

STATE OF THE MEETING REPORT

BOULDER MEETING OF THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS (Calendar Year 2022)

The Boulder Meeting of Friends is a community of faithful members and attenders with diverse leadings, needs, and strengths. Without the willing gifts of all, we could not have met the challenges, suffered the losses, or experienced the joys of the past year. As with other faith communities, we struggled to stay connected during the third year of the Covid-19 pandemic. We have started a process of restructuring our Meeting and its committees to better align with our aging population and reduced numbers (99 members now, according to our Archivist), while looking toward a future that will attract more younger members. This report offers a glimpse into the tremendous amount of personal and committee work required to keep our Meeting's body and Spirit nurtured.

Ministry and Worship (M&W) Committee has focused on the complex theme of revitalizing and restructuring our Meeting over the past four years, with fewer people being available to serve and their burn-out. Our effort started in 2021 and has continued this past year. We discussed one possible reorganization model and found Friends were anxious to move forward with a plan.

This past year our Nominating and O&M committees felt overwhelmed, with too few volunteers for too many positions. As we grieved the loss of several long-time members, the problems of an aging and smaller Meeting have become more pointed. We realize the need to welcome more young people into our Meeting.

In August 2022 we started a Task Force to research how other Quaker Meetings in the U.S. are dealing with the same problems. This research provided us with valuable thoughts on how to move forward. We propose to hold Meeting-wide workshops, to determine the form of our new Meeting structure. This could involve changes in nominated committee terms, combined or reinvented committees and positions, and perhaps more task-oriented service. We hope to have the participation of as many of our members and attenders as possible to create, season, and refine a plan for restructuring that would be brought back to Meeting for approval.

M&W has monitored the quality of worship, particularly in terms of blended/hybrid worship, adjusted Zoom settings, coordinated with in-house worshipers, and changed the script for Meeting closers. We appreciate the volunteers who have served as online and in-house tech hosts as well as Meeting closers, without whom we could not have worshipped so well together.

A small group of Friends has been meeting outside in Louisville since the beginning of the pandemic. We have discussed mutual sharing and learning between them and the rest of our community and extended invitations to attend each others' worship and programs. Seasoned Friends attending the group have continued their committee involvement.

M&W continues to plan our Christmas Eve service — this year we had a lovely hour for both in-person and online worshippers.

A well-attended course of Quaker Studies, focused on Quaker spirituality, was presented in the spring of 2022. We are helping to plan another Quaker Studies course this coming Fall. We are also planning to recommence Spring potlucks this year; queries to be decided.

Oversight and Membership (O&M) Committee is concerned mainly with pastoral care, in addition to overseeing the membership process. This involves, among other things, responding to Friends and attenders in need, in concert with the Service Committee. Though Covid's impact on our community

has eased, Friends' personal medical and financial hardships required support throughout the year. Like all other committees, O&M continued to discuss a new configuration of committees and how such a reconfiguration could revitalize our community. We shared ideas with Ministry & Worship, the Clerk, and the Associate Clerk, at our annual joint retreat in January 2023.

We continued outreach to Friends and regular attenders who have been absent from Meeting for some time. We also made a concerted effort to reach out to newcomers and longtime attenders to Meeting to see if they would like to apply for membership. As part of this effort, we conducted a thorough update of the Meeting's membership packet. The result is now available in the library and on our website. These efforts appear to have borne fruit in that Meeting has approved one new membership and three new requests have just reached us.

We continue to oversee the writing of Memorial Minutes. With sadness, we presented three minutes this year for Betty Herring, Jack Herring, and Maria Krenz, and are preparing one for Tony Umile.

Building and Grounds (B&G) Committee reports that our building has reached a difficult age. It is more than 20 years since the major rebuilding, and our systems have been showing their age. We have replaced two of the three furnaces and the hot water heater for the New Horizons Preschool. We also replaced the control panel for the fire alarm system, repaired the fence on the east side of the property, and removed a large rotten Siberian elm from the playground.

We had workdays most months with varying attendance, sometimes just two people. The last one had fifteen cheerful people raking and weeding. We continue the work on redesigning the flood mitigation around our building and enlarged the chase drain for the driveway. We are planning next steps.

After nearly three years with no permanent Building Use Coordinator, we have a new Coordinator, who will be joining our committee meetings as an auxiliary committee member.

Fellowship Committee has been operating without a convener or a committee structure. One person has volunteered to provide coffee, tea, and snacks on most Sundays, with other Quakers helping. We have a reduced budget, so we cannot do any "catering" of events, but we do provide our regular fare if requested. This Friend also does the shopping of food and kitchen supplies as needed.

Finance Committee oversees the Meeting's finances and advises the Meeting on financial issues. This was a very challenging year for the Finance Committee and the Meeting because donations dropped significantly during the year. Only with a direct appeal to members and attenders after worship were we successful in meeting our needs. We were indeed grateful. During 2022, the committee:

- Reviewed the Treasurer's reports and gave assistance and advice to the Treasurer.
- Worked with Meeting to warn of impending deficits and to obtain additional contributions, which avoided a large deficit in the Fiscal Year 2022 budget.
- Revised the budget when initial submissions from committees were not supported by current rates of contributions; revised the budget and schedule for outside donations for FY 2023.
- Sent an annual donation appeal letter to members and attenders in November.
- Continued to monitor the Meeting's financial status, planning, and procedures: affirmed policies disallowing pass-through checks or directed giving to outside organizations, clarified policies on giving to individuals, and handling gift checks returned or not cashed.

Grief and Bereavement Committee had a busy year, hosting memorials for several members. We held a memorial for Dave Weaver, who passed away in 2021, in Longmont at the end of April of 2022.

In addition, we also held memorials for Rick Healy (at the Chautauqua Community Room), and longtime members Tony Umile and Maria Krenz at Boulder Friends Meetinghouse. We will soon have memorials for Don Dick and Jack and Betty Herring, also at the Meetinghouse. With the exception of Rick's, all of these memorials were blended/hybrid.

Available online (see our website) is the book, *Going into the Light*, a resource for friends that can be downloaded. There are copies in the library and it can also be purchased for \$20. Also available in the Announcements area on the website is a form for Medical Power of Attorney, with directions on how to fill it out, along with information about Advanced Directives.

We also offered to the community that our committee can conduct a Celebration of Life, via Zoom, for loved ones who have passed. Friends may contact a member of the committee to arrange that. We are open to hearing from the community what other things they would like us to offer.

Higher Education Scholarship Committee met several times in 2022 and awarded five scholarships to students affiliated with our Meeting, for both Spring and Fall semesters.

Indigenous Peoples Concerns (IPC) Committee members wish to increase our understanding and appreciation of Indigenous Peoples, learn from them and their cultures, and support them in exercising their rights and achieving their goals.

This past year, we joined with members of Fort Collins Meeting in inviting Rick Williams, an Oglala Lakota/Northern Cheyenne Elder and Educator, as our guest at Program Hour on Indigenous Peoples on the Front Range.

We urged Friends to support bill HR 5444, which would create a Truth and Healing Commission to address the historical trauma experienced by Native American and Alaska Native children forcibly removed from their homes and placed in Indian boarding schools. We wrote minutes (approved by our monthly and yearly Meetings) to urge Friends to learn the history of the Quaker Indian Schools and consider ways to support Native-managed healing processes. We asked local and regional Meetings to become affiliate members of the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition.

At IMYM last summer, several members gave a presentation on Quaker Boarding Schools and also organized a visit to the Southern Ute Cultural Center and the Ute Mountain Tribal Park.

We supported the efforts of the Mestaa'ehehe Coalition, led by the Southern Arapaho and Cheyenne Tribes and the Wilderness Society, to rename Mt. Evans as Mount Blue Sky. More than a century and a half after Territorial Governor Evans was forced to resign in disgrace, having approving the Sand Creek Massacre, the mountain still bears his name. The Colorado Geographic Naming Advisory Board approved the new name. Now approved by Governor Polis, it will go to the national level renaming board. In an effort to increase the support for this we sent our minutes on this and other social justice issues to IMYM, FCNL, and FGC for posting on their websites.

We have ongoing relationships and provide modest financial support to the Mestaa'ehehe Coalition; Youth Healing Camps (Pine Ridge); Native American Rights Fund's Indigenous Peacemaking Initiative; Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes language programs; Right Relationship Boulder, and Toward Right Relationship with Native Peoples, a program of Friends Peace Teams.

Library Committee held meetings on Zoom and several committee members went to the Library and completed tasks such as shelving books and general maintenance, including an inventory of Spiritual

Journeys. We found a spiritual journey believed lost and then returned it to our collection. In addition to ordering and processing new books, we wrote short descriptions of books as well as journals for the Miscellany to inform our community, particularly new attenders, about varieties of Quaker resources.

We contributed about 25 books to the IMYM gathering book store last summer for their “free” table at Fort Lewis College. Attenders did pick up most of these Quaker history and faith and practice books. This service may not be offered in the future due to space constraints.

This year also marked the transfer of BFM’s papers (dating back to the 1950s) from the Carnegie Library for Local History to the University of Colorado Archives at Norlin Library. CU Archives agreed to house these papers largely because some well-known CU professors were Quakers and their papers are also available at these archives. The BFM papers are available to the public and well-maintained, certainly important for preserving Quaker and Boulder history.

Nominating Committee’s key role is to assure that our Meeting runs smoothly, by suggesting Friends for appointed committees/positions and by developing a process for filling volunteer committees. Here are key decisions Nominating Committee made in the past year.

O&M: The Oversight & Membership Committee had a resignation in January, and another Friend offered to fill the remaining few months of the term.

Friend at the Door: The member who had long served as Friend at the Door (FATD) coordinator had to step back from the duty. The Nominating and Fellowship Committees decided that FATD sign-ups could be added to the Fellowship volunteer sign-up sheet posted on the bulletin board in the Fellowship Room. Subsequently, another Friend stepped forward to coordinate Friend at the Door volunteers and will be a member of Fellowship Committee.

Process for volunteer committees: In response to feedback last year, the Nominating Committee developed an online form to facilitate the process of signing up for volunteer committees and to provide information about Friends’ current and future interests for involvement in Meeting. The need for an online committee sign-up process became apparent during the pandemic when Meeting discontinued the use of paper sign-up sheets in the Fellowship Room. Committee conveners were asked to circulate the link to the online form to their committee members. Friends uncomfortable with technology can communicate their interests through their conveners or directly to a member of the Nominating Committee.

Committees to be Laid Down: The Program Committee has been inactive and may be a candidate to be laid down. The Quaker Activities Committee has had no request for financial support in over two years, and recommends this committee be laid down. The Nominating Committee communicated these possibilities to Friends leading the restructuring activities.

Appointed Positions: The Nominating Committee has been challenged this year to find appropriate candidates for Associate Clerk and Associate Treasurer as well as new candidates for Ministry & Worship and Oversight & Membership committees. The Nominating Committee recognizes that its work may be impacted by the restructuring of Meeting, so we postponed the search for Associate Clerk and Associate Treasurer.

The Nominating Committee will publish the slate in its current form in the March and April Miscellany so that everyone can see the vacant roles and committee openings.

Peace and Social Justice (PSJ) Committee has kept in touch through 2022 about the individual work our members have been engaged with. We have united in programs or Minutes to present to the Meeting for Business, but much of our work has been done individually. We have sought to encourage cooperation between Meetings within IMYM, and have been encouraged lately with ways in which IMYM has made it easier to share our callings and coordinate some efforts.

We have used focus areas to communicate with the larger Meeting, and to organize our budget requests. Those areas have included Peace and Prevention of Violence, Racial Justice, Immigration Justice, Environmental Stewardship, and Accessibility.

In July, our much-loved Convener, Rick Healy, died while bicycling in France, and it has taken us awhile to come to terms with that loss. We have thought about how to restructure our committee and still remain viable, while also taking into account our Meeting's plans for restructuring. For now we have agreed to operate PSJ as a supportive meeting place for individuals who are activists within the local and broader community, a place where we will occasionally unite in action and sometimes involve the Meeting with our actions. Some of the work we have done includes:

- Making the Worship room more accessible via air purifiers, as well as research on other aspects of accessibility (with the Ad-hoc Accessibility Committee).
- Producing handouts on the climate emergency, which have been distributed in various areas of the country as well as our Meeting. We have also worked with Elders' Climate Action, hoping to establish a local chapter.
- Promoting peace, equality, and human rights in Palestine and Israel.
- Supporting the NAACP Boulder County, in local police reform, educational reform, and inter-faith education, and training around racial justice issues.
- Supporting the Boulder Area Sanctuary and Immigration Coalition (BASIC), and helping an individual in sanctuary locally for four years. BASIC has expanded its scope to include broader immigration needs, both locally and nationally.
- Helping those experiencing homelessness in Boulder and researching what has been effective in various cities/states and countries around the world.
- Educating the public and legislators about the adverse effects of nuclear weapons and nuclear power, which are inextricably linked.
- Helping to prevent gun violence, mainly in conjunction with an interfaith group in Boulder. Efforts included gun buy-backs, providing gun safes to avoid exposure of children and vulnerable adults to guns, as well as supporting state and local legislation for promoting safety from gun violence.
- Continuing coordination between PSJ and the Indigenous Peoples Concerns (IPC) Committee, including racism and indigenous Palestinian human rights.

Program Committee activity picked up in 2022, as Friends became more comfortable attending Meeting in-person. All 2022 programs were blended/hybrid. Program highlights included: a second program on the purpose of Boulder Monthly Meeting; a worship-sharing session led by Ministry & Worship on our committees; an hour on processing our grief after the deaths of two members in separate accidents; and a program hour by Meeting's Service Committee. During 2022, membership on the Program Committee was reduced to one Member who became the contact person responsible for an initial conversation about proposals and then followed up with the Meeting's calendar coordinator.

We plan a plethora of programs this Spring after the long winter of Covid. January saw a Meditative Music interlude between Meeting for Worship and Meeting for Business. In early February, George

Lakey spoke to Friends and the larger community on nonviolent direct action, and two programs are scheduled in March.

Religious Education Committee is a strong committee of four members. Besides quality childcare workers in the nursery every Sunday, our all-volunteer teachers and assistants in the elementary levels are doing an excellent job. REC decided to split First Day School into two classes, with the younger children in K-3 grades and the older children in the 4-7 grades. Though we have several new families, the number of youngsters who attend continues to be inconsistent. The K-3 class may have between three and six participants and the older class between three and nine children. The classes meet on the second and fourth Sundays of each month and usually follow a curriculum based on Quaker testimonies, with two months reserved for exploring Bible stories and teachings. We have had success with several events bringing the Meeting's children together with the adults. We had an ice cream social, Halloween and Valentine's Day get-togethers, as well as an outdoor in-person Christmas program. Childcare is provided every Sunday and for special events. The summer program was based on the concept of endangered species, though presented in an engaging way.

Service Committee's outreach within our Meeting community included many phone calls, especially to Friends who live alone, who were sick, or who had lost a relative. Throughout the year we provided meals and transportation to Friends in need. Following the devastating Marshall Fire in late December 2021, we provided comfort and assistance to Friends impacted by the fire into the new year.

We continued to provide basic household and personal care products for Echo House, thanks to Friends' donations. Members of the committee participated in efforts to provide warm meals to those experiencing homelessness in Boulder.

In 2022 we provided financial support to the Boulder Homeless Shelter, Emergency Family Assistance Association (EFAA), Boulder Safehouse Progressive Alliance for Nonviolence (SPAN), Boulder Bridge House, Harvest of Hope Pantry, Echo House, and Feet Forward. A member of Service Committee organized a Program Hour featuring representatives from each of the five aid organizations to which the committee provides financial support.

In November 2022, our dear friend and former committee member Maria Krenz passed away. Maria exemplified service, perhaps most notably by her dedication to preparing and serving meals at the Boulder Shelter for the Homeless, or to anyone who was in need of a warm, nutritious meal. Maria was instrumental in the Medicine Box program, which served Boulder's homeless population in the overflow shelters at various churches.

Web Committee broadened its scope of responsibilities during 2022 by exploring the use of social media, publishing the weekly Bulletin newsletter, and renovating our site to accommodate post-pandemic changes at our Meeting. We continued to keep our website up and running, adapting to technological updates and the evolving needs of our meeting. We managed our Zoom account and provided communications through our Announcements page and Calendar. Our website continues to be refreshed with pertinent content directed at both current Friends and the outside community. This year we supported communications within our Meeting in multiple ways.

Website Content: Our webmaster uploaded and updated Meeting documents, policies, and procedures as needed or when requested by committees. We posted minutes passed by business meeting, and maintained a current Directory online. We planned with several committees to determine where they could best share information with our community and beyond. We also organized and revised the history page, adding historical photos as well as making content more accessible. Committee members

also looked for current photos to renew our site. A few older spiritual journeys were prepared to be posted. Towards the end of the year, the committee modified the website, updating it to reflect post-pandemic practices at Boulder Friends Meeting.

Site Management: This year we continued the technical management of our website, performing maintenance and solving problems. We also worked to pick a more effective search engine. We figured out a new editing system in WordPress and began to use an improved version of Google Analytics to examine our site's effectiveness.

Communications: The Bulletin editor is currently a member of Web Committee, so we took advantage of this to expand our responsibilities for communications by coordinating information in the Bulletin with Announcements and the Calendar on our Website. We clarified submissions guidelines for the many announcements and events of our meeting community. As always, we continually evaluated our site to see how it might better serve both our own members/attenders and the outside community.

Zoom: Although the job of Zoom coordinator is not necessarily linked to the Web Committee, the committee did consult on Zoom since our Zoom Coordinator is currently on the committee. We discussed Meeting guidelines for Zoom and shared them at business meeting. We recorded several program hours to be available to Friends who had missed them, and we archived those that might have lasting value. We continued to assist those who needed help using Zoom as well as our website.

Social Media: This year we held discussions about the possible use of social media to let potential attenders know about our meeting. We incorporated the Boulder Friends Meeting Facebook account under the auspices of the Web Committee, revised the "About Us" section on our Facebook page, and became involved with the postings. Then we learned about the potential for using targeted ads on Facebook to reach an audience of people who might be interested in our meeting. This interest broadened into the larger topic of ways to inform the surrounding community about Boulder Friends Meeting, and that led in turn to a program hour on "The Role of Social Media in Encouraging New Attenders" on January 15, 2023. A long-time Friend joined us to offer a historical perspective of how we have advertised in the past, back to telephone books and newspaper listings.

Web Committee worked diligently this year, maintaining our website, facilitating communications, supporting committees and program hours, and expanding into the world of social media. Looking forward, we see social media as well as our website as platforms to showcase Quaker values and Quaker projects to the general public as well as to our members and attenders. We are excited to contribute to this process.

AFSC Contact reports that during 2021 and 2022, our Meeting hosted four program hours about the work of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC). Two programs were presented by AFSC's Denver staff, focusing on their work in support of immigrant rights. Two programs (co-sponsored by Fort Collins Friends) focused on the process of internal restructuring at the national level, with presentations by Joyce Ajlouny, General Secretary, and by several staff and corporation members who had raised criticisms about the restructuring process.

Ad-Hoc Committee on Reopening was formed so that Business Meeting would not have to wrestle every month with the questions of when, and to what extent, we could begin to reopen the Meeting House after the pandemic. The Reopening Committee was tasked with keeping abreast of public health guidance and discerning when questions about reopening could be reasonably brought to Business Meeting. The blended/hybrid approach to worship, which was discerned, purchased, and installed under the guidance of our committee, has been a success. Even though worship now requires two additional facilitators every week (a Zoom host and an in-meeting AV person), we have successfully

held blended (in-person and Zoom) worship every week since May 2021. Over the course of the past year we have gradually decreased the restrictions on the use of the Meetinghouse—removing the masking requirement, removing the social-distancing requirement during worship. Recently, at our February 2023 Business Meeting, we removed our requirement that users of the Meetinghouse be either fully vaccinated per CDC guidelines, or have a negative covid test within 6 hours. The Meetinghouse is now open to all. As a part of this decision the Business Meeting reestablished a portion of the worship room for social distancing. In addition, the Business Meeting urged the Meeting to install air purifier(s) in the worship room. This task is being handled by the Meeting's Ad-hoc Committee on Accessibility.

Given that Covid has now become endemic, we expect to ask Business Meeting to lay our committee down during the upcoming year.

Submitted by Chris Griffin-Wehr, Clerk
Compiled by Rebecca Morris, Associate Clerk