

Montana Gathering of Friends

Welcome to Summer MGOF 2022

August 19-21 2022 in Luccock Park



We are excited to bring to you one of the leading lights of Quakerism, Jon Watts, to be our Friend in Residence for our summer gathering at Luccock Park in beautiful Paradise Valley. He asks: **“What will Quakerism look like for the Next Generation?”** As you know, Summer MGOF is a time away from time - to be in the primordial beauty of Montana and our beloved community, and to be seeking inner and corporate guidance for our complicated lives and our even more complex world. We are so fortunate to have Jon guide our way into a vision for Quakerism that holds so much promise for the future!

Jon is a musician, composer, videographer, and digital media consultant in Philadelphia. Open his website at www.jonwatts.com to see video and photography he did to document “Right Sharing of World Resources” work in Sierra Leone. One of his early videos went internet viral: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-XlMkK4_kTg. Jon is the founder of QuakerSpeak, an eight-year Project to share Quaker thought online through video interviews with a wide variety of seekers. Check out: <https://quakerspeak.com/video/7-millennials-share-how-a-year-of-service-changed-their-lives/>

As Jon says, *“Much of my work has focused on the generational shift in Quakerism and how the next generation of seekers will understand their own spiritual path, particularly through online media. So I applaud MGOF for your faithfulness in asking these rich questions, and I look forward to joining you in conversation around them.”* Jon’s Program includes a half-day **Quaker Story Telling Workshop**, and interactive activities designed to engage all ages.

We hope to have Quakers of all generations from Montana and Wyoming. North Pacific Yearly Meeting folks are also especially welcome to come to Luccock Park to share in a weekend of creativity, play, and worship. **Childcare, Children’s Program and Junior Friends activities** will be provided. This year Young Friends and Junior Friends will be invited to participate in active outdoor recreation (rafting if feasible), improvisational theater (for all ages), and a “book club” meeting on spiritual topics. Want to know more about the native vegetation around Luccock? A wild plant identification hike is likely to take place. Interested in what is happening with AFSC? Ask our representative. Interested in the amazing lobbying work of Montana’s FCNL Advocacy Team? Ask a member. And as you all know, Chico Hot Springs is just a short drive from Luccock.

We will hold a **Meeting for Memorials** late Saturday afternoon to honor those who have died in the last year, especially remembering Eli Roberts and Wendy Visscher. This time honored tradition helps us share our grief at the loss of our beloveds and serves to honor their impact upon us and how they have inspired us with their vibrant lives. You are also welcome to share remembrances of others lost this year whom we may not know.

As in years past, there is no fee for children to attend MGOF and our payment concept is “pay as you are led,” a remarkable method of demonstrating radical trust in Spirit. No one should hesitate to come for concern about cost.

For those who cannot attend in-person, there will be a **three-session virtual MGOF event** the same weekend. That will include two Zoom worship sharing sessions and one Zoom meeting for worship for virtual attendees. Be sure to register for either in-person or virtual attending of MGOF. The Coordinator will contact you by email after Registration to give you the links for Virtual MGOF. Because the internet signal from Luccock Park is unreliable, we cannot link people at home to activities at Luccock, but they will be connected with other virtual MGOF attendees.



COVID-19 Precautions

COVID-19 VACCINATIONS ARE REQUIRED FOR ALL ATTENDEES.

Please follow the CDC Guidelines with respect to vaccinations and boosters.

Attendees are asked to self test 48 hours prior to arrival. All attendees will be tested on arrival and again if they develop symptoms.

High risk individuals should wear high quality masks when indoors or when singing.

Physical distancing should be practiced when singing outdoors.

Meals should be consumed out of doors whenever possible.

Recognizing that circumstances may change, these guidelines are subject to revision depending upon the CDC determination of the level of community spread.

Food and Lodging

We will eat six meals served by Luccock kitchen staff from Friday dinner through Sunday lunch. The potluck on Friday at 1pm is the only meal we must bring. We are paying a small increase on the base food fee in order to get a menu which has more whole foods and vegetarian options. If you would like to bring fresh produce from your garden to offer to the Luccock kitchen staff, they are happy to try and incorporate that into their menus.

Those who have been to Luccock know that the cabins are simple and rustic vintage structures with no heat. Sleeping bags and pillow are absolutely necessary, and the bunks have only simple “camp style” mattresses. We will have a variety of cabin options, and we have requested cabins as close to the common bathrooms as possible. Anyone who wants to arrive on Thursday and spend the whole day Friday at Luccock is welcome to do so for an additional \$30/person (be self-sufficient in food). Please let us know on the registration comment section if you are planning to arrive Thursday.

Registration and Finances

The Registration is now open at www.montanafriends.com. Please note every adult needs to complete a separate registration. Children under 18 years old can be registered on the same form as their parent/guardian. The fee for Summer MGOF 2022 is \$180/adult, but children under 18 do not pay anything, that is covered by MGOF. Over 70 percent of the regular adult registration fee goes directly to food and lodging services provided by Luccock. The remainder of the fee pays for kids under 18 to attend for free, for travel expenses of our Friend in Residence, to make sure all interested Friends and visitors can attend, regardless of means, for youth recreational activities, and for child care and similar expenses. Please pay as you are led by Spirit.

This year we are also collecting donations (separate from your Registration Fee) to help provide an honorarium for our Friend in Residence. Please contact the Summer Coordinator, Will McDowell (will@clarkfork.org) if you would like to donate to the honorarium. This topic will be discussed at the next business meeting.

Daily Schedule

Please note this year we are expanding the weekend's activities **on Friday**. We will start with a **potluck lunch at 1pm on Friday, August 19**, followed by the opening session with our Friend in Residence. Please plan to **arrive either well before or after our 3pm to 5pm Friday Program**—so as not to disturb the participants.

FRIEND IN RESIDENCE: Jon Watts, Philadelphia, PA

FRIDAY, 19 August:

- 1pm. Arrival, sign-in. Lunch-Potluck.
- 3pm-5pm. **Jon's opening with introductions, overview, big picture questions.**
- 5:30pm Dinner (provided by Luccock kitchen)
- 6:30pm-8pm. Worship sharing.

SATURDAY, 20 August:

- 8:00am Breakfast
- 8:30am-12 noon **Jon's Quaker Story-telling workshop.**
- 12 noon-1pm Lunch.
- 1pm-5pm (approx.) Interest group activities for all ages: Kids/Junior Friends/Adults
- 5pm-5:45pm Meeting for Memorials—
- 6:00pm Dinner
- 7pm Community Night (Talent)

SUNDAY, 21 August

- 8:00am Breakfast
- 8:30am-9:15am **Jon Watts Plenary.** This will be the conclusion of Jon's offering.
- 9:30am-10:45am Worship Sharing.
- 10:45am-11am Singing
- 11am to noon. Meeting for Worship.
- Noon. Lunch. Clean-up and Departure after lunch.

Business Meeting will be held virtually at a date to be determined.

Meeting for Business Minutes

February 26, 2022

The Montana Gathering of Friends met over Zoom on February 26, 2022.

In attendance: Tina Visscher, presiding clerk, Claire Leonard, recording clerk, Linnea Wang, clerk of Ministry and Counsel, Julia Childs, Susan Wadsworth, Tim Visscher, Larry Leonard, Peter Husby, Lucretia Humphrey, Jim Humphrey, Jasmine Krotov, Georgia Foster, Judy Visscher, Joanne Kidder, Ted Etter, Jana Ostrom, Bev Young, Kat Northrup, Robin Whyatt, Noorjahan Parwana, MacKenzie Barton-Rowledge.

The meeting began at 10:03 with a period of silent worship. Clerk, Tina Visscher read the minutes of the summer meeting and these were approved by those in attendance.

Jana Ostrom, presiding clerk of North Pacific Yearly Meeting announced that the annual meeting this summer will probably not be held in Missoula as had been planned. The alternative is to hold it in eastern Oregon as a hybrid meeting. Apparently some F/friends believe that Montana is unsafe! The gathering will be held from July 13, to 17. The Friend in Residence will be Carl Magruder, a Friend of Color from Pacific Yearly Meeting.

Julia Childs reported on the funding provided to assist the Northern Cheyenne after the disastrous wildfire on their reservation this summer. MGOF agreed to give \$2000 which was divided between Yellowbird, a wholly native run organization, that used the money primarily to buy hay for those with grazing animals and the Boys and Girls Club, also run entirely by the tribe, that provided food.

Lucretia Humphrey read a minute developed by the Great Falls Worship Group in January in response to some racist events in the town. They wished to have a statement about what they, as Friends, believed and stood for. It is a minute to reject racism and acknowledge and reject institutional (systemic) racism. The minute was well received. It was noted that it did not include a call to personal responsibility (cultural humility). MGOF would like to consider uniting with the minute once this is added. Lucretia will take this back to the worship group and it will be considered further at summer MGOF.

MacKenzie Barton-Rowledge presented a proposed minute from the Anti-Racism Group of NPYM dealing with our desire to acknowledge the discriminatory and destructive actions of European settlers in this country and both educate ourselves and make amends as possible in response to this history. The committee is continuing to work on writing this minute and hopes to present it for adoption at the annual session this summer. The minute was joyfully received and a few comments for the committee to consider were offered. A Friend suggested that it might be more acceptable to phrase the Minute in a “pro” rather than “anti” voice. We might include an invitation to accept the gifts that Native Peoples have to give us. It is important to identify local allies and native groups/coordinating committees to have input. We would like to see something about children be included.

There will be an interest group on this topic at 1:00. There is a Google forum where input can be made.

The Treasurer’s Report and Budget were presented by Jim Humphrey. Jim suggested that we defer discussing these until the upcoming Steering Committee meeting. Jim has developed a proposed budget based on the profit and loss statement for 20-21, prepared by Cathy Weber.



Steering Committee Meeting Minutes

March 31, 2022

Attending:

Tina Visscher, Presiding Clerk
Claire Leonard, Recording Clerk
Will McDowell, Summer MGOF Coordinator
Linnea Wang, Clerk of Ministry and Counsel
Peter Husby, Assistant Summer MGOF Coordinator
Jim Humphrey, Finance Committee
Judy Visscher/Jasmine Krotov
Sandy Boemler
Kate Weiss

The meeting began with a period of expectant waiting.

Lucretia Humphrey had sent a report from Nominating Committee. She continues to look for a Presiding Clerk for MGOF. We need two Coordinators for Winter MGOF. Peter Husby, who will be assisting Will McDowell as a coordinator for this summer, does not plan to continue for 2023, so we also need a coordinator and assistant coordinator for that year.

Finance Committee report (Jim Humphrey)— Jim presented our current financial status, and then used the information to create a suggested budget. Summer MGOF costs about \$7,000. The virtual Winter MGOF last year cost about \$700 and the Fall and Spring gatherings cost about \$300. Jim is expecting that an in person gathering for winter will be about \$6000 based on what we have spent on gatherings at Camp Make-a-Dream in the past. The only expense for MGOF Monthly Meeting in the past has been the NPYM Assessments which are \$60 per member. MGOF Monthly has 18 members which gives \$1080 (\$1320). Some nonmembers also make donations to go to NPYM. Income comes from Friends donating their assessment and from some general donations. In the future we will have \$500 for the Love Fund.

We received some funds designated to go to the Migrant Fund. This year this was \$9880. Since the Bienvenidos Project has now become a 501(c)3 charitable organization. Future direct donations will be tax deductible. Currently Bienvenidos is forming its administrative structure and money donated to them will probably be used for this purpose rather than as direct aid to the families. Donations can still be made to the Bozeman Worship Group. These are probably tax

Ministry and Counsel has requested that we set up a “Love Fund” of \$500 to allow M&C to make certain expenditures to recognize and express gratitude to individuals. This will also be discussed at Steering Committee. It is unrelated to the question of reimbursing Friends in Residence.

Jim spoke about the accomplishments of the last several years including improving the bookkeeping, donations, a new tax ID number, etc. Jim plans to write a manual that will describe all this.

Nominating Committee reports that Tina Visscher is stepping down as clerk. We need coordinators for Summer 2023 and Winter 2023 MGOF Gatherings and “coordinators in waiting” (assistants) for same.

Linnea reported on Ministry and Counsel.

The Council of Elders has met one time. Future actions and meetings will happen as the group is led.

Work on the Job Description (and how one becomes a member) is ongoing but nearing completion.

The trial of asking newer F/friends to serve as Worship Sharing leaders has gone well

The committee is working on a Women’s Group.

Summer MGOF is being coordinated by Will McDowell, assisted by Peter Husby. We hope that it will be in person and have reservations at Luccock Park. We hope to have a Friend in Residence who will speak to persons under age 40.

One of the Worship Sharing Groups set up after last summer’s MGOF is ongoing.

Peter Husby reported that there is currently a great deal of turmoil at AFSC. The staff and the higher ups are at odds. Please hold everyone in the Light. Go to their website for more information.

FCNL is in the midst of their priority-setting procedure. There will be an interest group at 1:00 today.

Tina reported on Bienvenidos. They are now a 501c3 which creates a lot of new organizational requirements such as insurance, by-laws, etc. She is hopeful that they will be able to hire a coordinator. Meanwhile there are many new families moving to the area. There are not enough mentors. The process of helping a family get established is being sped up out of necessity. Currently the bank account is in arrears, but they are not yet set up to accept donations.

deductible but Jim recommends that large donations be given to MGOF to make this even more likely (as discussed at our last meeting).

Jim has been concerned about what is required for a charitable donation to be tax deductible and has spent great effort (with help from an accountant) clarifying this. He has prepared a manual addressing this for MGOF and F/friends in general to use. He proposes to lay down this work.

The report was accepted with plans to present the proposed budget at summer MGOF.

Ministry and Counsel (Linnea)—The Committee carried out its proposed new process for membership with a worship sharing session at our last meeting. One member would like to step down from the committee and two are continuing to discern whether they want to continue. This means that there is room for additional members. It would be desirable to have diversity in gender, age, and geography. We do have a new job description if anyone knows someone who would be interested.

In view of the minute from NPYM about indigenous peoples, we are working with the tribes about how we might help them.

Our work in organizing summer MGOF will be somewhat different than usual due to the different proposed structure

Summer MGOF (Will McDowell)—For several years a number of MGOF F/friends have been concerned about the aging of our community and our failure to attract young families. For many years there were youth of various ages. “Growing up in MGOF” seemed to be meaningful and important. Parents loved to bring their children to gatherings where their values were shared and everyone had a good time. We would like to hold a session where the focus is on young adult interests and many of our sons and daughters come “home.”

Luccock Park has been reserved for August 18, 19, 20 (to depart on the 21st after Meeting for Worship). Jon Watts, a young Quaker videographer, has been invited to be our Friend in Residence. He has agreed to this time and would plan on giving three half day sessions in addition to our usual events at a price of \$1,000 plus travel expenses and room and board.

The committee was enthusiastic although some wondered if there were not too many things to be taken into account to do it this summer. Concerns and ideas were shared generally.

Many families may have already made summer plans and those living at some distance may not have enough vacation time for another trip or have already booked these dates.

We will need to try to determine how many children of what ages to expect so as to provide Children’s Programs and infant care.

Our usual schedule needs to be modified so as to have as much of the young person programming as possible on Saturday.

How can we get some timely input from some of the young people during this planning period?

How are we going to pay \$1,000 now that we have decided not to pay an honorarium for Friends in Residence?

How do we prevent F/friends who are older, don’t have children or children who did not grow up the MGOF, etc. from feeling excluded? How do we meet their needs?

What is the proposed Theme?

Funding our Friend in Residence—Ever since MGOF decided not to pay an honorarium to the Friend in Residence, we have had difficulty with finding the Friend(s) we seem to need to meet particular issues. The decision not to pay an honorarium was apparently based on the idea that a Friend could/would/should give their presence and their wisdom to us as a gift. There was also concern about “fairness” if different individuals received differing amounts. The NPYM Minute on Indigenous relationships asks that we pay Indigenous people who speak to us an appropriate amount. This winter we did not offer an honorarium to Nia. Individual donations raised \$700 and that was paid to her. This does not seem to many of us to be the appropriate way to reimburse someone nor does it seem in keeping with the decision that MGOF made. It does, however, appear to be the only way we can fund asking Jon Watts to be our Friend in Residence this summer.

The Steering Committee approved asking Jon Watts to join us, raising \$1,000 from private donations, and bringing the question about paying our Friends in Residence before the Business Meeting at summer MGOF. One Friend stood aside, feeling that this was not a faithful adherence to the previous MGOF decision.

Respectfully submitted, Claire Leonard, Recording Clerk



Steering Committee Meeting Minutes

May 31, 2022

In Attendance

Tina Visscher, Presiding Clerk
Claire Leonard, Recording Clerk
Will McDowell, Summer MGOF Coordinator, Peter Husby, Assistant Coordinator, Judy Visscher, Jasmine Krotkov, Jim Humphrey, Kate Weiss, Linnea Wang, Clerk, Ministry and Council

The meeting opened with silence.

The proposed schedule for Summer Gathering:

Jon Watts is offering a 3 part program.

3:00 Friday, August 19, Opening Session

Saturday morning, "Telling our Story"—Videography

Sunday morning, Group Worship Sharing (it is not clear what this is) followed by Meeting for Worship

Saturday afternoon it is proposed to have an activity that will most appeal to young adults. Rafting from Gardiner has been suggested and we are exploring how to fund this. It would be \$50-\$90 per young person. It might be funded through "abundant giving" or possibly through NPYM funds.

Alternative activities for that time slot could include an improvisation workshop or a spiritually focused book group.

Georgia Walker-Kelleher is helping with our interaction with younger individuals.

It is difficult to predict what the situation with Covid will be by August. It was suggested that we follow the protocol that will be used by NPYM at Yearly Meeting or the protocol required by Luccock Park, whichever is most strict.

We would like to have some method(s) by which those who are not able to come in person could share the experience of the gathering. Tina suggested that she could explore what options there might be in person from Luccock. We can also ask Jon for ideas. It was suggested that non attenders might be interested in virtual worship sharing during that time.

We need volunteers to drive Jon and others from the airport(s) to Luccock Park.

Friends are in agreement that Meeting for Worship for Business will be held virtually on a different weekend. We need to look at the minute on Indigenous relations and determine what actions we want to commit to. We want to bring up the decision that has been made not to provide a stipend for our Friend in Residence for reconsideration, as we have found that it usually requires a stipend to get Friends that most meet the needs of MGOF.

The deadline for the Newsletter is June 19. The following material is needed:

Minutes from Business Meeting, Steering Committee.

Call to the Gathering and information about the Friend in Residence

Covid protocols

Information about meals

What to bring

"News"

Respectively submitted, Claire Leonard, Recording Clerk



Women's Retreat takes place in Bozeman

Nine women of the MGOF community met for the weekend of May 6-8. Lead by Kate and Linnea we gathered for the first time since before covid. Hoping to meet a need for connection and spiritual support we experimented with format, this time choosing to use modified worship sharing. A request from the group was for more history of each individual. Try to share your entire life and spiritual journey in 10 minutes! We'll refine the request next time.

We kept the food simple by assigning items to bring. We stayed in our two homes. which provided enough privacy for sleeping for most. We allowed for some free time although the weather did not cooperate with outdoor time.

Here is a typical comment: "The retreat was a very positive experience for me. It was something that I had been longing for, for some time."

We plan to meet some time at the summer gathering to consider the when, where and who might lead another gathering.

Kate Weiss and Linnea Wang

What has your Ministry and Counsel Committee been up to lately?

Summaries of Recent Meetings

February 27, 2022... There was great appreciation of the Friend In Residence for Winter gathering, Nia To Go There! Nia helped us to reach a deep place in a powerful experiential way, for example, how to “*feel*” another person, sensing a person, rather than using lots of words to become acquainted.

We approved the concept of a Love Fund (inspired by Missoula Monthly Meeting) which could be tapped at short notice for needs like expressions of sympathy or assistance with travel.

We also were inspired by Will McDowell’s vision of asking a prominent younger Quaker to be our Friend in Residence for Summer MGOF.

March 21, 2022.. Among more private concerns, we brainstormed ideas for new or old venues for retreat activities for smaller groups of Friends, such as the women’s retreats. We hope to balance cost with travel and privacy variables in our search.

Following a decision to encourage more inter-generational activity for Summer MGOF, an interesting and strong feeling of the group was that there should be no segregation by age in the plans for Summer gathering. Thus, oldsters and “youngsters” could all go rafting together, or all could learn about video together.

May 15, 2022... As not all MGOF folks will be physically able to attend Luccock in person, we came up with a design for a modified on-line gathering of two worship sharing sessions and a meeting for worship. Because of the technology limitations of Luccock we could not plan a hybrid event.

Regarding what made the long term worship sharing group so successful (it started near the beginning of covid and is still going strong!), it was noted that there was an unofficial leader who made sure that everyone got the link each week and who also often provided a query. Flexibility has also assisted this group to flourish.

We organized tasks for the summer gathering, who will call folks to lead worship sharing, who will do our writing tasks (welcome and queries) and who will put together worship sharing groups.

Minute of Support for Indigenous People

June 13, 2022 draft for consideration at NPYM annual session 2022

The North Pacific Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends repudiates the Doctrines of Discovery: the religious basis for European colonization around the world. We acknowledge and regret Friends’ role in the ensuing genocide, land theft, and forced assimilation of the peoples indigenous to this continent, including Friends’ role in operating and legitimizing compulsory schools for Indigenous children. We affirm the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

We commit to courageously and compassionately listen and face the learning required to comprehend settler colonialism and establish rapport with Indigenous people. We intend that these relationships will guide us to develop thoughtful, grounded actions to oppose the ongoing systemic dehumanization and material dispossession of the original peoples of the land on which we live and worship. Spirit calls us towards truth, racial healing, and transformation, following the Indigenous wisdom of respect for the earth and all its beings.

We see this Minute as one expression of the 2019 NPYM Uprooting Racism Minute.

We call the Meetings and Worship Groups of NPYM to commit as led, to each of the following actions:

- • To self-educate about the history of Indigenous life before European contact, the arrival of settler colonial peoples, and the current effects of colonization specific to one’s region. We encourage Friends to compensate Native people who provide us with their expertise, and to learn how to interrupt anti-Indigenous behavior and language.
- • To self-educate about Quaker involvement in compulsory day and boarding schools for Native children, where language, religious, and cultural assimilation were violently enforced, and where kidnapping, torture, and preventable child death were common. Transgenerational trauma from the violence of coercive family separation and from these schools persists today.
- • To provide opportunities for collective lamentation: times and/or spaces to acknowledge, grieve, and integrate these truths, with the guidance of Spirit.
- • To recognize that integrity requires us to uphold the self-determination and sovereignty of Native nations. Friends acknowledge that it is not the place of non-Indigenous people to define or decide the priorities or realities of Indigenous people, and that ‘right relationship’ requires respect for

- • To act in solidarity with the reinvigoration of local Indigenous cultural knowledge and wisdom. For example: language restoration; land, air, water, and wildlife stewardship; food and medicine; wildfire management techniques; spirituality; mental and physical healthcare; programs for youth; and Native-led healing work.
- • To explore the sources of our properties and wealth, and invest in Native nations or Native-led projects that support Indigenous rights, health, or autonomy. These investments could include sharing property, paying rent as suggested by tribes, or returning the land. Example projects include efforts to protect missing and murdered Indigenous relatives; federal recognition of tribes; supporting treaty rights; legislation repudiating the Doctrine of Discovery; ecological protection movements like Standing Rock or coal train opposition.
- • To identify ways in which the commitments made in NPYM Minutes are finding life in our Meetings, within each annual State of the Society report and/or to NPYM's Anti-Racism Working Group and/or at an event hosted by the NPYM Peace and Social Concerns Committee. By sharing, we expand the collective sense of what is possible.

State of Society Reports

Great Falls Worship Group - 2022

On the high plains of northcentral Montana resides a small worship group, a region which has been coping with drought, wind, and - like elsewhere - sometimes hateful politics. Still, like the rain that fell yesterday and soaked the ground giving life and hope, our group continues to nurture and sustain us, its scope wonderfully broadened by Zoom to encompass not only those of us who live in Great Falls but also members from Helena and from the western side of Montana. Our worship continues week to week, bringing together a diverse group of people seeking Spirit and community and finding both as we open ourselves to one another.

Many years ago Starshine moved to Great Falls and immediately became the third log of the fire that has kept us burning. Sometimes we burn brightly, and other times we need to blow on a few embers to once again produce Light. At the age of 93, Starshine needed more support and help than she could get in Great Falls. She has moved to Utah to have family close by. We miss her greatly, but she can still be with us through Zoom.

In a worship sharing format we set out to write our SOS report. Our query was: What has this worship group brought to you spiritually this year?

"Quakers here are a big umbrella, bringing together people of diverse backgrounds, who seek in varied ways to be

aware, awake, and responsive to life, rather than driving through on cruise control", said one respondent. "I greatly value and respect each of you." Others continued: "There is a willingness to be vulnerable to one another because a safe place is created with care. The gratitude people bring keeps us centered on the way we can give gifts as well as receive them. We are inspired in our worship to see the connections available to all. One person said he comes to connect, to learn and grow and in doing so, does feel connection and is grateful. Another Friend commented that to come into worship and sit down, looking at all our faces on Zoom brings her joy - the silence, the big circle, the place each of us holds in her heart. Another Friend said that coming to meeting is a thumbs up - a place to be spiritual which is welcoming and freeing, a place where our truths can co-mingle bringing us wisdom and compassion.

We appreciated the time spent on the NPYM Minute on Indigenous People with McKenzie Barton-Rowlage, but it was the sharing of an Elder from our own community, speaking of his life and spirituality, that especially gave us pause to ponder and grow and care more deeply about our Native American neighbors. Many of our 9 - 12 attenders are deeply involved in caretaking of a loved one. We are glad they can find sustenance and support from worship as they carry on.

Our worship makes us stronger to live in this battled and beautiful world knowing and experiencing the Light each of us has to bring to show a path to Spirit in all aspects of our living.



MISSOULA FRIENDS MEETING

The Missoula Friends Meeting has met the difficulties and blessings of the second full year of Covid with a healthy balance of courage, determination, perseverance, exhaustion, loneliness, compassion and good humor. Our lives have been improving in many good ways as we have faced and dealt with a pandemic over which we individually have limited control. We have

grown in our ability to adapt to the changes Covid has brought to our community. We have found new respect and gratitude for all private and public essential workers whose efforts have kept our society able to function. Our many protectors have shown us the Spirit in our midst, every day, and helped us to see that which is God in everyone.

As Covid continued to require some level of virtual meetings, we made an effort to obtain good technical equipment and to become proficient setting up Zoom meetings. As infection rates in Missoula declined and as permitted by law, some Missoula Friends began to meet in person at the meeting house, masked and socially distant, in conjunction with Friends who were meeting on zoom.

Those worshiping in the meeting house were grateful for the warmth of human companionship in a well loved venue. We struggled to find a format for meeting for worship that included as many people as possible and we kept in mind those Friends whose needs we were not meeting. We found that some were able to experience Spirit while worshiping on Zoom and others could not find that connection in the meeting house with technology present in the room. We listened to those concerns and considered alternative meeting formats. As a meeting we are grateful for our ability to proceed in worship in different ways and to meet the dangers of Covid with good will, understanding, compassion and joy.

Currently we are ending a two month trial of simultaneous meetings for worship with one group in person at the meeting house and another group meeting via Zoom. (We have a different format one Sunday a month for business meetings.) At the rise of meeting, both groups join together via Zoom where we continue our tradition of sharing joys and concerns, followed by announcements. This has allowed our meeting to increase our feelings of connectedness with each other and to share the events taking place in our lives.

We have seen a change in our meeting demographics this past year. We continue to have distant attenders participate in the life of the meeting via Zoom.

We have had numerous visitors worship with us in the meeting house; some have returned again and again. We are especially heartened by the number of young people and we hope to reach out to them in a sensitive and welcoming way. There seem to be fewer Friends to share in the work of the meeting. The risk of burnout is real.

We ask Friends to consider what gifts they can share with the meeting. As aging occurs, the needs of Friends increase. We will consider whether we need a ministry committee to make visits to such Friends, for whom we feel love and support.

NPYM has decided not to hold annual session in Missoula this year and next as had previously planned. Some Friends are relieved and some are disappointed.

We have looked for ways to strengthen and enjoy our community. The past summer brought us wonderful activities: kayaking, biking, picnics, and visits to Friends cabins. We hope to recreate together again this summer.

One tradition we miss is gathering after meeting for worship to share soup and bread. In order to reinstate this simple meal, we would need to come to a consensus regarding social distancing and mask wearing within the

meeting house. Some Friends are caring for aging parents and are very careful about their potential for Covid exposure. We must be mindful of everyone's concerns before moving forward.

This winter we unexpectedly lost a beloved young man, Eli Roberts. In the face of this tragedy, the meeting came together to support his family with love. We renewed our longstanding connection with his parents, who reported they felt our outpouring of love and care. We plan to create a tangible memorial for Eli on our property.

The interests of Friends remain varied and we have explored many of these in the 9:30 to 10:30 time slot on Sunday mornings. We discuss an article from Western Friend monthly. In evaluating the allocation of our Peace and Social Concerns funds, we considered the strengths of various charities and how to accomplish the most good in our communities. We focused on race relations, immigration, and Native American issues.

With an acute awareness of local needs and world affairs, we strive to put our faith in action. Our Peace and Social Concerns donations are one manifestation of these concerns. We continue to support our neighborhood school through donations to the Betty Husted Fund. We received anonymous donations for technology upgrades and to be used to support organizations doing good work. Friends voice their anguish over the war in Ukraine.

Several of the themes from our 2020 - 2021 State of the Meeting report occur here, remain relevant, and continue to evolve. It will be ever so as we evolve, discern what good it is possible for us to do, and hold dear and cherish one another. We look forward, with peaceful and joyful hearts, to what the future brings, and to discerning how we can most honorably shape that future, even in the smallest ways.



Bozeman Friends Worship Group

We recently gathered to reflect and share what has been most important to each of us in the life of our worship group over the past year.

Now in the third year of the Covid pandemic, we continue to adapt to a changed world. One member said “it blows me away that we have survived.” In fact, our shared spiritual foundation and our sense of community have deepened in some ways.

Some of us have been surprised at how rich and intimate meeting via Zoom can be. These Friends continue to experience deep connection with Spirit and our community when meeting remotely. The technology has also allowed Friends to join us who could not attend in person. In addition to dear Friends in Sheridan, MT, and Ohio, two new attenders joined us for the first time via Zoom. Other Friends do not feel a strong, living connection when we meet remotely, and some stopped attending until we could meet face to face again.

We resumed meeting in person in March, when vaccinations and decreasing case numbers helped us feel safer. We feel joy and gratitude returning to this familiar, rich way of gathering. We continue as a hybrid meeting, assisted by an “Owl” that shows the whole circle at once and centers on a person who is speaking. “Technology has offered us a bigger, wider intimacy.”

Worship sharing twice a month has deepened our connection in ways that are particular and responsive to our group. We frequently convene clearness committees to help members with important decisions and transitions. As the risk of Covid became more moderate, we had a precious “window of opportunity” to join for potluck and worship sharing.

We remain a small group, with no more than six to eight people joining for worship each week in any format. Some of us participate in activities of the wider Quaker community, which enriches us all. One member reflected that it can be “a strength that we don’t have structure... We can each do what we have to offer. If we can’t do it, then we simplify.” We make very little distinction between members and attenders. In this we feel a connection with early Friends, who did not recognize titles or distinctions based on social rank.

In the past three years the Bienvenidos project has expanded beyond our worship group. It recently organized as a 501c3 non-profit. It fosters building relationships between volunteers and individual migrant families with children, to support them in various ways, according to the needs of the family. These include helping navigate systems to access legal aid, health care, housing, transportation, and education, as well as celebrating birthdays and other sharing.

Bienvenidos has organized regular meetings of diverse community agencies, helping them build relationships and coordinate services to the migrant community. This is the first time some of these groups have ever communicated.

The past year has challenged us, but also blessed us with new, sometimes surprising interplays of separation and intimacy, Spirit and community, richer life in our small group and engagement in the outer world. We feel more deeply enriched by the dialogue between our inward experience of the Light and outward witness and action, which is so rooted in our Friends heritage.



Billings Monthly Meeting

The Billings Monthly meeting is doing well for a small Meeting. We meet every Sunday for Worship at 10 a.m. We generally have eight to ten people. During the pandemic, we met by Zoom. Several out-of-town members and regular attenders found it easier to attend by Zoom. In 2022, we started meeting in person again at Angela’s Piazza, a drop-in center for abused women run by the local Catholic Ursula nuns. We kept up participation by Zoom so people had a choice. During the nice weather in the summer, we meeting the back yard pagoda of the Towe’s.

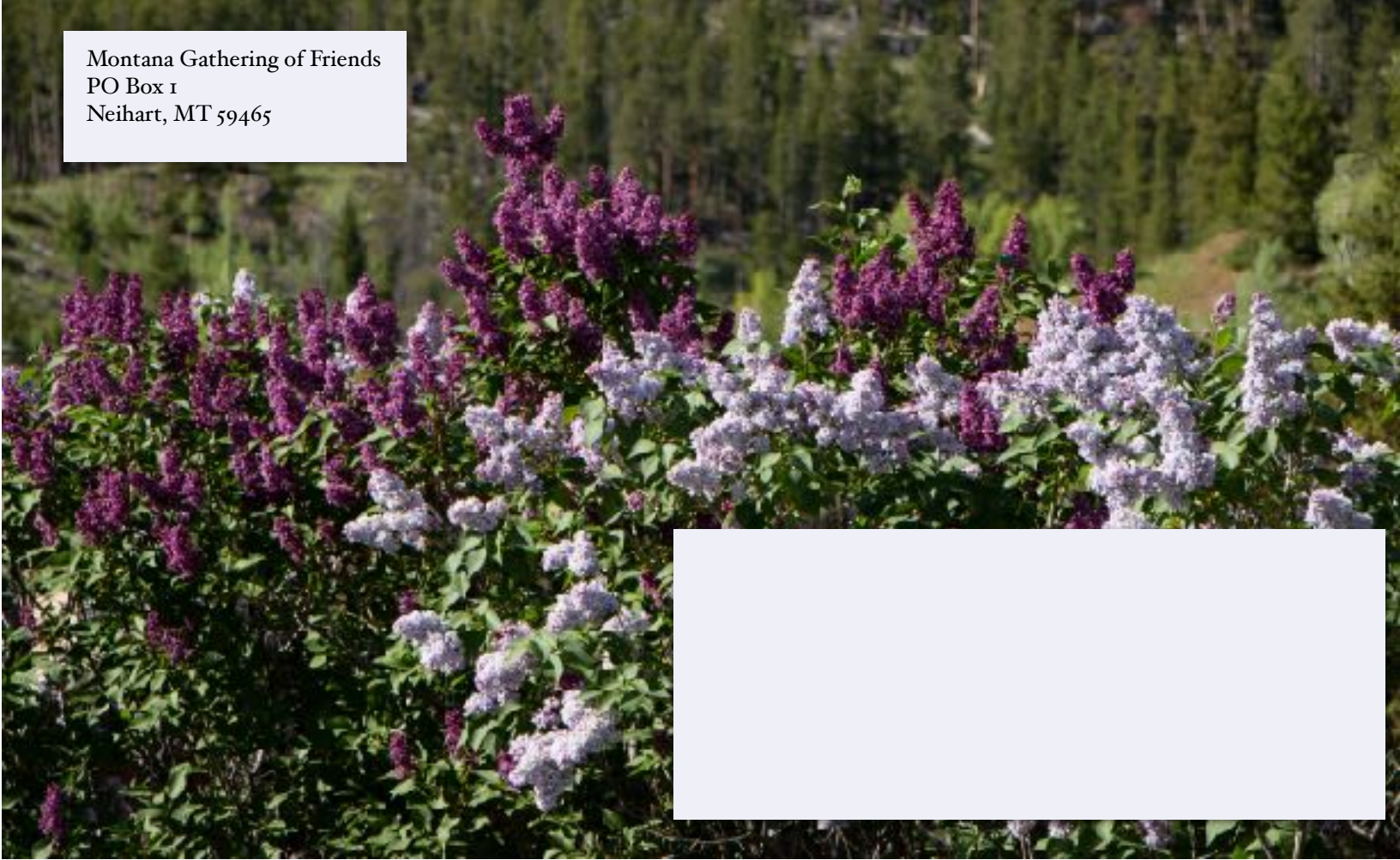
Last year we have had several very interesting Meetings for Learning. Generally a volunteer prepares and leads a discussion on some relevant Quaker issue. The coalition of Churches and other not-for-profit organizations concerned with discrimination in Billings, and the Alliance of Defenders of Acceptance and Belonging (which we got started) is still active. It coordinates and supports community activities which arose after the George Floyd protests. We did have one public Meeting in which the police chief and Sheriff responded to questions about their activities. As a new project, we are determined to prepare a statement to be released to the public about the Quaker approach to the challenge to democracy that is currently absorbing this country.

Respectfully submitted, Thomas E. Towe, Co-Clerk.

MT Quakers at the March on Washington

Fifteen Montanans including Quakers, went to Washington DC in June to join the Poor People’s Campaign, demanding justice for all, and a moral revival to save the heart and soul of our democracy. The march was an echo of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s Poor People’s March on Washington in 1963. Today we have fewer voting rights than we did in 1963, and people are still living in and dying from poverty in the richest nation ever to exist. Hear what Rev Dr. Bernice King had to say about it at this youtube link: <https://youtu.be/Yw-7TOs1nI8>, at 2:47:46.

Montana Gathering of Friends
PO Box 1
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Quakers were some of the first to join with Dr. King's movement, and we're still right alongside it today. AFSC's Joyce Ajlouny spoke at the march, and FCNL's Bridget Moix published an article about it with the Rev. William Barber in The Hill, which you can read here: <https://thehill.com/opinion/congress-blog/3527136-time-for-a-healing/>. They write: "To achieve the world we seek, we cannot wait for better days. We must follow God's calling to do right, seek justice, and correct these injustices. That's why our organizations are working together to promote a moral economic agenda that centers the 140 million and brings people together instead of tearing them apart."

Those of us traveling from Montana had a spirit-led trip. There were many happy coincidences, when Way opened, putting us at the right places, at the right times. Fortuitous little incidents like putting a Quaker in need of a bed in touch with a Montanan with an extra bed, and Quakers in cabs happening upon those in need of a ride - they all added up, reminding us that when we show up, when we put our faith into action, the web of spiritual connection is there to support us. Maybe that's wishful or superstitious thinking, but it feels right, so why not be pleased by the feeling?

And why not continue to show up, do the work, put faith into action? It is all we have left. Montana Quakers are invited to join the Montana Poor People's Campaign to organize at the state and local level—many of the most regressive policies are being passed at the state level, and these policies will have long and lasting effect, past even executive orders. The movement is not from above but below. To join, click on this link, <https://www.poorpeoplescampaign.org/committee/montana/>. Forward together: not one step back!

