

Spiritual State of the Meeting Report for 2012

1/6/2013

Attendees: Al Geiger, Bonnie Hall, Kenneth Hall, Wendy Clarissa Geiger, Elaine Martin (Clerk), Mike Shell (Recording Clerk)

Worship sharing

On 6th Day, First Month, 2013, following a meeting for worship which included two visiting Friends from Virginia Beach Friends Meeting, six Jacksonville Friends remained at our Evergreen Cemetery location for a brief lunch followed by worship sharing. Friends settled into a deep, gathered meeting. While all but one chose to speak, much of the 1 ½ hours of worship was spent in a profound silence which none seemed troubled to interrupt or eager to end.

The speakers each recognized a hopeful paradox about Meeting's experiences of 2012. On the one hand, we are increasingly active toward goals we identified a year ago. On the other, we have become more comfortable with expectant waiting, willing to sit patiently in each other's presence while we test alternative approaches to our goals.

One Friend noted that we are developing more internal strength and solidity in each other's presence, giving more attention to taking care of each other, making Meeting more accessible for adults and children, even though we have not extended ourselves much into the larger community.

Another Friend observed that we are less fearful, more able to express ourselves freely. What appears to be increased disunity actually reveals that we are letting each other express differences while still forging bonds to help us go forward. We are learning to deal with what we have—including the distractions of poor acoustics, trains passing during worship and insufficient space for First Day School—rather than waiting until we find “perfect” solutions to our needs.

Yet another Friend echoed the theme of becoming able to “forgive Meeting for not being perfect.” We are “dealing with the inconveniences of being impoverished in meeting for worship in a dirty place where *real* non-middle class work happens.” This Friend spends all week preparing for meeting for worship, sits at home during meeting when not able to attend, and wonders of early Friends: “What of their lives did they take into meeting, and what did they take into their lives from meeting?” Of the growth of this Meeting in its quiet cemetery setting, this Friend says, “Come seek the living among the dead.”

Finally, a Friend noted that most of our outreach is done outside of Meeting by individual Friends, rather than collectively. We continue to grow in many ways which need not be broken down into categories.

Milestones

Location

In response to a request to address certain accessibility issues, we explored a number of options and, on 2/5/2012, agreed to move from our longtime home on the Bolles School, Bartram Campus, to the employee lounge of Jacksonville's historic Evergreen Cemetery.

This space and location are convenient, yet the acoustics are poor for those with hearing challenges, a train passes loudly during meeting for worship, there is no space for First Day School, and the dirt from cemetery work is often present. Meeting continues to seek a better—even if still temporary—alternative location. We agree that we need to be more deliberate about long-term planning for meeting space.

Finances

Addressing a goal from last year, we have given fuller attention to financial matters. We agreed to pay most of our 2012 SEYM apportionment and to cover the 2013 amount in quarterly payments. We communicated with SEYM our concerns about the amount of yearly meeting budget designated for organizations which Jacksonville Meeting or individuals already support. We agreed to start a savings account toward long-term building needs.

Membership

We recorded three new members: Bonnie Hall, Wendy Clarissa Geiger and Mike Shell (by transfer from Columbia SC Meeting). Friends from Jacksonville, Gainesville and Tallahassee Meetings joined in a clearness committee for Bonnie and Wendy. Due to long-time lack of contact, we laid down the membership of Hans Fletcher.

We were also joined by several attenders, including Bonnie's husband Kenneth and their children, Hope (Bess) Wilson, who is co-leading our First Day School effort, along with her family, Brooke Stephens, who has offered her home as an alternative meeting place, and Brit Webwell, who visited during the summer to learn Quaker decision-making process for the local chapter of the Occupy Movement.

First Day School (FDS)

We are in unity that we want to welcome young people by providing FDS, yet we have stumbled over logistics this year. The primary issue is space separate from meeting for worship. Regardless of location, we have agreed to begin twice-monthly FDS session, one of them being an intergenerational session. Linda Wilson and Bess Wilson are leading the FDS effort.

The Jacksonville Meeting Newsletter

After over a decade, Friend Bettie Freel has passed on responsibility for the Meeting newsletter to new member Bonnie Hall. Friends minuted their appreciation to Bettie for newsletters of "cohesiveness and depth that often opened the reader to vast spiritual inner vistas[...] due in large part to [her] diligent search for pithy Quaker quotes, queries, advices, and more quotes."

Outreach

Meeting joined a number of outreach efforts both within and beyond the Quaker world. In February, Elaine Martin, Sue Watson and Barbara Vanderhoff spoke for us during an Interfaith Dialogue at Episcopal School of Jacksonville. In April, eleven Friends met for lunch and worship sharing in order to craft a statement identifying the five legislative priorities which Jacksonville Meeting recommended to Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) for its lobbying agenda during the 113th Congress (2013-2014).

In July, Brit Webwell attended the Occupy Movement's national convention in Philadelphia and brought Meeting a report on the event. In November, Friend Stuart Smith passed along to Mike Shell his decades-long role as Meeting representative to the Jacksonville Interfaith Council. Also in November, Meeting minuted its willingness to join SEYM Quaker Youth in their effort to convince Publix Super Markets, Inc., to participate in the Fair Food Campaign.

Fellowship

Friends found various ways to share increased fellowship with each other during 2012, culminating in a well-attended Christmas potluck hosted by the Hall family in St. Augustine.

Submitted by
Mike Shell, Recording Clerk
1/24/2013