

Worcester Friends Meeting State of the Society Report April 2026

What is our condition as a faith community within the Society of Friends?

We appreciate that messages shared in worship are rooted in spirit and personal experience of spiritual growth, rather than abstract concepts or political opinions.

We appreciate the variety within our Meeting community - gay/straight, theist/non-theist, politically involved and not - and the way that our community encourages individuals' spiritual journey without forcing conformity.

We continue to offer hybrid worship and business meetings. The hybrid option allows people to attend if they are ill or at home or at a distance. Friends at the meetinghouse have the option of sitting where they cannot see the screen and are not seen by the camera. We have an estimated 20 attendees in person per week and 1-4 on Zoom.

We are grateful for our financial stability and for the way that we have resolved conflicts of opinion.

We planted seeds that have come to fruition:

- Caring for our building has sustained the meetinghouse in keeping with our values as a space that is used by Friends and by community organizations.
- Some of the changes we made in the Meeting several years ago — fewer committees, co-clerking — have made us less over-extended within the Meeting, allowing us to participate more in community activities and other work.
- Preexisting relationships with Hadwen Park Church have connected us with valuable information and networks.
- The work that was done in building relationships with the Nipmuc community in working on the land acknowledgement taught us about how to work in community and forging relationships.

How is the Spirit moving among us?

Worcester Friends have done a lot to engage with and support other spiritual communities — making space for Havurah and Buddhists, financial and material support for other religious communities, bringing together nearly 20 different congregations in collaborative action for immigrant support. We can call this “spirit-led nonviolent action in our community, for our community”.

Friends noticed that the level of action we have in the wider community—forming WINIS (Worcester Interfaith Network for Immigrant Support), supporting the Center for Non-violent Solutions, participating as facilitators in AVP, etc.—has been largely a response to adversity in our country and society.

Where have we found sustenance and nurture?

Adversity is galvanizing: when there is a need, it motivates action. When times are difficult, we look for others with whom we can commune. It is sustaining to know that there are others with the same opinions and values.

How can we sustain action and collaboration when adversity is over?

- We now have better understanding of others than we did previously.
- We have relationships that we have built during our actions, and those relationships will remain.
- We have developed a communal and noncompetitive way of working with others in the community.
- The number of AVP facilitators within our meeting is growing. This commitment to and training in nonviolence will enrich our actions going forwards.

How have we sought to hold up and care for our meeting community?

We always appreciate our weekly potluck as a way to care for and get to know each other.

The Facing Race Book Group continues. It is a rich and enriching experience for those who participate.

Spiritual Enrichment sessions monthly are well attended. The sharing that arises is enriching.

What is our growing edge¹ as a spiritual community?

- Being more active in the community, in collaboration with other faith communities.
- The cross-pollination that happens when you collaborate.
- The softening of our hearts to suffering in the world, which is what motivates us to go forward with action in service to others.
- Membership and attendance, including younger adults. We still are saddened not to have children in attendance at our meeting.

How do we continue to make openings for people to be open and vulnerable with their different viewpoints and perspectives?

How can we make the meetinghouse more accessible to wheelchair users?

¹ The growing edge of an organization refers to the area where past behaviors are no longer serving the entity and new strategies are required to move forward. It is the threshold between the known and the unknown, where an organization faces a temporary plateau and must stretch its margins to achieve the next level of performance.