

Eugene Monthly Meeting State of Society Report 2023-2024

Eugene Meeting had a year of creative adaptation. New attenders, ideas, projects and energy led us to both a sense of expansion and a felt need for going deep and getting grounded.

The nurture of our community has taken many turns this year. **Ministry and Counsel Committee** experimented with different after-meeting offerings including storytelling, experiential movement, guest speakers, as well as traditional worship sharing. “Living Peace Here and Now” was the theme of our annual retreat which featured poetry, song, dance and worship. The tragic war in Gaza has upset everyone, and feelings run deep in our community. We find a need for listening, compassion and reconciliation.

For the first time in years we had a single **Clerk**, rather than co-clerks. This is a huge job! The **Clerks Support Committee** helps and advises, and former clerks have stepped up to share the load. Our hard-working Clerk has served with patience, kindness, and good humor.

The Meeting is experimenting with **technology**. We have had three weekly meetings for worship: First Day Zoom at 9:00 am, hybrid at 11:00, and a mid-week Zoom meeting. Technology is changing how we conduct committee business, share communications, keep records, and manage finances: mostly positive but some Friends have felt left behind. A new ad hoc **Technology Committee** is working with compassion and patience to bring us together.

Our “angels” on the **Care Committee** continue to provide transportation, shopping, running errands, visits and “check in” phone calls. We serve Friends who are experiencing illness, disability, aging, grief, and emergencies. We maintain a "Light Board" list that is shared weekly in our announcements. "Being held in the Light is a spiritual hug."

An **Outreach** Committee formed this year to welcome and encourage new attenders, and attendance has risen! In-home potlucks have deepened Friendship. A monthly Movie Night brings Friends together to watch films such as “Objector” and “Rustin.”

This year a new **Rising Clerks Program** was started to foster Quaker leadership and build community. It provides a supportive environment to inwardly listen, explore and discern personal leadings of the Spirit.

Children's Religious Education Committee made a bold move this year and hired a talented leader. The Committee continues to host Intergenerational Meetings once a month, which are enjoyed by all who attend. We still have only a few children coming to Meeting, which challenges our creative problem-solving skills.

Monthly **Adult Religious Education** Quaker Studies classes on the theme, “Let Our Lives Speak: How Do We Discern Our Personal Testimonies?” provide evenings of substance—a deep dive into Faith and Practice and opportunities to connect with each other through worship sharing.

Peace and Justice Committee continues to research, inform, and guide our Meeting in issues of peace, social justice and environmental concerns. This committee primarily supports three important leadings: a local voice for the **Quaker Peace Testimony** by participating in an FCNL Advocacy Team for Eugene/Springfield; efforts to confront Antisemitism and Islamophobia; and working to end conflicts in the greater Middle East including Gaza and Yemen. In December 2023 the Meeting came to unity on a Minute on the Conflict in Gaza, which can be viewed on our Meeting website. **Earth Care Ministry** publishes a weekly blog, holds outdoor worship in a wooded and serene cemetery near the Meetinghouse, and encourages environmental action in the Meeting. **Reparations to North American Indigenous Peoples** seeks to transform and restore relationships with Native peoples through education and a Giving Gateway ministry.

Coffee and snacks after Meeting have returned this year to great joy! The **Hospitality Committee** accommodates vegans and gluten sensitivity. Monthly potlucks are popular and feature interesting recipes. Social events provide glue for our community, including an annual “Ice Cream Social” in August, Thanksgiving dinner and a Christmas Party.

The Meeting's finances are in good condition. **Finance Committee** has invested in updated software and file sharing practices that allow them to develop and share reports. This encourages introspection into our use of money. Money is more than just what pays the bills, it is spiritual energy transformed to further our ministry in the world.

The **Nominating Committee** is important in matching Friends to responsibilities. It is a joy when a person and a job come together, and we learn about our collective works and quirks!

Building and Grounds Committee is renovating and upgrading our property. This year we completed concrete ramps and railing for wheelchair access. A major landscape project will filter rainwater passing through our property, eventually returning to the rivers in a more “trout friendly” condition. When it's done, two lovely patios surrounded by native plants and educational kiosks will invite neighbors to explore and learn. Major funds for this project are from local grants and Friends’ donations and enthusiastic volunteer labor.

Vital organs of **communication** within our Meeting community are our **Website** (eugenefriendsmeeting.org) and the **Weekly Bulletin**, distributed mainly by email. We are blessed with talented and faithful Friends who keep us connected and informed.

Statistically Eugene Friends Meeting has about 75 members and attenders. We have 15 to 20 new attenders this year. Our youth count is five children under 10, and five young people aged 11 to 18 years old. Youth attendance is irregular and unpredictable. There have been no births, deaths, or marriages in our community in the past year.

How did we survive the Covid Pandemic and its aftermath? There are still ghosts in the corners and bones on the floor that sometimes haunt us, but the optimism of creativity and adaptation is healing us. Our Friends Meeting is first and foremost a spiritual community, and we seek unity in that which is holy and wise, and greater than any of us.