

**Three Rivers Friends Meeting (Alaska)**  
**Epistle to Friends**  
**July 2020**

As with everyone everywhere this year, Three Rivers Friends is experiencing a 2020 unlike any we could have imagined. Until a few of us gathered via Zoom to prepare this State of the Meeting, we had not met as a group, either in person or online, since the end of February. We are thankful that Chena Ridge Meeting in Fairbanks hosts Meeting every Sunday; several of us have joined that gathering on a regular basis and find it to be a comforting and spiritually-rich experience. Similar to a major snowstorm, we have also found some comfort in the solitude that the pandemic has forced upon us and the opportunity to slow down and be home more. We feel fortunate to be dealing with this global situation in our small town with abundant choices for outdoor recreation and time in nature. We do miss seeing each other in person and regret that the pandemic has kept some of our seasonal Friends from returning to Alaska from their warmer winter homes.

Before the pandemic we had doubled our monthly gatherings. On the fourth Sunday we continued our long tradition of gathering at the Gundersons' home for brunch, discussion, and worship. On the second Sunday we had been meeting at the local Catholic church in the afternoon, with the hope that some would feel more comfortable joining us for the first time in a more public place than someone's home. We had posted flyers around the area and had met there December through March. While no newcomers had joined us, we had planned to continue until summer to give people more time to discover us.

Our Meeting numbers have diminished in the last two years with some Friends moving to other parts of Alaska and some spending more time out of state. Several Young Friends who were active in our Meeting through their early and mid-teen years graduated from high school this spring. They are thoughtful and passionate, and we are excited to see what they bring to the future. A happy addition to our Quaker family is baby Joshua, who was born with Down Syndrome in December and is thriving in the warm embrace of the Gunderson family.

We do not know what the future holds as the pandemic continues, but we anticipate that people will crave being together in person when this eventually passes. We look forward to our Sundays at the Gundersons' home, discussing Quakerism and how the Spirit moves within our lives and feeling the Divine Presence in our gathered midst.