

Swannanoa Valley Friends Meeting  
State of the Meeting  
April 4, 2020

2020 has been a year that has demanded a great deal from us. The COVID-19 pandemic, political changes, and the mainstream media attention paid to the Black Lives Matter Movement, to name a few have required active responses for which our Quaker faith and practice has been our source of strength and insight.

Shortly after the COVID-19 restriction went into effect, we began with First Day Worship on Zoom. However we had differing perspectives on the use of electronic media for worship, and some elected to continue worship in our yard. The latter group later met indoors within our state's guidelines when the weather got cold. Amidst the varying degrees of concern over where and how to meet, we found resolution through careful listening and respect for that of God in all of us, continuing both forms of worship while feeling spiritually connected.

While COVID-19 has decreased our in-person meetings, it has not dampened our commitment to stay involved in our community and address issues regarding Indigenous peoples, racial disparity, and our Latinx communities. Being led by the spirit, our hearts, and our commitment to love all, in 2020, we engaged in multiple platforms to provide support and make our voices heard.

A scheduled series of local workshops on *Toward Right Relationships with Native Peoples, (a program of Friends Peace Teams)*, was postponed due to COVID-19, but conversations continue within meeting, with local Cherokee elders and with other faith communities about rescheduling. The Meeting has placed a Land Acknowledgement sign on our property to honor the first peoples who inhabited our land, and work proceeds on a longer Land Acknowledgement statement to be read before SVFM events.

Witnessing the death of George Floyd and subsequent outrage, some Friends wrote letters to the editor as well as participated in postcard writing campaigns encouraging voter registration. We compiled an extensive list of resources for nonviolent civil resistance and strategy building.

We continue to support the Latinx community. Our members have helped immigrants in their quest to seek asylum, and we provided monetary donations. In addition, we assisted with Christmas gifts and English as a second language classes.

The continuing conflict in SAYMA regarding the Uplifting Racial Justice Committee has been painful for us and we continue to put careful attention into discerning an approach to upholding racial equity that combines Quaker practice and current thinking on racial dynamics in our country.

The SVFM Women's Dinner group continues to hold monthly gatherings to share a meal, consider issues and thoughts raised by a presenter or a query, and learn about our rich experiences, leadings, readings, and reflections that arise from our Quaker faith and identity. This community has led to deep sharing, despite a hiatus during the start of the pandemic, and a move to virtual dinners starting in August. These gatherings continue to nurture our spirit, our community, and our leadings on how we engage with the wider world.

We established a Flood Research Committee in response to the high probability of our meetinghouse being overtaken by flood waters. This has led us to ask ourselves questions such as the following: Does ownership of a piece of property enhance or detract from our mission? What is our mission? How do we balance our financial obligations with our spiritual connection to this property? We have begun to question who we are as a community and expect to continue our soul-searching in the coming year.

SVFM members have engaged in the crisis at Guilford College over their finances and identity as a liberal arts and Quaker institution. We hope for Guilford's recovery and enhancing its identity, so much needed for its distinctive contributions in our nation to liberal arts and wholistic, self-transformative, justice-seeking, spiritually-based education.

In 2020 Swannanoa Valley Friends have witnessed the loss through death of several Friends and family members of Friends: Betsy Moreton, February 8; Paul Hultberg, February 9; LeeOra Haring, December 21. We are saddened to see anyone of our community leave us, and we will miss each of these valued and loved human beings. We hold them and their loved ones in the Light, along with their many contributions to our community and in the world.