

**State of the Society
Jacksonville Friends Meeting**

Jacksonville Meeting greets all Friends in the Southeastern Yearly Meeting community. We give thanks for a year of warm fellowship and spiritual growth.

We thank Heidi Lowey-Ball for taking on the responsibilities of meeting clerk this past year. As we began the process of seeking a new clerk last spring, we were led to seek ways to involve more Friends in the work of the meeting. This process helped us to see ourselves as a community, and to recognize that a community's existence and growth depend upon the active participation of many individuals. This year we are experimenting with a new structure that encourages more Friends to participate and lessens the burden on any one person. We have rejuvenated our committees. We are pleased with our new structure, and feel free to shape it as necessary to the needs of the meeting.

Jacksonville Friends continue to search for ways to meet the needs of our children. Our meeting includes about a dozen children ranging in age from a few months to fourteen years. Parents and children have met together twice to plan activities for this diverse group. These meetings have resulted in excellent ideas. We note the participation of more children this year than in the recent past. A highlight of our year was the children's Christmas pageant.

Friends continue to be involved in a wide variety of social concerns in our community and the broader world. We note in particular Sally and Joe McIntire, who have embarked on a mission of reconciliation between Evangelical Protestants and Catholics in a rural, indigenous area of Mexico. They describe this delicate situation as one that has led to much confrontation and violence in the last year, with over 300 persons known killed. Jacksonville Friends are committed to maintaining as close a contact as possible with the McIntires and ask that all Friends in the Southeastern Yearly Meeting community surround them with love and light.

We report with sorrow the death of both Ruth and Josiah Cox Russell, members of Jacksonville Friends Meeting for many years. Memorial meetings for worship was held in St. Augustine under the care of Friends on 4/16/96 for Ruth and 11/15/96 for Josiah.

On August 5 this year we welcomed into our meeting family Emily Jane Leeser, daughter of Tracy and Alexander Leeser and sister of William.

Over the course of the past year we have welcomed new attenders, recorded one new member and said good bye to Friends whose life journeys carry them elsewhere. We continue to feel very much attached to many Friends at a distance and find that our monthly newsletter helps maintain warm contacts. Our trial year of a telephone listing brought many calls, several visitors and some new Friends who have come to stay. We give thanks for the phone!

We miss Friends who leave, delight in new seekers, welcome visitors and rely on the core of members and attenders who keep Friends' presence in Jacksonville alive. We truly do give thanks for our year, knowing that even though our lives carry us in many directions, we can count on a worship experience that is truly spiritual and enriching and a fellowship of F(f)riends that is truly nurturing.

Respectfully submitted by Debbi Rasmussen for Jacksonville Friends Meeting