

**State of the Meeting 2022**  
**Fort Worth Friends Meeting**  
1/20/2023

Dear Friends,

This past year the Fort Worth Friends Meeting had its first full year of worship back in our room at University Christian Church. Attendance is up as we have four new regular attenders, putting us at an average of about 11 people each First day. Two of these new attenders, Eli Shupe and Evan Mistur, requested membership and marriage under the care of the meeting; we have organized committees for each of these requests which will convene in 2023. Friends from our Meeting who traveled made time to attend Quaker Worship with other Meetings. Shannon Kincaid-Toncray worshipped with Friends in Austin while Eli and Evan, not only got engaged while in England, but also visited Bunhill Fields where George Fox is buried and worshipped with the Bunhill Fields Quaker Meeting.

On October 14<sup>th</sup>, students from Covenant Classical School, a private Christian school, attended worship and fellowship with our Meeting. These teenagers learned about Quakers in a history class and wondered if there were any Quakers left; after doing some research, they found us and had their teacher contact us through our website to arrange the visit. After worshipping with us, they asked us questions about our faith and how we view God, Jesus, and the bible during potluck fellowship time.

The Fort Worth and South-Central Yearly Meetings also suffered a great loss with the death of Gerald Jimmy Jr in 2022. We worked together with the Dallas Meeting to organize a Memorial Service to honor Gerald's Quaker faith and Native American Indian Heritage.

Since we have returned to our 'formal' setting and been joined by a number of new people, we focused our adult education on getting back to basics and the foundations of Quaker worship to make sure our new attendees understand what we are actually doing during our worship hour as Friends. Ken Stevens taught classes on our testimonies and giving ministry, as well as starting a sequence of lessons discussing worship based on William Taber's (1992) pamphlet "Four Doors to Meeting for Worship". Shannon Kincaid-Toncray also led two educational meetings, allowing Friends and new attendees to experience Quaker practices first-hand. In the first of these meetings, she organized a mock clearness committee to demonstrate the Quaker way of active listening and asking questions without giving advice. Then, she led a Meeting for Healing and discussion on what it means for Friends to "hold someone in the light."

Since returning to a more formal worship setting, we also found that we have been somewhat lax with our Quaker processes and business meetings as we had been conducting our procedures very informally in the park. In response, our clerk, Tom Taber, attended a new clerk training session led by FGC and brought his new skills to the Meeting. Since then, we have started trying different ways of closing worship and administering our business meetings. Sometimes we still fall short of our commitment to Quaker process by failing to leave space after someone speaks, but we are going to endeavor to address this issue as we move forward in 2023.

As always, our Meeting has had a very busy year with Peace and Justice work. In April of 2022, we held a letter writing event. Each person, and the Meeting as a whole, wrote a letter to the Governor of

Texas and the Texas Board of Paroles affirming our faith's stance against the death penalty and requesting a stay of execution for Melissa Lucio. Later in November, we tried to publish a letter to the editor in the Star-Telegram. We requested our local congressional representatives and Senator to co-sponsor the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Polices in The United States Act (S 2907/H.R. 5444). Unfortunately, the *Star-Telegram* did not publish it, but we mailed the same letter to our Senators and local representatives along with the 2022 Minutes from SCYM.

We continue our relationship with a Syrian family who came to Texas as family of seven and has now grown into a family of nine. We help provide them with school supplies, baby items, and financial assistance when needed. Additionally, Tom Taber participated in the Peace Together walk in Colleyville, Texas, wearing an FCNL "Love thy neighbor no exceptions" tee shirt. This walk is an interfaith event where people walk from a Mosque to a Synagogue. Lois Way attended a Quaker Palestine-Israel network Zoom meeting as well as an Urgent Call to Religious Society of Friends sessions. She also attended the FCNL lobby weekend virtually while Lon Burnam attended in person.

This year we Friends also engaged with the county jail system over our great concerns about the treatment of inmates at Tarrant County Jail after a preventable asthma-related death. We signed a joint letter from the Circle of Clergy to the governing Judge/Commissioner pushing him to address the ongoing mistreatment of jail inmates. We knew we wanted to sign the letter but were unsure how to do so appropriately as other groups had members of their clergy sign on, but we do not have anyone that can be categorized as such; in the end Tom signed the letter as our clerk despite not being clergy. Six Friends also toured the Tarrant County Jail in December to check the conditions of the jail and inmates and discuss our concerns about the alarming number of fatalities that have occurred there over the past few years. The tour and discussion were both fairly manicured, as the chief of the jail made sure to put their best foot forward to ensure that everything looked up to snuff, and visiting Friends noticed the jail appeared clean and well-kept, but they were left with ongoing concerns over jail conditions as they encountered inmates yelling out from their cells that they were not getting their medicine during the tour and stiff resistance from jail administrators when requesting copies of important documentation on jail procedures. We hope to continue work in this area to help push back on abuses in the county jail system.