

## State of Celo Friends Meeting in 2023

The theme for Celo Friends Meeting in 2023 was *community through Spirit-led worship and work*. Our meeting holds space for spirit led worship for everyone who enters. It is through the silence that each of us comes into the light following our own path. By listening in waiting to the spirit from within, and vocalizing when the spirit cannot be contained, all present are changed by this moment of inspiration. Be it sadness, or gladness, the change has already happened.

Our meeting community is held together by our abiding love and respect for one another, which manifests in an ability to listen deeply to each other. Our weekly potlucks provide ongoing cheer and nourishment, encouraging and deepening our felt sense that we are a family. Despite our sometimes quirky personalities, at the core of our community, we have faith in each other.

Our spring and fall Work Days are another way to get to know each other better. This year, in addition to the regular chores of cutting back brush, raking leaves, moving woodpiles, and painting and repairing neglected areas in the three buildings, we cleared an area for a new 8' x 12' storage shed. It arrived in December, which means the tools, fuels and paints that had long been stored in the crawlspace under the caretaker's apartment, are now housed in an easily accessible area. The joy of such shared labor—when our efforts are so visible—is a vital antidote against the grimness of the day's news.

The children's program in Meeting has continued to grow this year. We all benefit from this as the children bring love and Light to us. There are broad smiles of members and attenders as we sing with our children and watch as they share. We are grateful to have young families and dedicated leaders. First Day School is a balm for us all.

When the Israeli/Palestine conflict broke out in October, young adult attenders openly expressed their grief, and were led to coordinate a peace vigil to hold Israel and Palestine in the Light. The openness and response have increased witnessing in worship about the conflict and more focus on the peace testimony in the meeting.

Celo Friends Meeting Adult Religious Education Committee has utilized worship sharing groups, online readings and videos to explore the Vocal Ministry, The Testimony of Equality and Racial Justice, Quaker Eldering, and our history of Quaker Social Activism. These sessions deepen our personal relationships and also strengthen our understanding of our prophetic faith.

Racial Equity and Refugee support have been other concerns, through participation by some members in the SAYMA Racial Conflict Transformation program, reinstatement of the meetings' Racial Equity Committee, and Adult Religious Education programs and worship-sharing groups on racial justice. The approach to dealing with racism has been varied within the meeting and has created conflict with SAYMA, with some members withdrawing financial support from SAYMA due to a lack of trust in the Uplifting Racial Justice Committee.

Our Meeting community has also been struggling to meet the increasingly complex needs of some of our older members with both bodily disease and mental pain. We have realized that our resources are limited despite our hearts being ready to help.

Celo Friends Meeting is a loving spiritual community, which is bolstered by our children and by our faith in each other.