

Berea Friends Meeting 2020 State of the Meeting Report

This report has been composed in unprecedented times, with regular in-person Meeting for Worship being suspended due to the Covid-19 pandemic social distancing measures. Despite the challenges that this presents to our meeting community, and the prevalence of our current reality overshadowing all else, there is much to share about the 11 months leading up to where we are now.

Berea Friends Meeting continues to be a spiritually healthy and dynamic community of seekers. We regularly welcome three to six children, ten to twelve teens, and between twenty to thirty adults at Meeting for Worship. Visitors often join us. We have frequent First Hour discussion sessions which provide fertile soil in preparation for Worship. Our Meetings for Business in the Spirit of Worship are normally attended by at least ten people. This year we welcomed one Friend into formal membership in the Meeting.

This year has seen a great deal of activity at Berea Friends Meeting, with broad participation in committee work, incredible commitment of time, energy and emotional support to each other as individuals, and attention being given to efforts in the wider community and the world. We also have broad participation in work for SAYMA, and collaborating with Friends in other Kentucky meetings.

Our teens continue to be nourished by participation in the Southern Appalachian Young Friends (SAYF) program. We have a relatively large group of teens at present, and the children's program continues to flourish; the entire meeting benefits from the energy and enthusiasms of our young Friends. We continue to discern the ways in which attenders of all ages may be encouraged to interact, learn, support and be supported with regular intergenerational activities and projects, for instance our regular community service project of roadside trash pick-up twice per year.

The spiritual life of the meeting is rich, with deep discernment on the intersections of individual promptings and spirit-led action by the meeting as a corporate body. Bi-annually our Ministry and Nurture committee guides us through a membership review process. This year it provided fertile ground for deeper reflection about the spiritual life of our meeting. We struggle and strive to strike a healthy balance between the inward spiritual life and its outward manifestations in the world. True to our Quaker heritage, we encourage each other to attend to our inner promptings, to speak what is in our hearts, and to actively listen as we discern our spiritual path. Where conflict has arisen, we have relied on our Quaker process, and our goodwill, to guide us through the turbulence.

This year we have been led to be particularly active locally. Our Peace and Social Concerns and Outreach Committees again co-sponsored information tables at a series of live music events that take place in Berea over the summer. We again committed to the winter season of Berea's Room in the Inn efforts, with members and attenders serving in many capacities including: volunteering at the check-in location, preparing, sharing and hosting meals, donating materials, providing extra meetinghouse cleaning, and serving as "Innkeepers" once per week over the winter months to provide a shelter option for our local homeless population.

Racism has been, and continues to be, a major focus of our attention. As a meeting we engaged in a shared reading and discussion of the book "White Fragility". It was a valuable endeavor providing openings on how we, as a meeting and as individuals, can improve how we think about racism and white supremacy. We continue to open the use of our meeting space to a local group called "First Thursday Club" which meets monthly and aims to create conversation and share learning on racial justice issues and dismantling white supremacy; many from our meeting are also attenders with this group. As individuals and as a meeting body, we continue to grapple with understanding our own complicity in racist systems and institutions, and many of us are actively leaning into challenging conversations about what dismantling white supremacy looks like in our monthly and yearly

meetings.

We actively nurture a meeting culture that provides gentle correction and guidance, and we continue to value many long-cherished aspects of our Meeting — the opportunity to worship in a space where mind and body can be still, a home in which we can experience our Quaker identity, and a safe and welcoming spiritual community committed to listening, discerning, and seeking unity. We walk together on a path illuminated by The Light, supporting and nurturing each other on our journey. We strive to share the value of spiritual listening among ourselves, and with the wider community, and to serve as examples by living what we believe.