

Jacksonville Friends Spiritual State of the Meeting – 2016 Report February 5, 2017

Attendees: Mike Shell, Wendy Clarissa Geiger, Amanda Nelson, Willie Hager, Al Geiger, Elaine Martin, Stacy (visitor)

The following paraphrases and compiles testimony of different Friends.

Worship, Experiencing God's Presence

- I enjoy the silence, even if there is a totally silent meeting with no vocal ministry. I can't answer query about experiencing God's presence: I don't feel a push to put into words what I experience in meeting but it seems to be a benefit for me.
- Sometimes it takes the whole worship hour for me to center down. I think that's because we are centering down together, communally. We may find ourselves waiting for those who have a harder time centering. I only feel I am letting others down if I don't come to meeting with heart and mind prepared.

Ideas come or are enhanced in meeting. Because we worship in stillness, it's hard to analyze how mystical we are, but sometimes several might be pondering the same thing, with one sometimes giving another's message. It would be useful for us to take some time *after* worship to share what we experienced *during* worship; that would help us to connect even more.

Worshiping together is not so much about getting to know and love each other. It's just about coming and accepting each other as we are. When I was a child and teenager sitting in meeting, I used to watch each face and fell in love with the faces. I love this world. It has a lot to do with forgiveness.

- Meeting is a place to center myself. The world is always swirling and spinning. Since I am energy-sensitive, sitting in silence helps me feel the collective energy of others, and this inspires me. I have experienced personal growth due to this.
- I am nourished and comforted by worship. I do feel a sense of the spirit with us.
- Sometimes just sitting in silence is a good release. This was my first meeting, and I found stillness hard to do. I kept checking my smart phone. But I want to learn.
- I enjoyed finding peace by walking in through the Florida Christian Center garden before this meeting.
- Despite 30 years of Quaker worship, I can do silence, but I have great difficulty with stillness. I stay too stuck in the verbal. I'm very grateful for what others have shared, their witness to the value of simple stillness as nourishment.

Spiritual Growth

- Meeting has grown exponentially in the Light this past year, despite our numbers not changing much. Light has gone out into the community, affecting others through our service, just as Jesus invited us to do.
- Meeting is small, but those who attend are very committed to meeting. We have an active newsletter and website, and we do various outreach activities, such as our peace and social concerns activism and the conscientious objector presentation Al and Willie did at Koinonia Farm

<https://www.koinoniafarm.org/>.

We occasionally provide hospitality, and we are nourished by and have nourished Friends who visit.

Support for Each Other

- Meeting has been very small this past year, with several people unable to attend due to illness jobs, etc. We could do more to reach out to them. Even in worship, I feel I have "tentacles" out to them.
- We are a small group, but we are increasing in life, love, and concern for those who cannot be with us.
- I am concerned for isolated Friends who cannot join us for various reasons. I would like to see us make practical ministry to them a focus for this year. How can we carry meeting to them?

Meeting Business

- We are doing well with our business meetings despite our small size. We have committed people.

Witness in Community

- I feel such joy in watching Elaine and Willie indulge in social justice work as an outreach of meeting. Heidi is another who does outreach, taking her stepfather to his church. When I cannot attend, I sit in silence and join from afar.

A year ago, our SEYM secretary acknowledged not having time to connect with each other yearly meetings. I wrote to different Quaker organizations asking how to help this process. Until now, Friends General Conference has tended to be very top-down, communicating between headquarters in Philadelphia and yearly meetings. However, General Secretary Barry Crossno wrote me recently that fostering connections *between* yearly meetings is now on the FGC agenda to move forward in its work.

- Meeting is a great source in reconciliation, bringing the spiritual and activism together. Friends should take energy from meeting, knowing that we have an impact in the country through our actions, not just through marches and flags.
- Community involvement is very important for us. Meeting provides us the grounding for this. I feel very much supported in my own work. I feel the Light is with us.

Submitted by
Mike Shell, Meeting Clerk
2/20/2017