

Chattanooga State of the Meeting Report, 2022

Probably like all SAYMA meetings assessing their meetings, Chattanooga Friends are constantly asking “When will this pandemic cross be lifted from us?” Even though few of us still wear masks and our seats are not set as far apart, we have not returned to our prepandemic ways, either physically or psychologically. Chattanooga Friends have not rehired our monthly house cleaners, and our pre-pandemic five children (and their parents) have not returned to find we no longer have our First Day School for them. We have put our plans for enlarging our parking area on hold. Fewer members and attenders show up now for our twice-yearly (and still productive) work days or stay for Second Hours. We had to lay down our Peace and Social justice Committee because of a lack of leadership. It has not helped that our yearly meeting has been battered by meeting withdrawals and controversies about the best way to root out white supremacy.

Yet for our strong core group—what Quaker meeting could ever cope without them?—there are glimmers that suggest the darkness is penetrable: the weekly number of first-time and continuing visitors, sometime three a Sunday, has been heartening, and we gained one new member last year. We have found the Quaker Speak videos helpful and still take time to explore individual spiritual journeys of those who attend regularly. We have also been careful to keep our nearly ninety-year-old meetinghouse in good repair. Collecting food to deliver to a local food bank and homeless agency continues to be a priority. Weekly meetings for worship reveal that Friends and attenders are growing and maturing in the faith; gratitude for our worship is often expressed. Our two committees that had the Quaker word “Oversight” in their names have excised it and become “House and Grounds” and “Ministry and Nurture.” We look forward to a time when the shadow of the pandemic has faded and the meeting flourishes abundantly.

Approved, March. 19, 2023
Chattanooga Friends Meeting,
Larry and Becky Ingle,
Co-clerks