

2023 Annual State of the Meeting Report for the Boulder Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

The core focus for Boulder Friends Meeting in 2023 was restructuring and revitalization. Faced with an aging and declining membership and the demoralizing impact of the COVID pandemic, it has become hard to recruit participants in Meeting affairs. Following threshing sessions, program presentations, and workshops aimed at diagnosing our problems, we created working groups exploring each of 7 key areas in which we identified the chance for renewal: restructuring the work traditionally undertaken by standing committees; encouraging and supporting the concerns and leadings of individuals outside our committee structure; revamping religious education; increasing outreach to the wider community; making greater and more effective use of technology and social media; reconsidering how we conduct the work of our Peace & Social Justice and Indigenous People's Concerns committees in order to tie them more directly into the general life of the Meeting; and developing new ways of promoting spiritual unity and growth.

The Meeting approved three major changes last year: 1. In the past, clerks were appointed for 4 years, 2 as Clerk preceded by 2 as Associate Clerk. Beginning in May, clerks will serve for 3 years, one as Rising Clerk, one as Clerk, and one as Outgoing Clerk. In addition to shortening terms, this will also give the Clerk greater support. 2. Ministry & Worship and Oversight & Membership, each with 6 members, have been combined in one new 6-member committee, Spiritual Life & Membership. 3. The new, smaller committee is made possible by assigning the pastoral functions formerly carried out by Oversight & Membership to a new Care Committee. A feature of this committee is that, though it has a convener approved by Meeting, it will not hold regular meetings but will rather respond directly to the material, health, and spiritual needs of community members as they arise.

In addition, three new working groups emerged that have already had a tremendous impact. One focuses on religious education, and grew out of the old Religious Education committee. The second is the Spiritual Growth & Continuing Education working group, in which a number of individuals came together around the common concern of deepening the community's spiritual life. The third merged the former Web Committee with a technology planning group to maintain the Meeting's website, facilitate communications both inside the Meeting and with the wider community, and improve the use of hybrid technology to include those who are unable to attend in person.

Though our committee structure is still in flux, existing committees have remained active. Here follow brief highlights.

In addition to replacing the HVAC systems for the Worship Room and the New Horizons pre-school, **Building & Grounds** undertook repairs necessitated by two cases of vandalism. With the help of 10 to 12 regular volunteers, **Fellowship** restored fellowship activities to something approaching pre-COVID levels. **Finance** carried out all routine functions and has engaged in detailed discussions with the restructuring group to solve long-term problems, among them the lack of an Associate Treasurer. **Grief & Bereavement** hosted two Zoom memorial meetings, for Don Dick and Sharon Reimer. **Indigenous Peoples' Concerns** worked closely with the

Kwiyagat Community Academy, a unique charter school on the Ute Mountain reservation committed to preserving the Ute language, culture, history, and traditional skills, and the Mestaa'ehehe Coalition, led by the Southern Arapaho and Cheyenne Tribes, in its successful effort to change the name "Mount Evans," honoring the governor who authorized the Sand Creek Massacre, to "Mount Blue Sky," a name that honors the cultures of both the Cheyenne and Arapaho. Meanwhile, Paula Palmer's research on the harm done by Quaker Indian Boarding Schools motivated us to continue asking Friends and others to urge their representatives and senators to support legislation to create a Truth and Healing Commission to address multigenerational trauma stemming from the experience. Though lacking a convener, the **Library Committee** completed all essential tasks and collaborated with the Technology Planning Group to use our Zoom resources to revive the Spiritual Journeys program, in which individual members of the community share their spiritual experiences. **Ministry & Worship** initiated and supervised the Meeting's revitalization process, bringing the various changes that have already been made to the community for discussion and formal approval. Throughout the process, it has continued to perform all of its many traditional functions, including monitoring the quality of worship and vocal ministry, and began planning for BFM's 70th anniversary celebration in Fall 2024. While awaiting the results of the revitalization process in hopes of a significant lightening of the burden its members bear, **Nominating** continued to recruit volunteers for Meeting offices, functions, and committees. **Oversight & Membership** continued with its responsibilities of caring for community members' well-being, guiding Attenders through the membership process, and dealing with other concerns regarding membership, such as maintaining contact with distant and absent Friends. The committee completed the membership process for 5 people in 2023, all of them approved for membership by the Meeting, and wrote 2 Memorial Minutes, one for Tony Umile and another for Sharon Reimer. Members of **Peace & Social Justice** engaged in many peace and justice activities, including Elders for Climate Action, the NAACP, immigrant rights, and the promotion of Palestinian rights and sovereignty; and one member was instrumental in organizing IMYM's monthly peace and justice roundtable. **Religious Education** continued to oversee the First Day School program. It has also worked hard, and successfully, at attracting new students through closer communication with children and their parents to learn what they would like and by encouraging Meeting's participation in the service-learning project chosen and designed by the children themselves last Fall, in which the children solicit donations of pet food and pet toys for the Boulder Humane Society. In addition to collaborating with O&M in caring for Friends who live alone, have been ill, or have lost loved ones, **Service** provided basic household and personal-care products for Echo House, participated once a month in food service at the Boulder Homeless Shelter, and made donations to a number of local service organizations, including the Emergency Family Assistance Association, Boulder Safehouse, Boulder Bridge House, the Harvest of Hope Pantry, and HOPE For Longmont.

The Meeting's current membership is 101.

Respectfully submitted by Chris Braider, Associate Clerk, in consultation with Rebecca Morris, Clerk, and Chris Griffin-Wehr, Outgoing Clerk