

Heartland Friends Meeting

State of Society, May 2023

For where two or three gather in my name, there I am with them. --Matthew 18:20

All religions, all this singing, one song. The differences are just illusion and vanity. The sun's light looks a little different on this wall than it does on that wall. And a lot different on this other one. But it's still one light. --Rumi

Well ... Are we in our new normal yet? In our State of Society report last year we said, *"We are discovering, together, continually changing and evolving degrees of normal."* Heartland Friends are still discovering, and it is feeling better and better all the time. We're back to having our Adult Ed Hour in our Hearth Room, where we sit closer together than in the worship space or downstairs community room. It is nice to feel more intimate and relaxed in our Sunday morning Adult Ed discussions. We are having carry-in lunches again once a month after worship. This relaxed fellowship is so good! We are singing before worship again. So, are we in our "new normal" yet? Perhaps we are, and we joyfully embrace the fellowship.

We enjoyed having our annual Christmas Eve candlelight service indoors, after two years of chilly outdoor luminary-lit worship. That evening is always one of our special highlights each year.

We typically have between 8 to 18 or so in worship on Sunday mornings. Our numbers are somewhat less than pre-pandemic, but we have had some members move to other areas. We are welcoming new, occasional attenders who seem to be seeking. An outreach ministry we have embraced is keeping copies of Philip Gulley's book, *Living the Quaker Way* on hand to give to visitors. Members used this book for several months last summer and fall for an Adult Ed Hour book study and have received appreciative feedback about copies we have shared.

A major effort earlier this year involved a re-evaluation of our annual budget. During the pandemic we have all become more aware of local needs, and of our privilege in having enough food, shelter, health care and safety. In our budget re-evaluation, we are tightening some of our expenses and increasing our annual gifts to most of our Quaker agencies and to some newly adopted local agencies. We are grateful to share this growing leading among us.

We are growing older. Heartland has members discovering new health challenges and assisting with care of aging family members. This changes our energy somewhat, adding stresses to be embraced with Spirit-sharing and compassion.

Wichita Friends School children have been filling our worship room with their energy every Wednesday morning. Aaron, Connie and our teachers have heightened their intentionality for modeling quiet, unprogrammed worship with the 2 ½ through 9-year old children. It is amazing! Between the comforting strength of our Heartland space and the Spirit-work of the adults, over 30 children have been settling into the Quiet for 5 to 10 minutes and have grown into appropriate sharing-from-the-silence. Wow! Spirit is wonderful! We hope this centeredness will be a part of them for the rest of their lives.

Last year we reported that we were without a clerk. Now we have three! Jaylene Reed, Gail Kinzer and Connie Adams are discovering how to share the broad responsibilities and ministries of being co-clerks. With loving support from all our members, this co-clerk concept seems to be working. A gratitude often expressed is how appreciative we are of our community and how life-saving we are to each other.

Submitted by Heartland Friends Meeting