First Friends Meeting

State of the Meeting Report

November 2023

First Friends finds itself in a good position here in the autumn of 2023. We are politically and theologically quite diverse: we are working on helping Friends communicate and care for one another across that diversity. We’re committed to our Quaker tradition as we seek to deepen our spiritual lives as individuals and a community. We seem to be having a post-pandemic reawakening with visitors each Sunday and new friends becoming involved. We are still offering hybrid Unprogrammed Worship and some committees are continuing to meet via Zoom.

Our building and grounds are well cared for. We’ve just installed a fob system replacing keys to the building. Friends helped at our fall workday. We’ve updated some bathrooms, cleaned out some storage areas, and are hoping to embark on a kitchen renovation in the near future.

We are grateful to have a dedicated and stable staff. Our Pastor has been with us for nearly two years guiding us through the ups and downs of Meeting life. She and our Music Minister continue to plan excellent worship opportunities. We hired a Coordinator of Small Groups this year and have kept her busy; in addition, we were fortunate to hire an intern – a student from Guilford College. Our Office Manager and our Treasurer make the work flow well. We currently have three child caregivers who do an excellent job with our children.

Our Godly Play and Faith and Play programs for children are going very well. We have incorporated “All Ages Worship” in some of our fifth Sundays this year. Other than this, we currently have no youth programming, and we feel it’s time to begin a junior high youth group. Finding volunteers for youth work has proven challenging.

The work of our United Society of Friends Women (USFW) is a core part of the life of First Friends Meeting. This group is engaged in many outreach programs which help the Meeting, the community and Friends around the world.

We’re working to rebuild our connections to our community. We had lost some of our ministries such as the Food Bank and the Peace Festival due to the pandemic. We are also seeking ways to use our building as a resource to the community.

We plan, over the next months, to develop some small group structures to both help us know one another better and help our Friends deal with the growing difficulties of parenting, caring for our families, etc.

We have realized that our committee structure is outsized for a Meeting the size of ours, making it hard to find enough volunteers to do all the work of the Meeting. Our Monthly Meeting has approved the right-sizing of our committee structure for 2024. The hope is that this will support healthy committee engagement and work.

Ministry and Counsel has helped us clarify our mission and vision through a process of Appreciative Inquiry that our members appreciate as we *Pray, Play, Serve, Seek, and Share.* In 2024, our plan is to learn how to build on this in the future.