

Montana Gathering of Friends Aug 13-15 2021 at Luccock Park

Register for Summer MGOF: <https://www.montanafriends.org/>



Coming Home to the Center of our Community

When our collective journey took us to the dark woods of pandemic isolation and loss, what paths did you find in that dark wood? Each person's experience is different. Some even thrived during the pandemic. But for many of us there was an ennui, a languishing, which is the absence of feeling good, an absence of meaning, stagnation. In short, we suffered; we missed holidays, events were canceled, there were no in-person Quaker meetings, and not a single contra dance for over a year!

When your journey takes you to the dark woods, what paths have you found in the midst of anxiety and fear? What is the center of community for you? Where have you found community despite our Covid restrictions? What unexpected joys did you encounter?

Is it possible that we can come out of this pandemic changed for the better? More kind, more generous, more courageous in the face of injustice? What has sustained you? Equally, what have you released as of no value to you, simply illusion? What now, can help you to flourish as we glimpse post pandemic life?

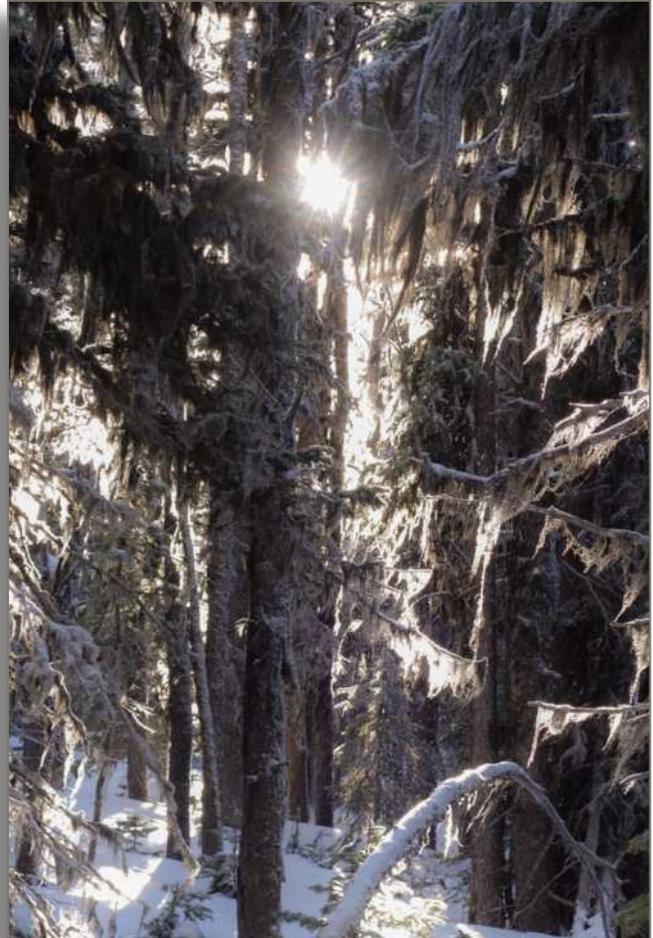
When your journey takes you to the dark woods, what paths have you found in the midst of anxiety and fear?

As best we can predict, it looks like it will be reasonably safe to hold MGOF in person at Luccock Park this year. There are precautions we can take, like being outside as much as possible and distancing physically when inside. Many of us are vaccinated,

although not all. It is important to respect individual choice, however different from our own. Nevertheless, the minimal risks are outweighed by the benefits.

Come home to the MGOF community! You are welcome even if we have never seen you before! Come home to folks who don't have all the answers but who are committed to seeking them, folks who love you the way you are. Come home to Summer MGOF!

We will have all the key pieces of MGOF gatherings: singing, time for chance encounters with people we rarely see, worship sharing, meeting for worship and cool interest groups that bring new insights and understandings. We hope to hear Susan Wadsworth play Native American flute. Maybe there will be a float trip on the Yellowstone. There will be a children's program, teens to challenge us and elders to bestow wisdom. Come one! Come All!



**Heather Sowers
Friend in Residence
Summer MGOF, 2021**

I lived in Montana from 1997-2007 and became a member of Missoula Monthly Meeting in 1998 after searching for a spiritual home in my early twenties. I've worked in social services and experiential education for thirty years. My passion for helping children and youth is rooted in a Divine calling to help families heal from trauma and loss that is often multi-generational. Originally from

the Midwest, my family moved to Maryland when I was a teen. I returned to the East Coast 14 years ago to be closer to my four siblings and mother. I am now a member of Gunpowder Friends Meeting in Sparks, Maryland – undoubtedly the most ironically named Quaker meeting in the country!

I am so honored to return to Montana and engage with the theme of “Coming Home to the Center of our Community.” In my plenary talk, I will invite us to try a dynamic centering exercise and then may share, as led by Spirit:

- stories from my spiritual journey
- reflections on coming out of the dark wood of Covid isolation – what inner truths did the pandemic reveal to you, truths that are sometimes hard to embrace and allow to transform our lives?
- How might we stand with each other in the darkness of losses experienced over this last year?
- What joys can we celebrate together after so long apart physically?

Steering Committee Meeting Minutes

4/10/21

This is basically a summary of action items.

The report of the Committee on Ministry and Counsel:

The clerk outlined the responsibilities of the committee.:

1. Determine the Theme for each gathering.
2. Recommend a Friend in Residence for each gathering.
3. Arrange Worship Sharing groups for each gathering, setting up the groups and writing the Queries.
4. Oversees the spiritual life of the meeting
5. Seeks out F/friends in need of special attention and provides such support as possible. Holds F/ friends in the Light where appropriate.

The Committee is looking into various existing Zoom opportunities programs for deepening spirituality.

Karen Grosz indicates we can do Zoom programs and meetings from the Lodge at Luccock. Geoff Poole has volunteered to help with technology as needed. Will will also help us. The Internet capabilities must be checked out before we can actually plan on offering a mixed format for the Gathering (all virtual allowing those who live far away, cannot travel, etc. to , fully, all in person, both, or parts involving the Friend in Residence virtual but other parts only in person. Missoula Meeting has purchased some equipment to allow expanded virtual programs but has not yet tried it out.

We ask the Friend in Residence to give a 1 1/2 hour plenary program, an interest group, and time with our youth.

The theme will be both a sharing of our personal ways of coping this past year to facilitate stress relief and a joyful celebration of being together again as the MGOF Community. Friday should be time for a fun activity. Two hours are allowed for the plenary. We propose giving an introduction to Worship Sharing and the guidelines at the end of the Plenary session rather than in each small group.

There was an extensive discussion of safety issues and risk with respect to Covid-19. Masks will be required indoors. Meals will be served in the Lodge in Bento boxes that we can take outside. There is some concern about the youth who will not be vaccinated, others who could not be vaccinated, older relatives of people who might be vulnerable if individuals who become affected go home to them. Luccock is doing what it can to prevent spread of Covid-19.

Claire Leonard will write a short article on steps that are being taken to minimize risk, especially for children and those who have not been vaccinated.

We discussed how to get information from the various alphabet groups to MGOF F/friends. There were a variety of ideas reflecting how much interest the individual has. One Friend suggested that we could set up lists (with e-mail addresses) of those who would want the information from each group). The MGOF contact would forward information they receive to their list. Another suggested that we create a blog for this information. Another would just be to post the information/links on our website and in the Newsletter.

A hybrid model is possible. This should be up and running by summer. Put a description of the ways this information will be available in the Newsletter. We should also have a report at the Meeting for Business. MGOF Monthly Meeting has about \$2,000 above our intended amount (2,000). We need to decide how to use this money. Could it be used for the Migrant Fund? One of the questions is how to set up donations to allow donors to use the donations as a legal tax deduction.

It was suggested that we might make the summer MGOF gathering free for anybody attending for the first time.

MGOF Meeting for Business February 20, 2021

The meeting began with a period of expectant silence at 4:00pm. The Clerk, Tina Visscher, began the session with some positive remarks about the resilience of our community. The minutes of the previous meeting had been distributed in the newsletter. We need to add the consent agenda to the minutes to adequately document the business that was conducted.

The meeting considered whether they wanted to approve the Diversity Minute that was written at Winter Gathering 2020 and widely circulated. It was suggested that we send the minute to Western Friend and/or Friend's Journal. We discussed taking it to NPYM. A friend suggested that we should include some context about how we came to write it. Another friend asked that it be sent out again and ask for more comments.

The next item of business was whether we wanted to revise our practice around providing an honorarium for Friends in Residence. Several comments are reported below.

It is a matter of equality. Friends we ask should be willing to give what they have to offer as a gift. NPYM does not provide an honorarium.

One friend felt we should provide an honorarium and that it should be proportional to the expense a friend might incur to provide their gift. They would stand aside if the honorarium was cancelled.

Different Friends have different needs. We might decide not to call it an honorarium which would give more flexibility. A member of the finance committee pointed out that we needed to consider our budget and having an amount that was not fixed would be a problem. The Clerk of M&C indicated that it was difficult for the committee to determine an appropriate amount for different individuals.

Minute 2021-1: MGOF will not pay an honorarium for the Friend in residence. When a person is invited, they will be asked what support they need and MGOF will help as led. Travel expenses will be covered up to \$500.

We next considered whether we wanted to unite with a minute on "No first use of Atomic Weapons" written and adopted by the Great Falls Meeting. Jasmine had initially conceived of this as something to submit to the Montana State Legislature.

As she is no longer representative, she and the meeting have turned to other ways to make their voices heard. She and others have started a group called, "Truth to Power" that is monitoring proposed legislation and recruiting individuals to lobby legislators. Starshine pushed the Great Falls Meeting to develop this minute because Great Falls is a logical target for nuclear war. The minute has been circulated. This was approved.

AFSC Report: Peter reported on his work with Good Samaritans helping immigrants who are attempting to cross the the border through the desert.He brought us a 5 page report by FCNL and a 30 page Interfaith report.. AFSC is cooperating with other groups including the Quaker Council for European Affairs, the Quaker United Nations Office, Britain Yearly Meeting, and FCNL. They are highlighting work on migration justice and hate speech.

Respectfully submitted, Clair O. Leonard, Recording Clerk

State of the Meeting Great Falls plus Helena -May 23, 2021

Attending (14) *Lucretia Humphrey, clerk; Starshine, Maria Arrington, Jim Humphrey, Pam & Mike Carroll, Bill & Rose, Lissie, Kat Northup, Derik Reed. Plus, honored guests from Seattle, University Meeting, Warren & Jana Ostrom. Brent Northup, dedicated notetaker.*

The meeting devoted the regular Sunday meeting to worship-sharing on Sunday, May 23, to share thoughts on the state of the meeting during the past year.Overview of the comments:

The meeting members expressed gratitude that Great Falls kept the candle burning when in-person meetings became impossible. Great Falls hosted a weekly online Zoom meeting, and sent weekly reminders. Lucretia led the meeting. When she was absent Starshine hosted. Those present expressed hope that the meeting could somehow navigate a return to live meetings, while still accommodating those who prefer online worship.

Praise:

1. Gratitude from many that the meeting continued, Zooming weekly.
2. Gratitude to the leaders that kept the Great Falls meeting alive, love to Starshine, Lucretia, Jim...and others who kept the candle burning in COVID times.
3. Gratitude to advocacy efforts by Jasmine and others, such as contacting senator staffs and writing a minute on Nuclear Arms, with attention to Malmstrom Air Force base which manages part of the US nuclear arsenal.

- 4.Gratitude for the acceptance of everyone without judgment
- 5.Overall, meeting seen as warm, accepting and much appreciated.

Suggestions:

- 1.Try to resolve the challenge of returning to live meetings, while still accommodating those who prefer zoom. What's the best way to handle "hybrid" meetings which have Zoom "on the wall" and others in person?
- 2.Search for a transition of leadership as Lucretia and Jim travel more, and host less often
- 3.Keep reaching out with advocacy to spread love



State of the Bozeman Worship Group May 2021

To Friends Everywhere:

Unexpected gifts and new challenges sum up the year for the Bozeman Worship Group.

The challenges were the effects of physical distancing, the stress of uncertainty and the huge growth of our migrant family project called Bienvenidos (Welcome).

Members of our worship group experienced the pandemic differently. Some worried about the oldest among us. Others focused on the deprivations the children and teens faced. Some had exacerbation of physical or mental health issues, while others were able to find joys in solitude, outdoor recreation and creativity.

The first hugs of completely vaccinated elders among us reminded us of the sweet gift of human touch, especially after being so deprived. With vaccines available now, we begin to see our way out of this dark time.

One clear joy was the depth of worship and worship sharing in our continuous Sunday Zoom meetings. We have worship sharing two Sundays a month, recognizing that we needed more connection with each other. We have also had several Zoom meetings to honor special moments. We joined together for worship on Thanksgiving morning to share community and gratitude. In December we substituted Zoom worship sharing for our annual Christmas potluck. In the Spring the women of the worship group met to send off a dear college graduate who is moving on to the next step in her life. It has been a particular blessing to have Friends join us from far away. We are reluctant to give up this close contact with them, but we have also missed those Friends for whom Zoom is not a viable option. We are implementing a hybrid model that allows us to meet both in person and remotely.

Bienvenidos has flourished because of the dedication of its volunteers, despite the limitations on contact imposed by Covid. The program now has 62 community volunteers and 30 families. During the year a visioning process helped formalize the vision, mission and structure of the organization. Bienvenidos coordinates a group of agencies and groups that interact with migrants and has recently become a partner with one of those nonprofits. The organization initiated a summer literacy camp for 30 Spanish-speaking children. The volunteer mentors build relationships with families and help them access community resources. They have felt enriched, and also humbled by closer understanding of the difficulties and anxieties these families face, and by their courage and resilience. Members of the worship group and the MGOF community have provided generous financial support. Other members of the Worship Group seek different ways to participate in the work.

As we move forward, we find that we are changed by living with the pandemic for more than a year now. We hope that change leads us to be better people than we were before, more focused on what really matters: life, love, kindness, welcome to all, and the power to speak truth when injustice afflicts those most in need.



Missoula Friends Meeting State of the Society Report

2020-2021

Missoula Friends Meeting met June 13 to consider an assessment of the state of our meeting and for a report to the quarterly (MGOF) and yearly (NPYM) meetings. This meeting is summarized as follows:

Missoula Meeting has met the challenges of the COVID year with resiliency and flexibility as well as fatigue and simply dogged determination. We have grown in diversity, insight and creativity as a result of this experience, and have strived to listen for whisperings and nudgings of Spirit in the strange, though now familiar space imposed by computer conferencing platforms.

Last spring and summer, we met for Meeting for Worship outdoors, masked and at a distance, until the Montana weather intervened and sent us onto the internet. We have been enriched by the attendance of Friends from distant worship groups under our care in the Flathead, Mission, and Glacier Valleys as well as from Colorado, England and British Columbia, including some newcomers to Quakerism and to our meeting. Some of us have attended meetings elsewhere and have appreciated that experience. We've also held a mid-week virtual Meeting for Worship.

We have clearly benefitted from the ease of gathering by teleconference for committee meetings and meetings of groups with shared interests. Many of us have found richness in being able to gather virtually with our Quaker neighbors to the west, the Moscow/Pullman Friends meeting as well as with the Montana Gathering of Friends (MGOF) community.

We're aware and concerned that there are other Missoula Friends who haven't attended meetings during much of this year and for whom the virtual platform isn't workable. There is no substitute for meeting in person.

The events that mark our lives have moved on during COVID. We sadly lost Richard Dunn, a dear, long- standing meeting member, in the spring of last year. Many Friends, Richard's family and other members of the community who also treasured Richard gathered in the fall to celebrate Richard and hold a tree- planting in his memory.

We joyfully gathered on May 22nd in person, masked at the Meetinghouse, to support Spencer Kellum and Heather Cummins who married under the care of our meeting. It was a remarkable time for those gathered, filling all Missoula Friends with hope, joy and wonder—and laughter. A moving experience has been to unite in support of a new statement acknowledging Native peoples as the original inhabitants of the land we now occupy:

"The Missoula Friends Meeting House is located on land cared for and held sacred by the Salish and Kalispel tribes for more than 12,000 years. We acknowledge the theft of tribal lands by the U.S. government and colonists. We recognize the consequent disruption of tribal culture, spiritual practices and life-sustaining natural resources, and the devastating effects of forced assimilation into European culture, with resultant loss of tribal languages and practices. We honor and support the resilience and determination of the tribes in meeting ongoing challenges and revitalizing their culture, spiritual practices and languages."

We have searched for ways that we can also make a difference as allies for racial justice. Our meeting has sponsored a monthly gathering concerning issues of racism. Through poignant meetings of this forum, we've had opportunities to become more informed and aware regarding the many issues confronting local Native people, as well as those of refugees from Central and South America.

As the last gathering of this series, on June 27th at 5:30 PM, Ellie Bundy, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT) Councilwoman, will give a presentation for Quakers and other interested people on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons (MMIP). Ellie Bundy presides over a new task force, which is the first comprehensive tribal response plan to address this nationwide tragedy, in conjunction with national and state officials. The plan focuses not only on law enforcement but also on victim services, community outreach, the media and public communication. It will be used as a national model. Ellie will provide an overview of MMIP, describe the components of the plan and discuss ways Quakers and others can assist tribes in addressing this terrible tragedy.

We have had enthusiastic Meetinghouse work parties and plan some community-building gatherings and excursions. We have plans to finally begin again to use our Meetinghouse, coming together for blended meetings in July.

"We continue to struggle as a small Meeting to accomplish all that we seek to do. We find that we are heavily reliant on a few people in Meeting to do much, and in particular this burden falls far too heavily on our Meeting Clerk. We are challenged to find balance and to work together more effectively to share our work and support one another."

We long for the felt sense of a gathered meeting where we will all be in the same familiar space once again, where Spirit will move among us in a way more familiar to those in human form.

Draft of June 23, 2021

Missoula Friends Meeting M&O Committee

Montana Gathering of Friends State of the Meeting Report 2019 to 2021

No one could have anticipated in 2019 what was to come in the next two years. Clearly there has been suffering due to social isolation and other stressors from the Covid 19 pandemic. But it is equally clear that there have been unexpected gifts which will change us forever.

Looking back before the pandemic we met for Summer MGOF 2019 with a theme of "From Spirit to Action and Action to Spirit." A couple shared their personal journeys of healing and leading toward social justice, especially on the southern border of the US. The teenagers provided a memorable skit on immigration that was both powerful and funny, ending in the song, *The ocean refuses no river, no river....*

In the winter of 2020 our theme was Listening to Where the Words Come From. We wanted to address concerns that some F/friends have felt alienated when their primary language of spirit was not well received by others. Sometimes that difference is named Christ centered in contrast to Universalist. But in this gathering we tried to go deeper than labels to "where the words come from."

Shortly after our winter gathering, all of us had to shift. It became impossible to meet in person. We were bereft of our worship groups. It was at this point that we made different choices. Some found Zoom an acceptable platform for worship. Others found it uncomfortable and stilted. Bozeman discovered the richness of worshipping with near and faraway folks. Red Lodge Friends joined Bozeman when they could. Dillon folks decided not to meet in person while continuing important personal connections, especially outdoors. Great Falls welcomed isolated Friends, Helena folks and even out of state Friends joined them in worship on Zoom.

We realized that if we wanted to hold any gathering at all for summer 2020, it would have to be on Zoom. Ministry and Counsel saw the need for a message of hope and asked Carrie Newcomer, a Quaker singer/song writer, to lead us in "Gardening in the Dark." Carrie provided just the hopeful energy that we needed.

For Winter MGOF 2021, still on Zoom, we were privileged to have Diane Randall, General Secretary of FCNL, serve as our Friend in Residence. The theme was "Bridging our inner and outer worlds." Diane encouraged us to settle into inner stillness to help us in finding our unique gifts. We were inspired by the effective and persistent work of FCNL.

What's new? MGOF agreed to take on the Honduran Families Project (see Bienvenidos discussion in the Bozeman Worship Group report) and statewide Quakers have donated funds. One challenge faced was the sorting out of how to make legal donations that could be documented. The men's group recently met in person after covid zoom meetings: the men continue to find important connection with each other.

A member who has served in our state legislature started a zoom lobbying group called "Truth to Power." Her leadership kept a light shining on a state legislature in which light of any kind was hard to find. She inspires us all.

Some groups are now experimenting with a hybrid model of worship, with some attending in person and others by Zoom. The next challenge is figuring out how to use a hybrid model for Summer MGOF (if possible).

To those not familiar with Montana Friends, MGOF is technically a monthly meeting but serves as our Quarterly Meeting. Worship groups in the west of the state function under the care of Missoula Monthly Meeting. Billings Monthly Meeting, the third meeting in the state, continues to meet regularly.

The challenges reported two years ago are still with us. We have few children and family units among us. We want to be more effective in our welcome to newcomers and returning friends. We want to clarify roles and responsibilities including terms of service on committees. But most of all we want to be open to Spirit, in each other, in our communities and in the wider world of which we are a part. We know that if we focus our work on being channels of Spirit, we will breathe new energy into our Montana Quaker community.

Linnea Wang
Clerk of Ministry and Counsel
June 28, 2021



Register for Summer MGOF

<https://www.montanafriends.org/>



Summer MGOF 2021 Schedule

FRIDAY, August 13

4:00-5:45	Arrival and registration
6:00-7:00	Pot Luck supper in the lodge
7:15-8:15	Group games, introductions (inter-generational)

SATURDAY, August 14

7:00-7:45	Early Bird worship
8:00	Breakfast in the lodge
9:00-10:20	Plenary with Heather Sowers
10:30-11:45	Worship Sharing groups
12:00	Lunch
1:00-2:00	Interest Groups
2:00-3:30	Meeting for Worship for Business
3:30-5:00	Free time
5:00	Dinner
6:00	Interest Group
7:15-8:45	Family Night

SUNDAY, August 15

7:00-7:45	Early Bird worship
8:00	Breakfast
9:00-10:30	Worship Sharing groups
10:30-11:00	Singing as we gather to worship
11:00-12:00	Meeting for Worship
12:00	Lunch
1:00-2:00	Clean up and good-byes

How to Get There and What to Bring

- From where ever you are get on I 90 heading toward Livingston Montana.
- At Livingston, take Exit 333 Route 89 south toward Yellowstone National Park
- At the bottom of the exit ramp, at the light, turn left (south) on US 89.
- Drive South toward Gardener and Yellowstone Park for 4.7 Miles.
- Turn left on East River Road. (If you miss East River Rd you can go down to Pine Creek Rd)
- Drive 7.7 miles you will pass the Pine Creek in and the little white Methodist church.
- Turn left at the entrance road that will lead you to Pine Creek Campground and the Luccock Church camp.
- Wind up the hill, about 2 miles, and then into the forest until the road forks between the church camp entrance and the campground.
- Go to the left, down into the Church camp

Here is the google map link: <https://www.google.ca/maps/dir/Livingston,+Mt,+USA/Luccock+Park+Assembly+Grounds,+Livingston,+Mt+59047,+United+States/@45.5988282,110.5531017,11z/am=t/data=!3m1!4b1!4m14!4m13!1m5!1m1!1s0x534513be27a04723:0x459632265a848c4c!2m2!1d110.5599556!2d45.6614105!1m5!1m1!1s0x534f88b146018f31:0x66696e9d66b591a7!2m2!1d-110.528526!2d45.499637!3e0>

Summer MGOF attenders will need on Friday, Saturday and Sunday:

- * Bedding of your choice
- * Towels and Personal Wash Gear (soap, toothbrush, shave,etc)
- * Clothes for both warm and chilly (it can go either way)
- * Flashlight
- * If you are going to visit Chico, hike, or do a river float, bring the needed gear.

A few Extras from the Summer Coordinator

Already the smiles are building anticipating our summer gathering together in Luccock Park August 13-15, 2021. How good it will be to absorb each other's presences in person again! We will have a children's program tailored to the ages of children signed up to come, and we welcome everyone!

Luccock has posted a few procedures for this summer, found elsewhere, and it might be useful for newcomers to also know that pets are not permitted.

Some of us may have found ourselves making something tangible during the long months of Covid, and we hope you will bring it to share. We will have a "Creations Corner" where anything you have written or crafted, sewn, painted or otherwise created can be displayed for others to ponder and appreciate. Bring along those treasures.

Fresh produce from any of our gardens is always welcomed by the kitchen and they will work it into our meals. There will be a refrigerator for our use in the Lodge where we can tuck leftovers, should there be any, from our Friday evening Potluck. There is also a way to heat anything you bring,(microwave and oven) and we will have use of the camp's dishes and silverware for the Potluck.

Tina Visscher and Judy Visscher will be leading a hike bright and early Friday morning should you wish to join them! It may be a good thing to contact one of them if you plan to come. For all others, Registration will open around 4pm in the Lodge, with time to choose your cabin or tent site and get settled before dinner at 6pm.

Hour- long Interest Groups are held on Saturday, but the time slots are different this year due to Luccock's rescheduling of supper to 5pm. We invite you to be bold and share something you care about or know how to do! Tell us your idea on the Registration form when you fill it out or just arrive with your offering and materials. By way of example, we hear that Peter Husby is thinking of offering a workshop about Biocentrism, and that Kate Weiss may offer an inter-generational interest group on making prayer flags.

As if there weren't enough going on, there is always the possibility that an outing will spontaneously be proposed. If you are keen to go play in the Yellowstone, for example, then come prepared with life jackets, floating devices, and an extra towel. You never know what will pop up! We will try to make our new schedule work without leaving you feeling breathless.

And then there is our Family Night of inexhaustible fun, where anyone can do just about anything, from serious to corny. Please don't be shy about bringing an instrument you play, too. The more, the merrier.

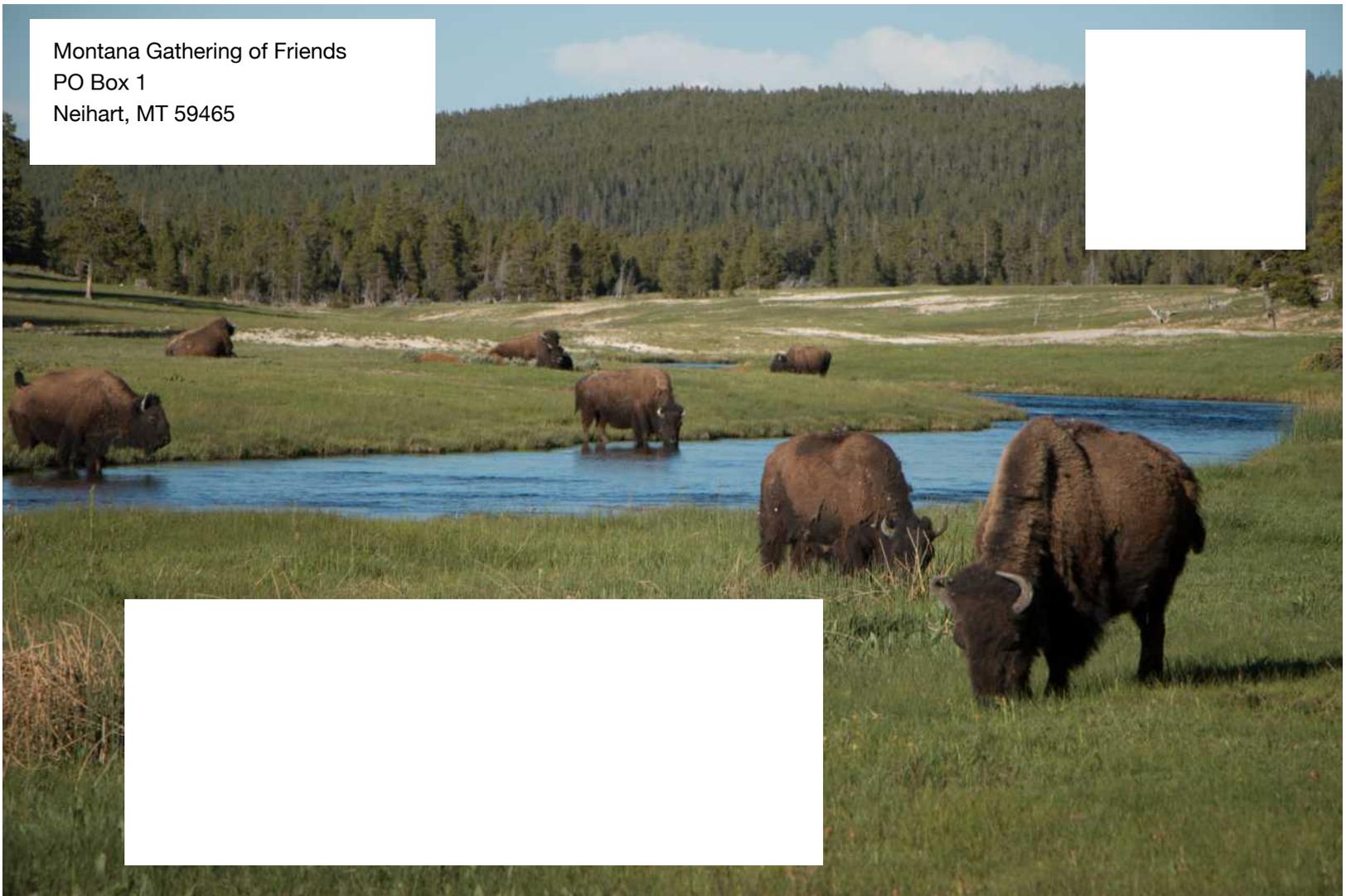
We are working on the means to share some sessions by Zoom for those unable to be physically present, but do not know at this point if this will be doable.

We do look forward to seeing young and old, newcomers and veterans of a dozen MGOFS, and especially Friends who just think it is time to get back together for one more special time of deep sharing, stimulating ideas, and pure fun which the Montana Gathering of Friends 2021 promises to deliver!



Nancy Cochran
nqmontana@gmail.com

Montana Gathering of Friends
PO Box 1
Neihart, MT 59465



Covid Guidelines

Sani stations are provided for your safety and comfort.

Please wear a mask when interacting with staff inside of a building.

Livingston County Health suggests no more than 50 in a building at one time.

Cabins have fans for increased ventilation, place fans in windows.

Limit bathhouses to 5 people at a time.

Meals are served in such a manner that you may eat inside or out.

**If you feel ill, alert your event leaders,
and quarantine in The Cabin in The Woods until you can go home.**

