluck meetings were cancelled, but by late Fall, program hours began again via Zoom with M&W's offerings focusing on learning about Quaker practice through the experiences of long-time Quakers.

Oversight and Membership Committee (O&M) provides pastoral care for those in need and coordinates with other committees, such as Service and Ministry and Worship, to care for our members and attenders. O&M forms clearness committees for membership, marriage, and for spiritual and other personal concerns. O&M conducted the following recurring activities: Review of Friends in need, and connecting them with available resources; consideration of the impact of Covid, monitoring closure of the Meeting House and the ongoing possibility of its re-opening; Clearness committees for membership (1), specific needs such as conflict in the meeting (1), member transfers and resignations (2), and special requests by members (1). We held a retreat with Ministry & Worship to better coordinate our efforts for membership well-being and quality of worship, and coordinated with other committees such as Service, Ad Hoc on Accessibility, and Grief and Bereavement to insure members' needs are met.

Special activities included: Coordination with M&W and Nominating Committee for filling committee positions and possibly reducing committees; coordination with the Program Committee to support cohesion of the Meeting; coordination with other committees for successful Zoom meetings, paying attention to visitors and returning Friends; a policy for constructive email communication; inclusion of the Membership Directory on the protected website, and consideration of the positive process of eldering.

Building and Grounds Committee completed the following projects despite the building closure & no rentals, except the New Horizons preschool which returned to in-person learning in August 2020: hired painters to paint the Fellowship Room and Meetinghouse hallways; installed pathway lights; secured maintenance for furnaces; researched the use of WIFI-remote-controlled thermostats to be installed Spring 2021; held five workdays to maintain the grounds; installed two sensors to monitor extreme cold and/or flooding in the building; worked with the newly formed Ad Hoc Committee on Accessibility; responded to flooded bathroom & repaired toilet; reviewed the possibility of adding street-side Land

Acknowledgment signage; considered installing a labyrinth in the front yard; arranged for tree pruning and removal to be completed Spring 2021; monitored Xcel situation; and received bids for improving drainage in the front yard. We further conducted routine repairs and maintenance of the fire alarm and fire suppression systems, WIFI service, phone system, dishwasher, bathroom fixtures, lawn watering system, roof, door closers, emergency lights, HVAC, and thermostats.

Fellowship Committee tried to stay safe and healthy at home.

Finance Committee oversees the Meeting's finances, advises the Meeting on financial issues, and reviewed reports and assisted the Treasurer; prepared the budget for FY 2021; sent an annual donation appeal letter to members and attenders; continued to work with representatives and B&G to monitor the Meeting's risk exposure due to the building's vulnerability in the flood plain and ongoing work by Xcel; laid down Togo Support Committed Fund.; hired a non-Quaker bookkeeper; instituted background checks on bookkeeper, treasurer, and associate treasurer; adapted the Meeting's financial planning and procedures in response to changing conditions during the pandemic.

Grief and Bereavement Committee communicated electronically as we lost beloved Friends, including Joseph Linton, Carl Feitler, and Robin Powelson. Bob Sheffield's family organized an outdoor memorial for him in July, which Friends could attend in person or by zoom. Available online at the website is [Going into the Light](#), a downloadable resource book for Friends. We offered to arrange a Celebration of Life for families with loved ones who have passed. We plan to offer more death cafes and grief counseling groups once we can meet again in person.

Indigenous Peoples Concerns Committee worked with our Meeting to adopt a Land Acknowledgement, with clear steps beyond words on paper. We are the only Monthly Meeting from IMYM participating in a Joint Indian Affairs Committee supporting activities taking place across the county. COVID-19 has had a particularly devastating effect on the physical, emotional, and spiritual health of Indigenous communities, including those we support with financial contributions. While connections have been limited in the past year, we continue our relationship through support for Isna Wicca Owayawa Loneman School of the Pine Ridge Reservation, Youth Healing Camps (Pine Ridge), Native American Rights Fund's Indigenous Peacemaking Initiative, Right Relationship Boulder, Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes language program, National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition; and we continue to support Paula Palmer's Toward Right Relationship with Native Peoples ministry through Friends Peace Teams.

Library Committee typically gathers in the library to discuss and then do the necessary tasks relating to maintaining and developing our library collection and looks forward to resuming our work of keeping our collection accessible, current, and relevant when the Meeting House re-opens. We did bring to Business Meeting a proposed increase in donations to two Journals since we were not spending from our budget.

Nominating Committee was able to fill some vacancies during the year. Building Use Coordinator was vacant much of the year and our committee had to be creative to spread the word about needs. Since we could not lobby Friends in the Fellowship Room we hosted a Program Hour. Progress has been steady in finding willing Friends to fill positions and serve on committees, though significant challenges remain. We are hopeful that the slate will be fully filled out by April.

Program Committee, resumed programming in mid-November with a "Meet Our Artists" series in which artistic Friends shared a bit about the inspiration and process that enables their art. A Friend offered insights into what it means to "Hold Someone in the Light," and a NOAA scientist made a pandemic-appropriate presentation on masks and the protections they give. We held our usual December Arts & Crafts Fair, as well as the annual First Day School Christmas program. We started the New Year with the

Ministry & Worship Series on ‘Contemporary Quakers,’ and Nominating Committee discussed the staffing of our Meeting committees, and encouraged sign-ups in February.

Peace and Social Justice Committee (PSJ) worked to keep Boulder Friends informed of peace and social justice issues at the national and local levels, though not able to hold workshops as we have done in previous years. Following the recommendation from PSJ, Boulder Friends established an Ad Hoc Committee to study ways in which the Meeting can become more accessible to people with disabilities with PSJ members leading this committee. Members actively participated with the Boulder County Sanctuary Coalition to continue our support for Ingrid Encalada Latorre and her family living in sanctuary at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Boulder. Members also partnered with the NAACP, Black Lives Matter Freedom Schools, Showing Up for Racial Justice, and other organizations to work toward equity and accountability in education and policing. PSJ supported a group discussion on the book, “So You Want to Talk About Race” by Ijeoma Oluo. A “Get Out the Vote” letter-writing campaign was held in October 2020. Members further wrote letters and met with legislators in support of environmental and health safeguards in agricultural practices. Members were also involved with a new local group, Human Rights for Palestinians.

Religious Education Committee supported our excellent all-volunteer teachers and assistants in the elementary, junior and senior levels. The number of youngsters who attend remains inconsistent with the K-6 class having between four and nine participants. That group follows a curriculum based on Quaker testimonies and history, with two months reserved for exploring Bible stories and teachings. The junior young friends (JYFs) met twice a month with one to three participants. The senior young friends (SYFs) also met twice a month, including a “walk to a coffee shop” with both teen groups in attendance. Our Zoom summer program was based on plants and their relationship with people. Adults, who didn’t usually teach during the year volunteered their expertise and interests and got to know the young people better. K-6th First Day School lessons zoomed the regular themes twice a month, and that group met in a nearby park, with masks and social distancing. The kids played while the parents and teachers talked, and we’re planning more of these picnics. We also managed a Zoom Christmas program, with kids dressed up and even pets participating! The two teen groups gathered remotely several times for a service project, a movie and a game as well as planning for their part of the Christmas program.

Service Committee’s in-person community outreach was severely curtailed during the pandemic, but funds to the organizations were dispersed as usual. Friends also continued to deliver monthly supplies to Echo House. Outreach within our Meeting community consisted of many phone calls, especially to Friends who live alone, were sick, or lost a relative. We still make weekly meals for several Friends.

Web Committee had a busy year as the pandemic forced us all online. We added Zoom management to our regular duties; whether temporarily or permanently has yet to be decided. We improved the organization of the website, simplifying some of our navigation choices and adapting wording to make it more user-friendly for both our members/attenders and for visitors exploring our meeting. Our Announcements page blossomed and required a new configuration, and we replaced our regular calendar with a Zoom & Events calendar. We continued to encourage Friends to use our website to get acquainted and share ideas through blogs and Friends Online Profiles. We also archived our many Spiritual Journeys, copying from DVDs to save them on hard drives in several locations. In the face of frustrations of not being able to meet in person during the pandemic, the Web Committee helped substantially to continue the life of the Meeting through online worship, activities, and communications.