

State of Society Report for 2021

Friends Meeting at Cambridge 2021 was a year of tentative emergence from the isolation and fear of the pandemic. Zoom allowed us to stay connected in worship, Forum, Afterthoughts and our many committees and small groups. We had virtual First Day School, a Christmas music fest, game nights and silent retreats. In July we opened the meeting house and began the adventure of hybrid worship. Joyfully, Friends from Mexico, France and distant parts of the United States could join us and have become – or been able to remain – active parts of our community. Integrating technology has been challenging and requires considerable time and effort. It has also created conflict and required difficult decisions. Some Friends are tired. Some feel disconnected from the community. Some of us long for the familiarity of old patterns, but the world has changed and, with the help and guidance of the Divine, we are creating something new.

Many find their deepest sense of Spirit working with others in small groups—Faithfulness Groups, support groups, committees, interest groups, neighborhood groups, breakout groups on Zoom and more,. Others find satisfaction in worship at Raytheon, being with our children, and even working through conflicts. Support from the Pastoral Care Team, and to each other informally, has been particularly meaningful during Covid-19 and changes to our patterns. “I felt Spirit when I felt the many hands at work in the community.” “FMC has carried many of us through the pandemic. That might be true whether or not we were participating in online gatherings.” Many new young people have found us during these times, bringing curiosity and energy. We hope to mix the generations so that we may learn from each other.

Yet the conflict and messiness in the world do affect us, as individuals and in our interactions with each other. There is grief. Edginess and crankiness can arise, and Spirit calls us to be mindful, to be patient, and to support each other. Communication can be more difficult on Zoom. Finding love and Spirit in informal intimate conversations where thoughts and experiences are shared, has been restricted by Covid accommodations. The closure of facilities left us missing simple lunch, being with the children, seeing our faces in person without masks. The work to be done is sometimes overwhelming. Some are unable to feel spiritually connected. Some have chosen to stay away. There is a desire to further connect our faith with action, to help the Light shine in the world and heal, and a call to a more visible witness, a common sense of purpose.

We need trust in each other and trust in the Divine. We must remember to look for Spirit in the midst of busyness. Re-weaving the fabric of our community is like darning a sock that is worn and has holes, yet still made of strong material. Love, listening, and discernment can create strong threads to close the gaps. In the end it will be familiar, though changed, comfortable, resilient and durable.