

Moving Through Life Together in the Spirit
Friends Meeting of San Antonio
State of the Meeting, 2023

Last year was a time of challenges and growth for Friends Meeting of San Antonio.

Our co-clerks conducted meeting for worship with attention to business in the Light, well ordered and with time for consideration of each thought. They called for silence when unity was evasive, and most of the time we were open to a way forward. We are grateful for their service to the Meeting.

Our numbers grew slowly but steadily over the year, and we welcomed new attenders, some just learning about Quakerism and some experienced. We celebrated new participants in the children's program, youngsters who enjoyed stories, growing tomatoes and herbs, making soup for our monthly potluck, and decorating birthday cakes for the twice-a-year celebrations.

We remembered the life of Marian Carter, who, with her husband Rusty, was instrumental in the formation of Friends Meeting of San Antonio. We shared our experiences with Marian at a memorial service attended by friends both in person and from afar on Zoom. Long time friends Joni Thibault and James Mize moved to North Carolina; we miss them dearly and wish them well.

We enjoyed first Sunday potlucks on our porch, Friday morning worship on Zoom, and a resumption of our monthly mid-week soup and Meeting for Worship. A steadfast group gathered on third Saturdays for Meeting for Weeding to keep the meetinghouse and grounds in good order. October found our parking lot full of friends plus a few neighbors and passers-by with lawn chairs, cameras, and protective glasses to enjoy the spectacular partial eclipse.

Friends attended and led forums on a variety of topics including Vocal Ministry, Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business, Angelic Troublemakers, Quaker Foundational Texts, Encountering Transcendence, South Central Yearly Meeting, Visible Mending, issues surrounding reproductive health, and a series on Quaker Basics.

In response to a request by Friends Committee on National Legislation for advice on a policy regarding reproductive rights, we met three times to articulate the sense of the Meeting on this fraught subject. Our statement began, "Friends Meeting of San Antonio is a community which values life, possibility, and growth." We expressed a hope for affordable, accessible, and comprehensive health care for everyone able to give birth, including contraception, pre-and post-natal care, counseling, family and adoption support, and safe and legal abortion care. One friend stood aside.

Although we have experienced a significant increase in participation and attendance, we continue to struggle to marshal the communal energy needed for Meeting to function both spiritually and materially. Friends Meeting of San Antonio is not alone in finding that the work of Meeting falls on a small number of people, a situation exacerbated by the slow recovery in numbers after the pandemic. We continue to work on improving this situation.

An Ad Hoc Task committee is trying different ways to make sure the doors are open on Sunday morning, the potluck tables are set up and taken down, the kitchen is clean after coffee hour, the Zoom screen and laptop are set up and monitored, and so on. Although people are signing up for tasks, we are not yet at a point where there are enough.

Likewise, our committees have suffered from our reduced numbers. During the pandemic we hibernated Peace and Social Concerns, Long-term Planning, and Community Engagement, with the idea of having individuals follow their leadings and bring actions or issues to Meeting for Business. This has not been a workable approach, and we feel the lack of those committees keenly.

Our meetinghouse and grounds became a gathering spot for unhoused people, and it has become difficult to find unity on how to balance the overwhelming desire to care for those in need with limited human and financial resources. Meeting is in the process of finding a way, and we draw on the Light and the Spirit in each of us as we move toward a means of addressing the conflicting needs.

For the year 2023, Friends Meeting of San Antonio came to worship with open hearts and minds, grounded in silence, and listening for the Spirit to speak through us.