

Tempe Monthly Meeting

State of the Meeting Report, 2019-2020

Tempe Monthly Meeting remains committed to building the Beloved Community. We find comfort in our gatherings for worship, corporately searching in silence and with the benefit of vocal ministry for our sense of God's hand in our lives and the world's affairs. Many of us find fulfillment in serving our Meeting, our community, and Quaker organizations.

The Society of Friends has been described as a "do it yourself religion," which means that if Friends see something that needs doing, they do it. That description aptly describes our Meeting this past year. We are blessed with members of our community who have stepped up to serve in a number of leadership and committee positions. Friends who did not think of themselves in certain roles have discovered gifts they did not feel previously confident about exercising. A number of members of our community have, as a result, shared those gifts and strengthened our community of seekers.

Tempe Friends Meeting has also been blessed with wonderful seekers who have found a home with us in the last year and bring richness to the fabric of our gatherings. Some have left us, which they do with our blessings. Our hope is that they find community with those among whom they travel and share some of the generous spirit they have brought to us. Others, who remain among us, have found opportunities to contribute to different Quaker, Christian and Ecumenical witness for which we offer grateful praise.

Marcelle Martin who had a recently published the well-received book entitled "Our Life Is Love" visited us in the spring of 2018 to share openings. Friends were blessed to hear her words and to reflect upon own insights. Friends anticipate continuing with regular gatherings to worship and share focused on her book.

In 6th month of 2019, we hosted Donna Higgins Smith of Redwoods Forest Friends Meeting, who was traveling with Jane Snyder and Miguel Costop from the Guatemala Friends Scholarship program. They provided information about the program which is supported and funded through Redwood Forest Friends Meeting in Santa Rosa, California.Meeting.

We began reading periodically from the book "Healing After Loss: Daily Meditations For Working Through Grief." As with our practice of reading monthly from Faith and Practice, these regular readings during worship have been well received and give our gathered fellowship of seekers much to ponder.

Anne Pomeroy led our spiritual retreat in 2nd month 2019. She challenged us to find opportunities for grace, to consider what is needed for hope, to practice gratitude, and to consider what is authentic in our sharing. We were also asked to measure how we might practice gratitude in order to interrupt negative patterns.

Our 2020 spiritual retreat in 2nd month, was led by Mary Klein, who came for two days of worship and activities focused on "faith into practice into faith into practice." Friends shared insights about our lives and beliefs and considered our ties to the greater society of Friends as well as our meeting community. Because Friends are non-creedal, the diversity among us was an interesting exploration. It revealed how little difference that diversity makes to our gathered meetings waiting on the coming of the Presence.

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In early 2020, Diane Randall and Sarah Kennedy came from FCNL for a potluck supper on 6th day, worship and then an address and questions in a gathering of Arizona Friends. We heard news of Friendly lobbying and efforts to bring our values to our national government for the benefit of all. That visit was a further reflection of our Meeting's great appreciation for FCNL's important work. In early 2019, we gathered to discern our sense of Quaker leadings in response to FCNL's inquiry about legislative priorities. We understand that our contribution like that of Friends across the country was accepted with appreciation. We are busy with the 2020 discernment for FCNL. A minute concerning immigration and our concern with abuse of the strangers in our land by our government was approved in 4th month 2019.

Tempe with Phoenix Friends Meeting and others have renewed the FCNL advocacy team which had previously existed. Through advocacy at the local level, FCNL and Quakers can exercise influence on national policy. We anticipate exciting work for all involved.

We had a threshing session on our practices and policy toward gun violence and the dangers it poses to our community. Tempe Friends were not able to come to a unified resolution, but did adopt a policy prohibiting firearms on our meeting property and have put up a notice by the meetinghouse entrance. We adopted a minute of concern over climate change and forwarded it to Intermountain Yearly Meeting. We also approved a letter which asked our congressional leaders to support the Energy Innovation and Carbon Tax Dividend Act (H.R. 763). We supported Kurandza Fund Raising "I stand for girls." We have raised funds for Ramallah Friends School. Friends have also been asked to assist with and host Quaker involvement with the White Privilege Conference scheduled in early 4th month 2020 in Mesa. Friends faithfully and joyfully meet our obligations with respect to I-Help, the homeless feeding and housing program to which we contribute ourselves.

Our Children's Religious Education program is a credit to wonderful contributions by dedicated adult Friends who deserve more support from the rest of us. It is also a credit to the marvelous young people who are faithful in their attendance at First Day school. Our Adult Religious Education Committee has not been as successful. The hard work of members of our community to enhance our religious education is appreciated but not sufficiently experienced. We will do better in the coming year.

We lost our dear Friend Bob Dolphin and miss his physical presence even as we feel his continuing spiritual impact. Jeffrey Janney, son of Rinda and Mark and a young Friend with us when our meeting house was new, sadly also died prematurely. We continue to grieve their passing as well as the loss of others who were important presences in our lives and the life of the meeting. Their importance in our spiritual lives is continuing.

Tempe Monthly Meeting continues to enjoy special blessings of additions to our community of weighty Friends who have found our community in their retirement. The wisdom of Friends who have years of experience with Quaker process is a special benefit that the meeting treasures and counts upon for help in finding God's way for us in difficult times.

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We are also grateful for winter visitors and other traveling Friends who come among us regularly. We feel torn when the weather turns and we know they will leave but take solace in our anticipation of their return.

In this year, Tempe Meeting has had two Friends request release from their membership. One Friend has been approved for membership. A member has died, leaving 47 adult members.

In turbulent times we are mindful of Jesus' message that we are called to love not only those who are natural objects of our caring and affection but even those who in the world would count as enemies. We are taught that they are God's children too, on whom the sun also rises and on whom the rain also falls.