

Memphis Friends Meeting State of the Meeting Report for 2022

We began 2022 fresh from the disappointment of yet another Christmas Eve only accessible to us online. And while we had to return to online-only for Christmas Eve at the end of 2022, we postponed that service to hold a joyous in-person Epiphany in January 2023.

Throughout 2022 many of us continued to face the longing to be together in person, while being tender that some of us still did not feel safe doing so. Finding our way back to the meetinghouse was a road of tension, bearing with each other in love, sometimes reverting to Zoom only worship, sometimes gathering in the back yard, and then finally in the meetinghouse.

Last summer, long before we were meeting in person again, we undertook carpentry repairs and had the exterior of the meetinghouse painted. Now that we are back, we find that the meetinghouse is still a beautiful, well-maintained place for us, a welcome space for worship

Returning to the meetinghouse is allowing us to do many things that have been on hold during the pandemic: First Day School, potlucks, and sharing our space with others. We have just recently resumed First Day School and it is wonderful having young Friends in our midst once again. Last spring, one of our teens invited SAYF to our meetinghouse for the first time for their spring retreat, but it was only this spring that we found unity to resume monthly potlucks. We strive to be hospitable; it is a joy when new people find us. And it is a joy to once again open the meetinghouse to community groups.

Friends are devoting time and energy to our Justice Working Group, our yearly meeting, Wider Quaker Organizations, and community groups supporting racial justice, peace, and the LGBTQ+ community. However, the work is daunting and to find the encouragement to continue our efforts, we are cautioning ourselves to take the time to discern what is reasonable to do with the time and energy we have to give.

As we continue breathing new life into our community, the simplest of things can be deeply meaningful: a call, a card, a note, meeting for daily online worship, or a ride to worship. The slow regrowth of our community sometimes takes a leap forward as we rely on the certainty of the spirit. We are moving forward by being present for each other. Our collective deepening also comes from clearness committees, discernment, and supporting and lifting up not only the focused Friend but also the supporting Friends as well.

These reflections yield several queries and observations: How do we keep Quaker communities, large and small, safe? How do we balance the truth of our testimonies while being Friends of integrity? How do we help people feel connected to the Light within, as well as with our community of Friends?

By wrestling with these challenges Friends grow closer to Spirit and to the Light. If we let them, the challenges we face can lead to spiritual deepening.

Process: Meeting for Learning on Zoom January 22, individual conversations, small in-person meetings in February, read in Meeting for Business March 12, seasoned online, and approved in Meeting for Business April 9, 2023.

Memphis Friends Meeting List of activities in 2022

Activities grow out of an abundance of spirit. Here are some of our activities supporting causes we have worked on, supported, or accomplished during 2022:

- *Hosting a SAYF retreat*
- *Holding a 2nd faith stories sharing group*
- *Sponsoring our own MLK Day food drive*
- *Marching in the MLK parade*
- *Working with the local Advocacy Group of Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL)*
- *Threshing about conflict in Southern Appalachian Yearly Meeting and Association (SAYMA)*
- *Endorsing a reparative justice minute from Atlanta*
- *Making financial contributions to WQOs and local causes*
- *Worshiping with Friends in Kiev through Zoom*
- *Participating in Quaker Earthcare Witness (QEW)*
- *Participating in FWCC events on Zoom*
- *Supporting the Poor Peoples' Campaign*
- *Producing a museum exhibit for Memphis Proud!*
- *Researching Southern Quaker stories and finding ways to share them*
- *Offering support to the Golden Rule sailboat tour*
- *Inviting Friends and Community Leaders to present Meetings for Learning including Folami Adams and Friends from SAYMA M&N*
- *Supporting the End Slavery amendment to the state constitution*
- *Volunteering to serve in SAYMA on committees or as officers*
- *Attending Online Friends General Conference (FGC) gathering*
- *Attending Yearly Meeting both online and in-person*
- *Attending the Tennessee Equality Project (TEP) Gumbo Contest*
- *Participating in Braver Angels*
- *Attending a retreat in Nashville where Folami Adams was the keynote speaker*
- *Participating in a workshop at Pendle Hill (Connection, Rupture, and Repair)*

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