

## January 2024: State of Columbia Friends Meeting (CFM)

2023 presented several challenges. Using Quaker processes and good will, we addressed several conflicts which threatened our ability to speak to the divine in each other. By focusing on our spiritual heritage, we fostered a more robust appreciation of our Meeting community. And although we remain few in number, we are committed to adapting to change and future challenges with creativity and kindness..

Our size has meant that folks fill multiple roles and realizing the budget for building upkeep and donations is harder. We have a beautiful meetinghouse and grounds which is an asset to the Columbia community, our neighbors and Friends statewide. Our goal is to be aware of the realities of this situation and explore solutions while living a rich community and spiritual life.

There are numerous examples of how we embraced the light which fostered positive growth. One was our assistance to a PhD student from a war torn country whose background included peace work with Friends. We wrote minutes on issues of peace and justice, letters to our local paper, and engaged in peace pole initiatives. Our interfaith, state wide FCNL advocacy team was, very active. We provided space and support for monthly music and poetry events as well as gardening plots and the First Day School recently held a very well attended George Fox 400 birthday party that was widely enjoyed. It filled our meetinghouse! These activities served to uplift and nourish our faith community.

Columbia Friends have drawn upon the spiritual heritage and testimonies of Quakers to act in the world today. This habit of principled engagement on issues of peace and social justice is well known and we continue, in that spirit, to address our broken world buoyed by each other and the knowledge that activism is integral to the life and spirit of Quakers.