

What is the state of our meeting's spiritual health?

Please join us in co-creating FMC's State of Society Report for 2023

Submission due date: Friday, May 3rd

Friends Meeting at Cambridge (FMC) is embarking on a creative, collaborative, and Spirit-led assessment of our meeting's spiritual health. We're asking everyone to reflect on a set of queries and create a small canvas that reflects their leadings. These canvases will be compiled into one large mosaic mural for all to see, with Worship sharing to go deeper and make sense of what emerges. This mosaic will become our State of Society report. Our Worship Sharing notes will accompany it as our "Artists' Statement." We hope everyone will participate. Please read on for more details!

What is the State of Society report?

New England Yearly Meeting (NEYM) Faith & Practice calls for local meetings to assess the spiritual health of its community every year as it creates this report. The goal is to "understand its strengths and challenges as a community" and to "see how it has been led, how faithfully it has responded to challenges, and where it might need to focus its attention in the future." The process is intended to "bind the community and renew its sense of commitment."

Who contributes to the State of Society Report?

Everyone! For our meeting to truly understand the spiritual health of our community, it is vitally important that we hear from all corners of our community. We want to hear from those who worship by Zoom and in-person. We want to hear from children, teenagers, and young adult friends (YAFs). We hope to hear from members and non-members, as well as regular attenders and spotty attenders. Are you thriving at meeting? We want to hear from you! Do you feel conflicted, confused, or challenged in some way? We also want to hear from you! Our hope is to create an inclusive process that accommodates all of these experiences.

How will we create the State of Society Report?

Our goal is to create a large mosaic mural composed of individual canvases. Each canvas will capture an individual's reflections on the state of our meeting. To do this, we are asking everyone to:

- 1. Create your "canvas"** by cutting a letter size (8.5" x 11") sheet of paper in half.
- 2. Gather "art supplies"**. You can make it as simple or elaborate as you feel led (e.g., pencils, sharpies, crayons, markers, construction paper, tissue paper, magazines, catalogs, stamps, yarn, felt). If you want or need additional supplies, please check out the table of supplies in the Friends Center.
- 3. Reflect on queries.** Sit quietly and listen to whichever queries draw you in, When reflecting over the past year:
 - What is thriving and what is challenging, changing, or needs strengthening, in:
 - The quality of worship and vocal ministry
 - The strength of the meeting community
 - Efforts to foster spiritual growth and evidence of growth
 - Possible tensions in the meeting, and how Friends are responding to those challenges
 - Significant events or activities in the meeting's year together
 - Social justice concerns of the meeting and stands taken based on Friends' religious principles
 - Participation in activities with Friends beyond the local meeting
 - Relations with the community and other religious groups
 - How have we sought to hold up and care for our meeting community?
 - What is our growing edge as a spiritual community?
 - How is the Spirit moving among us?

- Where have we found sustenance and nurture?

For younger children, consider simpler queries such as:

- What is it like sitting quietly during Meeting for Worship? What do you notice about this time in Worship? What do you think about? How do you feel?
- Have you learned anything new this year at First Day School? What was it, and how did it make you feel?
- What are you most excited about when coming to Meeting?
- If you could change one thing about Meeting, what would it be?

4. **Transform your canvas** by trying to capture your experience with the queries. You can do this by collaging, drawing, painting, stamping, sewing, adding words — any creative expression that feels right.

When will we do this?

Please return your canvas to FMC by **Friday May 3rd**. Then, on **Sunday May 5th** during Forum, 9:15-10:15am, we will have a hybrid gathering in which we will together assemble the pieces into a collective mosaic. Later in the day during Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business, 1:30-3:30pm, we will have Worship sharing, notes will be taken, and these notes will be our “Artists’ Statement” to accompany the State of Society report.

Where do I do this?

There will be a table of supplies in the library of the Friends Center April 14–May 3. You can then create your piece anywhere! Friends who would like to can create together during Fellowship at the rise of Meeting. You are also welcome to create your canvas at home. (Please help us replenish this supply with any additional materials you have at home!) There will also be two Zoom gatherings when Friends can gather and create together, April 18th at 7pm and April 20th at 4pm.

What if I’m not very artsy? You can still do this! First, please remember that we are much more interested in the process than the product. And the process is simply this: that you allow a response to rise in you, to one or more queries (or your own reflections) about Friends Meeting at Cambridge, and put something expressing — or representing, or prompted by — that response on a half sheet of paper. It can simply be a word or words if you prefer. Your canvas also does not need to fully speak for itself or be immediately understandable. The end product is only the witness to the process, not the point of it; and both process and product will be spoken to by the Artists’ Statement garnered from worship sharing as well. We hope you will have fun and the process will be joyful, but your contribution is valuable even if this is not your comfort zone! We hope you will share whatever this brings forth from you.

How do I submit my contribution?

You can do this by dropping off your submission in the main office, mailing it (5 Longfellow Park, Cambridge MA, 02138), or emailing a photo of your submission to stateofsociety@fmcquaker.org

Who can I talk to if I have questions or feedback?

Please email stateofsociety@fmcquaker.org. Your email will go to a small ad hoc working group comprising members from Ministry & Counsel and Blue Sky. It includes: Betsy Roper, Erin Bumgarner, Jan Nisenbaum, Kim West, and Virginia Swain.