

## **Westport Monthly Meeting State of Society 2021: Distanced Together**

As the pandemic has had profound effects on our individual lives, it has also affected all aspects of our Meeting life. In many ways the past year has been more about changes than growth as old ways of doing things are re-examined and re-invented and new challenges faced. We came into the year with the deep centeredness and love which upholds this Meeting and this strength has carried us through as we face these challenges.

We mourn the lost worship participation of and fellowship with families and children who have had their own difficulties during the pandemic. An hour of silence does not seem to meet the spiritual needs at this time of children who are “Zoomed out”. We have struggled and continue to struggle with ways to reconnect with families.

We mourn the lost attendance of some who are uncomfortable with Zoom worship, yet with joy we celebrate the presence of others whose health concerns or distance have prevented physical participation.

We mourn the lost face to face gatherings that begin and end the worship hour and provide so much richness and ministry, yet through letters, texts, emails, cookies and outdoor distanced tea gatherings have learned that our connection and ministry can expand beyond the physical presence and beyond the allotted First Day morning. Our Seekers Group has taken on an even more important role in providing this tender connection and we have initiated a shorter mid-week worship to further this outreach.

We mourn the loss of our annual Book Fair but are actively looking at alternative ways to provide this much loved community event as well as re-imagining other ways we can use our property as life reopens.

Beyond worship we have had to rethink other ways our ministry and outreach take shape. As physical gatherings have been prohibited we have utilized our Outreach Fund to joyfully support groups in the community doing heartfelt work that speaks to us. Through tender, diligent and rapid work in December we helped a disadvantaged family realize a surprise Christmas. The momentum of our Peace and Social Justice Committee has slowed as we faced the challenges presented to us and were forced to lay down some work. Yet, little by little, we have found new ways to rebuild our deep journey into Racial Justice, Immigration Justice and our historic relationship with Native Peoples.

There is a deep hunger to return to the Meeting House. Slowly we have reintroduced physical worship along side virtual connections and we have struggled with introducing and establishing technology that meets our needs while being minimally intrusive. This is an ongoing effort, but the pandemic has opened our eyes to the need for continued hybrid worship so the we can be as inclusive as possible.

Approved 05/23/2021.

Elizabeth Lee, Clerk