

SPRINGFIELD FRIENDS - STATE OF THE MEETING 2020-2021

Note: while our meeting is searching for a new clerk, we have not held monthly meeting for business. This report was assembled from monthly meeting minutes, newsletters and reports. It has not been approved by monthly meeting, but has been circulated with Ministry and Counsel.

Springfield Friends are surviving and thriving during one of the most challenging years in our history.

When all activities were locked down at the beginning of the COVID-19 epidemic, we immediately began making **weekly videos of the message** which were posted on FaceBook. We also made videos of our **midweek Bible study**. Although these are shorter than the full hour of worship or Bible study, they are watched by a very large number of Friends – most weeks more people watch the videos than came to worship or Bible study in pre-COVID times!

We immediately set up a **phone tree** to stay in touch with all of our members. We have used **phone calls, e-mails, e-cards, FaceBook posts** and **extra mailings** to try and maintain the web of friendship and fellowship with each other. We also held **drive-by showers** for weddings and new babies in the meeting, which brought joy to everyone.

In July of 2020, we started holding **worship outdoors** in front of the meetinghouse, using a sound system so that people in their cars or in chairs on the lawn could hear. Miraculously, it never rained on Sunday morning for the whole summer and fall! Last October we moved worship back **indoors** with a number of **basic precautions** – everyone wore face masks, and we removed the cushions from every other row of pews to encourage safe social distancing.

We experimented with holding committee meetings, adult classes and fellowship events on **Zoom**, but we have not had as much success with this as some other meetings in the NC Fellowship of Friends – some of our members in outlying areas don't have good Internet connection at home, or aren't familiar with this type of technology.

One of the biggest sacrifices was not being able to sing **hymns** during worship, since several studies showed that congregational singing was a very efficient way to spread the virus. Fortunately, last fall we found an outstanding pianist, **Suzanne Polak**. She has many connections at UNCG and was able to bring a number of gifted guest soloists to enliven our worship. Various members of the meeting also brought solos as well, so that most weeks we were able to have at least some music at worship.

Our **youth minister, Tanna Shipwash**, did her best to stay in touch with all of our young Friends in spite of many difficulties. We have resumed having regular **weekly youth meetings**, and we look forward to a new age group which is moving up from elementary school this fall. Since many children were being home schooled, we created a series of seven **children's pamphlets** which were shared with families.

Last year 10 of our young adult members were enrolled in **college**, and we made a special effort to send them e-mails and e-cards throughout the year, and care packages at exam times.

In-person attendance at worship is now roughly **50%** of what it was before the epidemic, and continues to grow. We reached a major milestone in June when a survey showed that at least **85%** of our members have been **fully vaccinated**.

A major experiment last year was welcoming a **Spanish-speaking congregation** to share our space. Fuente de Misericordia, a Pentecostal group, has their main congregation in Asheboro and wanted to hold services for their members in High Point and Archdale. Like us, they began by worshiping outdoors, and last fall they moved into our under-used chapel. We enjoyed getting to know their pastor, David Recendez and his wife Grecia, and their group really rocked it out at worship on Sunday afternoons. Unfortunately, their congregation could not sustain the time or financial commitment, and reluctantly **discontinued** holding services here in June of 2021.

A **tornado** last summer blew down over a dozen trees on meeting property. Fortunately none of our buildings were hit, but we did have to replace the **roofs** on the **NCYM Inc. office** and the **colonnade** which connects the meetinghouse with the Museum of Old Domestic Life. An unexpected benefit of the tornado was the fellowship during a number of outdoor work days as we cut up the fallen trees over a period of several months.

We also used the extra time this year to renovate over 100 lighting fixtures in our building, replacing fluorescents with new **LED lights**. A major gift and the work of several volunteers allowed us to bring high-speed **fiberoptic internet** and **WiFi** throughout our entire building, which will enrich our Sunday School and youth programs with quality videos and online materials. Another gift helped us create a **new media center** in an unused Sunday School room, with a large-screen smart TV which can be used by different groups.

Springfield's **250th anniversary** will be in 2013 – we first started worshipping here in 1773. A major project this year was creating an **archival storage room** to organize and protect the hundreds of documents, photographs and other materials which were in danger of being lost. Even more exciting, this summer saw the publication of the first volume of *Springfield Friends: 250 Years – The People of Springfield*. These 71 short biographies share the lives of ministers, missionaries, pioneering Quakers, educators, farmers, founders of new industries, civic leaders and others who have been members Springfield. Future volumes will include articles about the history of the meeting, and family trees of Quakers who came from our meeting.

Our meeting still has lots of challenges. As the COVID-19 epidemic has ebbed and surged, we have had to change plans many, many times! A lot of Friends are **still scared** of in-person worship, or have fallen out of the habit of coming to meeting and Sunday School – rebuilding confidence will take a while. Some Friends want us to **livestream worship**, which will need both **expensive equipment** and hard-to-find **volunteers**.

Our longtime clerk, **Ken Hill**, resigned in June after accepting a new job in Virginia, and replacing him will be difficult. We are critically short of Friends who have the time and ability to lead **adult classes**. Although we had few **deaths** this year, we are keenly aware of the loss of a generation of dedicated members – builders, teachers, donors and leaders who brought lifetimes of strength to Springfield.

But we are still **filled with hope**. We worship, we pray, we work together and we love each other. We have been **richly blessed**, and we trust that Jesus is with us still.



Births:

Skylar Eva Simmons, born April 27, 2021 (Trevon Simmons and Lauren Culler)
Avalee Blair Cox, born June 2, 2020 (Brandon and Brittany Cox)
Elizabeth Grace Myers, born April 30, 2020 (Jonathan and Lauren Myers)

Deaths:

Jewel Parris - died September 14, 2020
Walter Blackburn - died October 11, 1920
David Stanfield (former pastor) - died February 3, 2021
Jeffery York - died March 9, 2021
Magdalene "Maggie" Farlow - died April 7, 2021