We are a large Meeting in a large city with the resulting joys and challenges. We gain new participants and members as people come to Portland for school, jobs, and retirement, and we are also a way station for seekers who may come for one Sunday or a few months. These seekers both enrich and challenge us to examine our own values and assumptions. The size of meeting for worship, usually with seventy or eighty people, means that ministries vary widely, nourishing some of us on one day and others on another.

Multnomah Meeting spans the generations. We have active adults in every decade of their lives, from their 20s to their 90s. We have strong programs for children and teens that build friendships and community and support their efforts to take Quaker values with them beyond the meetinghouse. At the same time, the cohesive group of Young Adult Friends from recent years no longer meets. We are concerned about meeting the needs of young adults in our community.

Diversity of belief and worship is a strength and a challenge. Because of our size, we have strong and active subgroups such as Bible Study, Friendly Readers, Sunday Morning Adult Discussion, and early worship. Each of these draws a different set of participants and builds a sense of community. We are not surprised that our large Meeting includes people with a wide range of backgrounds, values, and beliefs. Many see this diversity of our spiritual thought and practice as exciting. Some sense hostility to Christian belief and find it off-putting and distressing, but others find that their Christian beliefs are well accepted. There is need for continuing work to understand our range of belief without privileging particular strands.

Multnomah Meeting is blessed with financial stability. We have the resources to maintain a large meeting and a welcoming building, and we recognize the quiet work by the Hearthkeeper and the Finance and Property committees who keep our property functioning. At the same time, we ask ourselves how we can best use these resources “to live into our calling” in the wider world.

We also struggle to understand and utilize the positions of privilege that many of us enjoy as individuals to build a more just world, both as individuals and as a Meeting community. We appreciate the strong work of the Peace and Social Concerns Committee, which has been balancing the imperatives of passionate commitment to specific causes with opportunities for community action. The Friends for Racial Justice group reminds us, through education and highlighting individual and structural privilege, of the ongoing challenge of racial justice and the imperative for more social action.

Size and diversity create many (perhaps impossible) demands on our do-it-yourself governance and management. Many of our committees are undersized and understaffed, and the work of Nominating Committee is never-ending. We try our best to care for each other, and renaming Oversight Committee as Care and Counsel Committee is a positive and affirming step. The work of Friendly Care Committee is another example of the quiet ways in which we care for each other.

Worship and Ministry continues a commitment to nurture the spiritual vitality and groundedness of our worship, including opportunities through our annual pass at the Ben Lomond Quaker Center and our local “Exploring A Quaker Way of Life” series. Some experience worship as “challenging in dark times”, but even so, Multnomah Meeting seeks to find hope in divine guidance, strength in our imperfect but solid community, and courage in our leadings to bring justice and peace into a needy world.