

Allen's Neck Friends Meeting

A Welcoming Quaker Community in Dartmouth, Massachusetts

ALLENS NECK STATE OF SOCIETY, 2022-2023

2/26/2023, clerked by Kathy Neustadt

Attendance: c. 24 in-person, with another 6 attending on Zoom

Noting that Ministry and Council had just approved the introduction of microphones in worship, generally, clerk Blair Tatman suggested that using them in today's worship sharing was part of the experiment. As to the topic of how we have been doing as a Quaker meeting over the past year, he offered this: "I see us as musicians, playing different instruments, if not necessarily in the same genre. We sound good together, and I am really happy to be a part of it."

This was a theme borne out throughout the session: stories of different kinds of satisfaction and of gratitude. One Friend introduced the image of the Meeting as a family, where "everyone takes part"—enumerating the many tasks that people take on willingly—and concluded that "there's so much life in this Meeting that has created this circle of F/friends." Along similar lines, another added that "even when I'm not sure what I'm supposed to be doing, I get grounded here." Likening the experience to being on a boat "with others feeling similarly—people who have remembered to bring food and oars—" the speaker experienced how "the wind dies down.... I find it comforting and challenging at the same time."

"The life-enhancing Spirit that sometimes find me when I'm here with you... and at the daily Zoom meeting" was also celebrated as "something I've always hungered for but couldn't put into words." "When I come to Meeting," another shared, "I think of us here as listening to and hearing the many voices of God: the voice of silence, the voice of friendship, the voice of the natural world that holds us... the voice of faith."

Another Friend described a process of "evolution in myself" since coming to Allen's Neck and developing a practice of daily worship that has led to "momentous places for me, to the rivers of Light and love that we talk about that flows

over us and that we can tap into.” This sharing ended with a benediction of sorts: “I bless this Meeting for creating an atmosphere in which that can occur.”

Someone spoke of being attracted to Allen’s Neck in different ways at different times: by the building, by the welcome, by the silence. “When I think about this place, the word that comes is ‘grace.’ I don’t know what it is exactly, but it feels like it’s here—coming together and making an even greater grace—and I love it.” Three of the Zoom attenders, one after the other, added their pleasure at being able to participate: even at a remove; even with a cold (“It’s infinitely better than not being here at all”); and with gratitude for being “a part of this meeting and for all of you.”

At the end of the sharing, there were a couple of references made to some areas of lack. It was reported that some of the longer-term members who miss having more “conversation” at Meeting are gathering together socially and enjoying it. Another Friend was reminded of the pleasure of some years ago, when having children in the building and as part of worship “made the Light lighter,” concluding that “I need... I want... more of that.”

One Friend’s observation seemed to summarize well the overall mood: “I love to hear others speak—with or without microphones—and I feel really positive about the State of Society at Allen’s Neck.”