

State of the Meeting Report

Deep River Friends Meeting

Approved by Monthly Meeting for Business Tenth Month, Thirteenth Day, Two Thousand and Twenty-Two

This year has been a year of continued blessings, self-discovery, and challenges. Friends have been discerning our way to continue to stay engaged with our members, attendees, and the community, while learning to be a self-led meeting and managing the ongoing challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic. Even with the challenges of the past year and with the loss of several well-loved Friends, we have welcomed new membership, celebrated the birth of children and grandchildren, and learned that we are stronger and more equipped to move forward than we originally believed.

Our main focus continues to be discerning who we are as a Meeting and how we move forward in an ever challenging and changing world. Don Durham led the meeting for approximately six months as our Intentional Interim Pastor. He helped establish a framework for the Transition Team to begin thought provoking discussions and self-evaluation among our membership. The Transition Team participated in many meetings. As a result of these bi-monthly meetings, two congregational meetings were held. These were carefully prepared to help the members take a close look at how they viewed the Meeting as well as how the community viewed Deep River Friends Meeting. Information was gleaned to help understand how and why the Meeting has arrived at its present-day state and to help guide the Meeting into the future. One common theme that surfaced was that Friends are seeking Biblical based sermons, while recognizing that the most meaningful part of the First Day Worship service is Communion after the manner of Friends.

Another mutual theme was that Friends are committed to serving our community around us as well as serving Friends around the world. We continue to engage in our missions supporting the greater Friends network through Worthington Friends in Jamaica and Belize Friends School. We were blessed to be able to host both Nikki Holland and David and Shauna Goode this past year. We also continue to support our community through food drives, school supply collection, Crop Walk donations, providing meals to Open Door Shelter and Leslie's House and providing our Fellowship Hall as a meeting place for AA three times a week. The Meeting continues to be a loving presence in our community while focusing on simplicity, peace, integrity, community, equality, and stewardship.

Because of the hard and diligent work of the Transition Team, the Meeting recently felt prepared to form a Pastoral Search committee. A five-person committee was

appointed and approved by the Monthly Meeting. We are excited to begin our search for a full time Pastoral Minister. We are currently developing a well-defined job description as well as compensation package to present to candidates. We will be seeking God's will for Deep River Friends as we continue through this process.

Our First Day Worship services have been somewhat varied this past year as compared to years past, due to the lack of a Pastoral Minister. Through various efforts, we have continued with meaningful worship every First Day whether through acquired speakers, or self-reflection as guided by the Holy Spirit during Communion After the Manner of Friends. Our Worship services have been enhanced by special music as well as returning to the singing of many of our favorite hymns.

Although we have accomplished much during the past year, we recognize there is still much work to be done. An area of major concern for our meeting is our aging membership. We must continue to look for ways to attract young families and keep our youth engaged and committed to Deep River Friends, as they are the future of our meeting. Our young children continue to be a bright light for Deep River. We are thankful for our current volunteers who diligently work with our young children and have numerous fellowship opportunities for them throughout the year. We recognize that efforts around inviting, engaging, and offering our worship experience to those age forty and younger will reap the blessing of having youth and younger children to our Meeting.

Another area of concern is how we continue to service all the needs of our community with less resources (both members time and talents as well as financial). We have been blessed thus far, to continue with a loving presence in not only our membership but also with our community at large. With increasing demands and time constraints on our current members, we must ensure we are utilizing our resources to our best ability.

Deep River Friends is a diverse community. We recognize there are social issues that need to be addressed at some point in the future. It is important to find a place that keeps us true to our biblical values but continues with our Quaker focus and foundation.

Overall, the Meeting continues to thrive in the face of challenges. We continue to be mindful of our needs, spiritually, financially, and personally. We are blessed to be ready to embark on our next phase of finding a full time Pastoral Minister. We know we will have to rely on God and the Holy Spirit to lead us through this process, but we are excited about what the future holds for Deep River Friends Meeting.