

FOR APPROVAL - State of the Meeting, Western Quarter, 2022-03-28

There are strong relationships and partnerships among Friends and Meetings in Western Quarter. Gathering for worship, programs, and business is a springboard for deep connection. One of the first things we do, and perhaps with the most enthusiasm and spirit, when we gather for meetings for worship with attention to business is to share updates from our meetings. Updates on worship times and formats are given along with pastoral and witness work. Meeting in virtual and hybrid formats has not changed the depth of our connections, the celebration of spirit and friendship when we gather in whatever number and format.

Evidence of those strong concerns was apparent in the forming of our Aging Concerns Committee. About a year ago, a Friend in one of our smaller meetings, experienced a sudden health change. A Sunday morning email to some Friends across the Quarter asking for help, resources, and suggestions received numerous responses within the hour. That email brought out a shared leading, and ultimately grew to become a committee. The aim of the group is to arrange programming at quarter gatherings and compile resources to help Friends attend to their own, a family member's or dear friend's needs as they age or are in a moment of transition. We have completed just two programs so far, and suggested Friends invite family, neighbors, and friends, and we did; we recently turned out in one of the largest numbers for a quarter program in recent years. As Way opens, we plan to hold two more gathered programs to complete a 'Year on Aging Concerns', and then determine how else to continue with this vital program. The growing online Resource Center has been well received and will no doubt continue as a legacy of Friends' community response to the original need.

As a Quarter we are also beginning another endeavor together: what to do with the historic but memberless properties connected to the quarter. Some of the meeting houses and burial grounds are under the care of the Quarter, some are under the care of one of our monthly meetings. With each property we are aware of how the communities who gathered there influenced the communities we are today and our broader communities, yet we are also aware that it is not the physical spaces that are sacred but people who come together in worship. To that end, a standing Historic Property Committee has formed, emergency funds have been set aside to support assessment needs, and the work of determining the structural and disposition needs of these properties has begun.

One service the Quarter has often provided for its Monthly Meetings is youth programming. Our Youth Activities Coordinator resigned after the 4th month meeting. She had done intergenerational programming prior to worship via Zoom that was well-received by all participants. We have not filled the position. We were able to do a joint youth program in early December with Concord Quarter, and are most appreciative of the opportunity to connect with Yearly Meeting staff for programming and staff support for the 7th month Joint Quarterly Meeting with Concord Quarter.

Western Quarter is financially sound thanks to healthy reserves that were accumulated years ago. Our annual budget typically slightly exceeds our annual income from covenants, however we have rarely had to dip into reserves. For example, the past two years we budgeted for in person quarterly meetings which have been held largely virtually. We have also struggled to fill a very part time position of youth coordinator, thus spending under budget in this category. We continue to try to balance the needs of our member meetings and families with a sustainable approach to spending.