

SOUTHEASTERN YEARLY MEETING  
*of the Religious Society of Friends*

SPIRITUAL STATE OF THE MEETING REPORTS  
2014

*“...for when I came into the silent assemblies of God's people, I felt a secret power among them, which touched my heart, and as I gave way unto it, I found the evil weakening in me and the good raised up, and so I became thus knit and united unto them, hungering more and more after the increase of this power and life, whereby I might feel myself perfectly redeemed.”*

---Robert Barclay, 1678

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Recognizing diversity of cultural and spiritual backgrounds within Meeting, we come together as Seekers. This loving acceptance of one another creates an open and nurturing environment. Our Meeting honors sacred Silence and waiting for experiences of Inner Light. Meetings are further enriched at the close of worship when we share afterthoughts and concerns, as well as taking time for holding others within the Light. Our monthly pot lucks give us the opportunity to know each other better and allow the spirit (and good food, of course) to bring us closer.

We have much to be thankful for and openly show our concern for everyone's well being. We are reminded by Ministry and Counsel "...to give thought to how we allow ourselves to be cared for and to how we care for others."

We likewise reach out to our community in many ways. Members and Attenders actively support food banks, a soup kitchen and shelters for families. Several of our Members have been led to assist a local not-for-profit preschool by organizing and participating in painting and cleaning workdays, purchasing needed materials, and enthusiastically hosting their first Holiday party for staff, children and families. Several who are led are assisting the administration in its mission to improve the lives of these mostly "at risk" children.

We were grateful to take advantage of the SEYM Workshop on Clerking given by Nancy Fennell for our annual retreat at a lovely park on Lake Tarpon. Other workshops during the year included four sessions of Quakerism 101 led by one of our Members. We held a special fellowship gathering for discernment to finalize the list of priorities for the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress to send to Friends Committee on National Legislation. There has been a growing concern among Friends about how we are governed and many write letters to Congressmen and editors of local papers and visit congressional offices to present our views on local and national issues.

It was with great joy that we received a visit by several Young Friends on First Day as they presented a lively overview of their participation at FGC and their mission to better the lives of the Immokalee farm workers. They, and their selfless courageous efforts touched our hearts as we hope to continue supporting their actions in the future.

Our Meetings for Worship with a Concern for Business are held regularly with an openness that encourages members and attenders to participate. We have lively, in-depth discussions as committees present their reports and concerns. We continue to meet in the Scottish American Society Hall in Dunedin and although our finances are sound, we have not seen a way to purchase our own Meetinghouse. We look to the day when we have a facility which may encourage more families with children with resources for First Day School.

Although our Meeting has not grown in membership, we are blessed with regular attenders and visitors. We released one longtime member to the care of another Meeting when she moved to be closer to family. Like many Florida Meetings we experience an increase in visitors during the Winter months and look forward each year to receiving messages from Meetings around the globe.

# FORT LAUDERDALE FRIENDS MEETING

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## *State of the Meeting Report 2014*

Fort Lauderdale Friends Meeting continues as a small meeting whose regular attenders know each other well.

We have, with some success, improved the focus and structure of our Meetings for Business. We continue to remind ourselves that when we conduct our business, we are in worship. We have shared with each other about our strategies for growing spiritually at a Meeting for Learning, and we have continued to explore issues of spiritual growth.

We take time to consider questions that newer attenders may ask. Our meetings for worship have ample opportunities for listening to the Spirit.

We enjoy organizing our annual Tri County Quaker Picnic, attended by Friends from the Palm Beach, Fort Lauderdale, and Miami meetings. The 2014 picnic featured a discussion about encouraging participation and involvement in our local meetings.

Serving meals several times a year at the Broward Partnership for the Homeless has given us an opportunity for friendly conversation that includes a bit of listening.

A local organization, Food Not Bombs, has been helping to feed homeless people in spite of some new ordinances that severely restrict such feeding programs. Our meeting has offered our encouragement for feeding homeless people; and we wrote a letter of protest to the city commissioners. Recently, a temporary injunction has been issued against the city, and we await further developments.

Occasional "Movie Nights" in a member's home have been enjoyable opportunities to share and discuss movies. One of our "movie nights" turned in to a community event. In February, we hosted a showing of "A Fierce Green Fire: The Battle for a Living Planet" at a local arts movie house, Cinema Paradiso. The event featured a conversation via Skype with the movie's producer, Mark Kitchell.

For another movie night we watched "Dead Man Walking," about Sister Helen Prejean's work with death row inmates. The movie was named after a book that she had written. Subsequently, several of us went to her presentation about the death penalty at Second Presbyterian Church. Her talk and her presence were inspiring.

We find hope in the stability and functionality of our small meeting. We are thankful for our spiritual community and for our opportunities for growth.

• ***How do we support each other as members of this beloved community?***

F/friends consider our Meeting to be a kind and loving community, and many of us have felt comfort from the Meeting in times of trouble. However, members and attenders are often reluctant to tell us when they need help. Friends and attenders have been encouraged to expand their involvement in the Meeting by participating on committees and projects. The happy result has been their feeling of being an integral part of the Meeting as well as getting to know each other in a deeper way. Those of us who have had the opportunity to participate in a Spiritual Formation Group have become closer to one another in “that which is eternal.” Newcomers have mentioned feeling welcomed.

• ***What was our meeting’s witness in the wider community in the last year?***

Our Peace & Social Concerns Committee has been very active this year, helping us to focus on the needs of the wider community. Our entrance into the L.I.F.E. Group (Lee Interfaith for Empowerment) has been an important step as we are now working hand-in-hand with other faith communities. The Meeting also helped host the annual gathering of the Peace Churches of Florida. Although our money and efforts have been directed to local problems, we also continue to witness to larger global issues. However, F/friends feel that they need to work harder on letting the world know about our peace mission. Within our own small community we have been blessed with several people willing to ensure that we are stewards of our meeting space that is shared with other community organizations. One Friend has a leading to spread the word to other churches about the “Second Underground Railroad”—the mission work of Olympia Friends Meeting in Washington State to save gays and lesbians from certain death in Uganda.

• ***Has there been a deepening and strengthening of the sense of the Divine Presence in our midst during the past year? Do we feel a sense of our individual spirits fusing in-to an undivided group as we worship? Do we leave our meetings filled with a sense of love and peace and courage to meet the challenge of Spirit-filled living?***

Friends were enthusiastic about their experiences in the Spiritual Formation Groups and about the impact the groups had on their spiritual development and on their experiences of community within the Meeting.

Friends expressed that the ministry in both the Meeting and Afterthoughts deepened their spirituality and strengthened them to meet the challenges of the larger community, and expressed special appreciation for the ministry in song

The presence of new young families has provided the welcome opportunity to re-establish our First Day School, expanding the scope of our worship

• ***Are there places where the meeting isn’t reaching fully for the Light?***

A wide variety of concerns were expressed by Friends on this question, and these are reflected below:

- Living in the Light is a lifetime project and that some of us are focused on things other than spirit-led subjects rather than focusing on the bigger picture.
- We as a community should be doing more about media-shared incidents of violence
- We haven’t done much as a Meeting regarding the status of the LGBTQ persons in the larger community.
- Some of us tend to be social activists but don’t pay enough attention to God’s plan and God’s time, and that our actions and words need to be grounded in faith.
- There is a potential for growth in the Quaker message in the larger community, but many of us tend to hang back, fearing both the banner of evangelism and the possibility of outrunning our guide. We need to talk about this more.
- We will all be impacted by the fracking issue and other climate change issues. Don’t we need to

DO something about it as a Quaker community?

- Our meeting should become more aware of and engaged with AFSC's work in the Gaza Strip.

- ***What would we like meeting to be to meet our needs and needs of those who would attend meeting?***

The Meeting has reached a point in its life where Friends have once again begun a period of discernment of God's will for us with regard to our meeting space. Friends expressed concerns about handicap accessibility and ability to physically hear one another in the current space.

## QUAKER MEETING OF MELBOURNE

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Members and attenders of Quaker Meeting of Melbourne met on March 1<sup>st</sup> as a committee-of-whole following Meeting for Worship to consider the Spiritual State of our Meeting.

The commitment to support one another has continued to grow during this past year. There is a level of energy that is greater than the prior year.

Thanks to the work of Friends William and Lyn our Web site has been significantly improved with many articles about our faith and practice being posted. William and Lyn were also responsible for making two permanent signs. One sign is located near the building where we have our Meeting for Worship and the other sign is attached to the building. Friends Hope, William and Lyn were responsible for starting a Face book site for our Meeting with numerous "likes" being posted.

Our Meeting continues to have activities with the Unitarian church where we have our weekly Meetings. Recently, we hosted the "coffee hour" after their service. Friend Hope was active in helping the Unitarians arrange for the "Go Granny D" stage presentation. Several members of our Meeting attended the performance.

We continued to welcome visiting Friends from across America. We have continued to have Meetings for Enrichment (discussions and potlucks) and we have Meetings for Worship with a Concern for Business on a monthly basis.

We believe that our Meeting for Worship and other Meeting activities have nurtured our Spiritual growth and there has been a deepening and strengthening of the Divine Presence among us.

Our Meeting deeply misses the presence of Lyn Cope who moved to Oberlin, Ohio during this past year. We miss the presence of Cheri Roberts who moved to North Carolina.

Our Meeting rejoices over the new membership of Jerome Courtois and the regular attendance of Susan Freedman.

During this next year, we need to continue to grow and have greater outreach in our community.

March 8, 2015

This is not a traditional Spiritual State of the Meeting report. This is a snapshot of a meeting in transition. We have several long term members and attenders facing declining health, including cognitive issues, but we have no young adults , few healthy and vibrant adults, and very few young families, to help carry on the work of our meeting. We looked at the writing of this report as a valuable opportunity for the meeting as a whole to come together for worshipful introspection and visioning.

This is a meeting with many strengths. There is a strong sense pervading our community of faith that there is that of God in everyone and that all people are children of God. Worship and living out our testimonies is at the heart of our meeting. Our meetings for worship are cordial and we follow Quaker practice and etiquette.

In addition to being Friends and attenders, we are also friends. We have a monthly Friendly Lunch as well as Market Dinners during the winter months for both fundraising and fellowship. There is always fellowship with coffee and surprises each First Day after worship. While many of us travel over an hour to attend meeting and do not have opportunities to interact with the Gainesville community as much as we would like, many of us have developed strong ties and life long friendships within our meeting and SEYM.

We are spiritually strong in seeing that of God in all creation, experiencing the spirit moving among us, encouraging spiritual growth and development , accepting differences in our spiritual journeys and practices, and learning to wait for and listen to the spirit. Our committees work well, seasoning ideas in a worshipful manner and bringing reports and minutes for action to our regularly scheduled meetings for Worship with an Attention to Business. We acknowledge and nurture each other's spiritual gifts. For most of us Quakerism deeply influences every aspect of our daily lives.

Our meeting is financially stable. We strive to handle financial matters with integrity and openness. We meet our financial obligations and maintain our meetinghouse .

As we look towards the future we see a need to become more visible in the community, reach out to young adults and families, and become a more active and visible witness to the needs of our community. Through our committees we are working together to update and build a strong infrastructure within our meeting to position ourselves for greater outreach, to improve collaboration with other faith and social justice groups, and to increase community use of our meetinghouse. Through these efforts we hope to build a more vibrant and diverse Quaker meeting. We have moved our website to the QuakerCloud to increase our visibility and provide better access to up to date information about our meeting.

Tis a gift to be simple, tis a gift to be free.....Our meeting is a precious gift. We are striving to care well for the gift we have and do a better job sharing our gift with the wider community.

**Attendees:** Bess Wilson, Mike Shell, Bonnie Hall, Ken Hall, Al Geiger, Elaine Martin, Doug Halpin  
The Jacksonville Friends Meeting held a worship sharing relating to the current spiritual state of the Meeting following our regular Meeting for Worship.

**Deepening of Worship:** The resounding theme spoken by nearly all Friends was of the deepening of spirituality during first day worship. Some spoke of feeling fulfilled and the silence becoming deep and rich. Others spoke of finding it easier to settle into the silence. One Friend spoke of feeling safer in being able to express their faith and their feelings openly and of how they had begun to feel a kinship with those in Meeting.

**Meeting for Business:** Several Friends spoke of a welcome shift in the direction of business meetings. They felt this process was becoming more meaningful and productive for decision-making within the meeting. It has provided better structure for discerning the sense of the meeting and developing unity within the meeting.

**Social Interaction:** Many Friends spoke of the pleasure they gained from the many social events undertaken this year. Some of the variety of events held as a Meeting this year included regular monthly pot lucks, a canoe outing, visit to the Florida Coalition for Peace and Justice, end of summer and Christmas Meetings held in St. Augustine, and a birthday party in honor of Wendy Clarissa Geiger. All Friends hoped to continue these types of social events into the coming year as means of further getting to understand one another.

**Healing:** All Friends spoke of pain and sorrow felt about the conflict that occurred earlier this year and the resulting unhealed wounds. Friends often do not like conflict, but one mentioned that from early Quakerism a significant challenge has always been how to deal with unpleasant issues and differences. Throughout history mankind has not been good at it. Although sensing pain, Friends did not see a clear path forward in finding resolution. One Friend spoke of being still and working as a meeting to create that place where God can work through us to find peace for all.

**Outreach:** All Friends spoke of the phenomenal year with regard to outreach. The Jacksonville Meeting has been involved in a wide variety of activities. Meeting has representatives participating in social justice programs with ICARE, sponsored a presentation on Moral Injury and hosted representatives from Quaker House, hosted the SEYM youth group, continued involvement with the Florida Coalition for Peace and Justice and Wage Peace, and collected donations for the Clara White mission. Friends hope these initiatives will continue into the coming year and that we continue to search for outreach opportunities that speak to the entire Meeting.

**Meeting House Committee:** Another initiative begun this year was the establishment of a meeting house committee to develop a short and long term plan for a permanent meeting location. Friends feel strongly that this initiative would improve the health of the Meeting through growth and stability. Permanent facilities would provide a better opportunity for greater involvement of families and better support development of First Day School.

**Ongoing needs:** The following issues were raised by Friends as challenges to continue to work on in the coming year:

- Continued outreach and local community involvement
- Expand the ability to embrace new families into the meeting
- Continuing to build on the foundation and structure of Quakerism
- Investigate conflict resolution training
- Investigate the addition of a worship and ministry committee
- Expand the participation of younger persons and a need to nurture our children

# Lake Wales Worship Group

## State of the Meeting Report 2014-15

The Lake Wales Worship Group has been undergoing a period of change, in more ways than one. On April 17, 2014, we lost our beloved long time attender (and Member of St. Petersburg Meeting), Elizabeth Rapp, mother of Bill Rapp. In a small memorial meeting on June 1st, we celebrated her life. Many of the attenders gave heartfelt remembrances of her. We viewed pictures of her and her family, shared a meal and extended care and condolences to Bill.



**March 2014**

On September 22, 2014, Gary Lanker, an occasional attender and husband of attender Caroline Lanker, passed away. The Worship group, Caroline, and her family held a memorial meeting for Gary the following week. It was well attended by members of the Tampa and St. Petersburg Meetings and many non-Quakers. Some commented that it was their first experience of a Quaker meeting. Many of Gary's friends and family felt led to speak about their warm remembrances of him. It was a beautiful service and we are missing Gary.

Over the past year, the meeting has grown in attendance. Some people who had attended years before have found the worship group again. Others, new to Quakerism, are appreciating our silent form of worship. Unlike some summers when we have not held meeting every week, our numbers remained up during the summer of 2014 and we have met almost every First Day. This winter, we have missed some of our formerly regular winter attenders, but maintain communication with them and hope to see them again in the future. Other new seasonal visitors have joined us. Our Worship Group, now being attended by up to 15

people or so, is filled with a rich silence. We often have quite deep sharing following the break of silence. During one such sharing, some voiced that they were often still deep in meditation at the end of hour and felt a need for a slower, more gentle, break of silence. As a result of this discussion, we are trying to be more mindful of each other as we come out of silence. Following Meeting, we frequently share personal joys and sorrows and concerns for the world. Being a small group allows us to be more aware of health or other difficulties among us and we try to provide assistance as circumstances allow. Friendships, new and old, have been strengthened by our support of one another outside of worship. Frequent meals together at local restaurants following Meeting provide further opportunities to get to know each other.

On one final note, we have purchased a small sign to be placed by the road near the Audubon Center to announce worship inside. We feel that it will help new attenders find the location of the Worship Group and



**February 2015**

also announce to the greater community that we are meeting for worship there. In this small way, we are trying to increase the shining of our "Little Light" to our neighbors on the Lake Wales Ridge. We appreciate visits from St. Petersburg Monthly Meeting (as we are under the care of the St. Petersburg Monthly Meeting) as well as other Quaker Friends. We rejoice in all visitors and seasonal attenders as it increases the richness of our small Worship Group.



This year Meetings for Worship have been very rich in the depth of silence in worship and movement of the Spirit that lead to the offering and receiving of vocal ministry and enhance our caring for one another. We strive to greet with loving patience the occasional verbal offerings that may not be divinely inspired. Our Meetings for Worship with a concern for Business have grown in generosity and effectiveness, since we have been consciously practicing addressing all our information and concerns through the Clerk and since we have gained a better understanding of gathering a "Sense of the Meeting". Our Meetings for Worship and our Meetings for Learning have been enriched by the frequent participation of Quaker visitors from other states and countries. Our monthly Quaker Bible Study sessions have been blessed by inspired leaders and participants, engaging in both serious and mirthful scholarship and lay commentary. We experience a vital spirituality with sufficient regularity that we qualify as a nurturing Faith Community for most Members and Attenders.

We are challenged by the pastoral care needs of both our elderly and our youth. We have engaged in conversation of how best to address the needs of aging members, and we are all aging. Only a few Friends engage in the ministry of visitation with the homebound. Our phone calls and mail greetings have been much appreciated. We need to increase our First Day School leadership pool! Those who do work with our children provide a great service. We are happy that the number of children in the Meeting is on the rise. Too often, we cannot adequately plan ahead due to lack of volunteers.

Since our last Spiritual State of the Meeting letter, Miami Friends have repeatedly shown joy in providing hospitality for Quakers serving multiple regional, national and international organizations. We hosted committee gatherings of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), Friends General Conference (FGC), Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC), and some of those involved in the Quaker Youth Pilgrimages to Peru and Bolivia.

We rekindle our relationship with fellow Quakers in Southeast Florida by participating in the annual Tri-county picnic, an opportunity to share in fellowship with Friends from Palm Beach and Ft. Lauderdale Meetings. We also collaborated with Spanish speaking Friends of the local Iglesia de Los Amigos in worship and service for visitors to Miami.

The past year has seen changes in membership. Several members have transferred their membership to other Meetings. We have also removed Members who had lost contact with us. A dear Attender, Janet Launcelott, and two Members, Evelyn Hensley, and Steve Mendoza, have died. We welcomed to the Miami Friends Meeting several new Members who help us stay fresh in our own spiritual journeys: Lon Clay Hill, Jane Westburg and Jeanette Smith. Our Meeting is in the clearness process with two additional Attenders seeking Membership.

Although small in number, we seek to impact the broader community in a variety of ways. Some of us are led to witness on peace and social justice concerns such as mountain top removal, earth care, police/community relations, civilian oversight of law enforcement, bullying in schools, wage theft and worker justice, immigration, racism, and mass incarceration.

Our Youth, through Southeast Yearly Meeting, brought us to engagement in the work of (EQAT) Earth Quaker Action Team. Our Youth led our Meeting in supporting a National Day of Action by EQAT, by gathering at a local PNC Bank, and asking the bank to cease funding mountain top removal for coal mining. A group from Miami Friends Meeting participated in worship at the PNC branch bank in Aventura, Florida. On that day, the group leafleted bank customers and showed them a jar of the actual contaminated water from mountain top removal's fouling the rivers. Our group spoke through designated representatives with the bank manager and with police, and used social media to communicate our presence and to protest as

## *Miami Meeting continued*

part of the national campaign. A professional short video was prepared by a Member of our Meeting and distributed on line. It was greatly appreciated by SEYM and EQAT, and by Members and Attenders of our Meeting.

We remain involved in some of the activities of the Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP), both national and international (AVP-USA and AVP-International), and we continue to support the efforts of (PAV-Cuba), Proyecto Alternativas a la Violencia , the AVP group of facilitators active in Cuba.

Some of us engage in interfaith ministry by actively participating in a local long standing Clergy Dialogue, offering Quaker testimonies and witness to Jews, Muslims, Catholic and Protestant Christians, and some attend interfaith meetings of the Miami Coalition of Christians and Jews (MCCJ).

Friends attended formative meetings (with members of Riviera Presbyterian Church, Coral Gables Congregational Church and others) to help establish Friends of Sabeel-South Florida. FOS-SFL (Friends of Sabeel - South Florida) is affiliated with FOSNA (Friends of Sabeel-North America). Sabeel is a Palestinian Christian organization concerned for human rights in the occupied territories of Israel. Friends participated in a boycott action (consonant with AFSC) asking local shoppers at Dadeland Station not to buy "SodaStream".

Meeting members serve on one or more of the many Southeastern Yearly Meeting (SEYM) committees: Ministry and Worship, Nominating, Peace and Social Concerns, and Earth Care Witness. We are represented at all SEYM gatherings, at Half Yearly Meeting, and at both Fall and Winter Interim Business Meetings. Some Friends serve as SEYM representatives to FWCC, some serve on the Pro-Nica Board, the AFSC Corporation, the Quaker United Nations Committee (QUNC) or the Executive Committee of the FWCC Section of the Americas. In addition, some of us were heavily involved in community efforts to save our public libraries!

We continue to serve the community by sharing our two buildings with community groups - including a bilingual cooperative preschool. Their playground and green space enrich our First Day school. Our long-term upstairs Bartram House occupants left in July. After several threshing sessions the Meeting has affirmed its commitment to incorporate the use of its properties into its mission, defined as " to be together in a growing community and to love one another, as a way of beckoning to the people of our community". We made one of the Bartram rooms into our Meeting's office. We are making small repairs as we seek other occupants. In the activity room of our Meeting House, we have installed new windows so as to make our air conditioning more efficient, and we have built and installed a long counter to simplify and beautify food serving.

A highlight worthy of special mention was the Clerking Workshop by Arthur Larrabee, offered by Miami Friends as a service to all interested Quakers in our Yearly Meeting. This bonding, entertaining, and enlightening retreat experience enriched our Meeting and our Clerk. We now hold in common an understanding of important and effective clerking skills. The large retreat, held in the Meeting House, marked our willingness to host traveling Friends in our homes. We have rediscovered shared joy in a Spirit-led Ministry of Hospitality. And, we very much appreciate the care and refreshment our own Hospitality Committee faithfully provides for us each Sunday and at special events.

### ***Greetings to all SEYM Friends!***

In drafting our state of the meeting report, we focused on four of the Queries from the SEYM Worship & Ministry Committee: ***How has the Spirit been moving among us this past year? How does the spirit of worship extend into our committee work and into meeting for worship with a concern for business? What was our meeting's witness in the wider community in the last year? How has our meeting for worship or other meeting activities nurtured our spiritual growth?***

Orlando Friends have sensed the Spirit moving among us this last year in many ways. The work of the spirit is most visible in the new energy we feel in the life and work of the Meeting and how we have grown in our understanding and practice of the Quaker way both as individuals and as a community.

Fruits of the spirit become more apparent as we grow in the Light and become more seasoned, grounded and at ease in our faith and practice. Friends have observed a deeper listening to each other, and greater mindfulness to our own tone of voice and choice of words.

The spirit is apparent in our fellowship: our enjoyment of each other's company, the sharing of joys, sorrows, and laughter. At one Friend's leading, we have started 'Friday Night Friends', gathering one Friday night a month for food, fellowship, and fun. Together we mourned the loss, and celebrated the lives, of two dear and long-time Friends, Dean Engstrom and Sandy Ilardi. We welcomed Frances Stacey and Holly Grasso into membership.

We have begun "Exploring Quakerism" using the SEYM ***Faith and Practice***, as well as continuing our "Conversations to Explore". These quiet gatherings, held after worship & coffee, are inclusive of long time members and new attenders. Friends engage in dialogue in a spirit of love both as speakers and listeners. It is wonderful to have such discussions about our faith; it increases unity and community and contributes to our becoming more seasoned Friends.

New energy is apparent in Friends' enthusiasm in volunteering for committee work. As the Nominating Committee has been at work on our new slate of nominations, more Friends have felt energized and empowered to take on new responsibilities. New energy is also seen as some of our members in Deland & Orange City become more active, coming together for worship on an occasional basis, and also attending our Meetings for Business.

We have had an increase in participation in Meeting for Business, with about 24 Friends regularly in attendance. In our meetings we experience less 'popcorn,' more listening and mindful speaking. Difficult issues have been taken up in Good Order, with care, respect, and a spirit of working together. We are working on our concerns for how our organizational, financial and legal responsibilities can be put in good order. As we become more seasoned in doing committee work the Quaker way, we experience a greater sense of community and shared concerns and efforts. Friends feel even more encouraged by the enjoyment of fellowship and how we care for each other as we do the work.

While Meeting had in the past minuted a concern for mass incarceration, this year we are blessed with a way to support this concern. Miguel Adams, an attender at Meeting, has started a non-profit organization, **Speak Up Florida**, a campaign to end the 'New Jim Crow.' We have supported his efforts with a grant as well as moral support. Minerva Glidden helped establish the non-profit & serves on the board. We increased funding for our Grants program, through which we can give more substantial donations to community organizations who serve the neediest among us with their transformative work. The grant-making process involves getting to know them and becoming better connected to the wider community.

## ***Orlando Meeting continued***

This year we joined **Faith in Florida**, a multi-cultural interfaith organization that addresses economic and racial inequality, civil rights, immigration & healthcare issues in Florida.

We continue to help the homeless in various ways. We are in our 13<sup>th</sup> year of providing, once a month, home-cooked dinners and fellowship to a small men's program, Fresh Start. Kay Lesnick & Martha Morris also provide bags of personal items for the men. We regularly have a few homeless persons join us for Bible Study and worship; Kay & Bill Carlie give them some personal assistance.

We are working on our concern for how the Meeting as a whole can be more active and involved in Peace & Social Concerns and our witness in the world.

## **PALM BEACH MONTHLY MEETING** *of the Religious Society of Friends* 2014 State of the Meeting Report

### ***1. What spiritually nourishes members & attenders at Palm Beach Meeting?***

Members and attenders agree that many aspects of Palm Beach Meeting nourish their spirits, especially worship and the sense of community. Meetings for Learning and the weekly potluck are times of fellowship and welcoming newcomers. The annual retreat is always well received and also is a way of including new attenders. We enjoy a sense of like-mindedness and feel at home. Being in south Florida, we have a diversity of visitors, giving us a sense of contact with the wider world of Quakers. People feel that their individual needs are met compassionately, and they are always welcome even after a long absence. People appreciate that the meeting offers many opportunities to serve in ways that are valuable. However, we regret that currently we do not have any children attending. Also we seldom schedule evening programs but that may change in the new year.

### ***2. What was the meeting's witness in the wider world in the past year?***

We aim to be faithful to our testimonies by our service to the wider world. We have been a small presence at local peace activities including vigils and the Raging Grannies. We participate in Quaker action through our connection with FCNL, ProNica, and Quaker Peace Teams. Friends individually witness in the world through community gardens and Wellington Cares Clearinghouse. Meeting for Learning has often brought us into contact with people from the community. We are involved with Lake Worth Interfaith Network, participating in an interfaith Thanksgiving service, and other community activities. Several outside groups meet at the meetinghouse during the week enlarging our contact in the community. Traveling Friends have enriched our meeting with their reports and enriched the world by their contact with other cultures. We are hoping that at some point a particular local or world issue will unite the meeting in working for peace and justice, but for now, projects tend to be individual or occasional.

### ***3. What have we done in the past year to make our meetinghouse more welcoming & accessible to the community?***

This year we have been able to complete some long-needed renovations to make the meetinghouse a more welcoming place: roof, air conditioner, ceiling, and back entrance. Now the backdoor opens even when it rains, certainly more welcoming! We now have a Grow the Meeting Committee to address outreach and inreach. Also we have improved the sign at the front and added reflective lettering making it more visible at night. Members have redesigned our bulletin board to communicate better who we are. We try to present a welcoming and inclusive presence so that all people feel at home. We are trying to make ourselves a more visible presence in the community through social media: Facebook, website, Meet Up, and newsletter. One newcomer reported that she felt a "radical welcome" when she arrived. Another spoke of the "upper room" aspect of our second floor meeting room.

When Friends met on November 2, 2014 for Worship Sharing, there was plenty of opportunity for both joys and concerns, as we looked back over our spiritual year. And mostly, dear Friends, we simply solidified our love for our Meeting, acknowledging our faith in its rich yet quiet practice, a golden rope of many strands.

So, yes, we face a common challenge of many older congregations. Our Meeting is seriously wanting in folks between the ages of 2 and 40, as one Friend noted, but yet, there is a wonderful mixture of gratitude for what we do have and real hope for our future. Yes, we are missing some of our weighty members, who, for their own reasons, have distanced themselves from our circle, or moved away. We feel the losses, both the inevitable and the unfortunate. But we also recognize the treasures within. We marvel at our youth who have become activists with courage and accomplishments way beyond their years. Our teens have taken the skills they have learned from their work with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) Fair Food Campaign far beyond our Meeting, to pray for and confront corporate involvement in Mountain Top Removal Mining. And, just last month they went to New York City to be part of the largest Climate Change March in history. We are bursting with admiration and pride. They are our best, our hope for the future. But they are also not our only activists. We continue our weekly peaceful demonstrations in favor of Gun Control, and our weekly Peace walks, too, in the tradition of so many Quakers who have gone before us. We cherish our involvement with ProNica and our very own Meeting-wide Climate Change work. We know Pat Murphy is also truly with us in spirit and proud of us, both young and old!

We appreciate what we do have. As one Friend said, "One thing that is great is that we care for each other, nurture each other, help and assist each other. Folks are not bashful about asking for help OR stingy about giving help." We have caring down pat, but need more caregivers to keep up this tradition. Apply within.

Another appreciative message came from an Attender who complimented us for the quality of worship. She liked that people don't talk too much in Meeting for Worship because she so treasures the silence. She believes that the reason for the balance of vocal and non-vocal is because of the opportunities for fellowship after worship, as well as the programs offered many Sundays.

And, yes, like so many meetings, we, too, need many more committee members, many more attenders at Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business, more workers, less bees. Even with the promise of delicious Quaker Baker brownies fresh out of the oven, still we couldn't get a full house for Worship Sharing! Come on! Clearly, our strength is not in the quantity of our numbers but in the quality of our spirit! It is a Mystery with a capital "M" --somehow our Spirit is leading us. For example, probably the most beautiful message that came out of our Worship Sharing was from our oldest member, one of our two, count 'em two, centenarians. She said, "When I go back over the length of my life, it is not an unbroken chain. It's grown and matured, through the Depression, wars, hard times, good times, more like a thick rope, woven together, reaching out to my family, my friends into what it is now, all coming together. I am so happy to be here!" Are we not fortunate?

We know that everyone has their own strengths, their own time, their own path, as another Friend said, so maybe our greatest challenge is finding ways to include them in our golden rope! We cherish our differences, even the ones we do not understand. Who wouldn't want to be on Hospitality? And maybe, as one Friend noted, we may want to focus in on engagement in a few activities instead of trying to do too many. But we also acknowledge that we somehow get a lot done in spite of our low numbers, another great Mystery. And finally, one of our older members gave us a paradigm for matching strengths, skills, personality traits, etc. You think these old birds are doddering? Think again! Out of the mouths of old babes--wisdom and grace. We are all in awe of our best and our brightest, our oldest and our youngest. We will try to expand our numbers, but we will focus more on nurturing our Spirits, honoring, and cherishing the gifts among us.

# TALLAHASSEE MONTHLY MEETING *of the Religious Society of Friends*

## 2014 State of the Meeting Report

This has been a year which one member characterized as moving toward being more contemplative, finding a deeper hope and faith that replaced her “doubt of God. “ Others among us expressed the meaningfulness of finding a community in which they feel such love and respect and that holds values they share. A concern for sustaining the natural world has enhanced our meeting through second hour worship sharing and individual testimonies during this past year.

We accepted into membership one new member and continue to have rich conversations with other attenders about the possibilities of membership. Worship, Ministry and Oversight spent considerable time last year shaping queries that meet some conditions frequently encountered in people seeking membership in this particular Meeting. Worship and Ministry has shaped those concepts (itself a richly rewarding process) and then brought them to the meeting in a series of second hours of worship sharing in small or general groups. Sometimes this has resulted in rethinking and resubmitting the query, but always in real and rewarding self-examination for those involved.

Some among us slow to embrace the occasional tedium of meeting for business have come to recognize the innate brilliance of Quaker process and the depth of its importance for our community life. One of those was especially struck by observing process at Yearly Meeting.

An attender serving on W&M attested to a deepening understanding of the Quaker way of approaching problems with unconditional love, resulting in her own acceptance of who she is and relaxing into her spiritual development as one loved for her whole self. Another member of W&M feels a deepened responsibility for the challenges that arise in the beloved community.

One member has begun eliciting significant stories of our lives, first of our elders and eventually of younger members of our meeting. These are first presented in a second hour, in our newsletter, and finally collected in a growing loose-leaf, increasing the depth of our knowledge and appreciation of each other.

This Meeting this spring shared oversight of the marriage of a dear same-sex couple with Midcoast Meeting in Damariscotta, Maine, a state that recognizes the legality of the union, as Florida did not. Both meetings provided the couple with clearness committees, Midcoast Meeting took the marriage under their care, and members of Tallahassee meeting were loving witnesses at the marriage held in Damariscotta.

Another recent wedding of a daughter of the Meeting took place this autumn geographically nearby. “Quaker inspired” though not under the care of the meeting, it was attended and witnessed by members of the meeting who had watched her growing up.

We all find ourselves stretched in positive ways working to help and support each other. Two of our young people have been supported in finding internships through members of the meeting. Another member shared his joy in the support and encouragement of the meeting for his family, especially for his own teen for whom an ongoing nurturing relationship with several individuals, the listening encouragement of and acceptance as a valued member of the Meeting has resulted in increasing engagement in the social activism of SEYM and his finding a real calling in advocacy.

In collective witness, in addition to small but deeply considered financial contributions to activities in the near and broader community, members of the Meeting have continued to serve meals to the homeless on fifth Sundays through Tallahassee churches ECHO project (Emergency Care Help Organization). Members of the meeting regularly join the worship group at the Florida Correctional Institution in Marianna, FL. We share a yearly Christmas gift collaboration for residents at the state’s Hilltop Residential Program in Madison, FL, home to one of our members.

## *Tallahassee Meeting continued*

The Meeting was pleased to have the opportunity to provide monetary support this year for the activities of several young adults who have grown out of our meeting. First, we helped support a team of recent college graduates who developed a water purification system and spent 3 months in a village in Rwanda working with local residents to adapt it for their use. Second we contributed to a health clinic in Senegal where one of our young adults who attends Guilford College, worked this past summer; they were facing an alarming increase in patients suffering from Ebola. And third, we helped support a young man who grew up in our Meeting and participated this past summer in the Quaker Youth Pilgrimage to Peru and Bolivia. One youth member has been very inspired by our Yearly Meeting's action and witness about mountain-top removal and other social justice issues and training for non-violence.

*\*\*\*Much of the material for this report was gathered in a Second Hour worship-sharing in December 2014. The queries we used to guide us were:*

- 1) How has Meeting for Worship nurtured my spiritual growth?*
- 2) How has Meeting for Business and other meeting activities both nurtured and challenged my spiritual growth?*
- 3) How have we supported each other over the past year as members of this beloved community?*
- 4) What was our Meeting's witness to the wider community in the last year?*

## WINTER PARK MONTHLY MEETING

*State of the Meeting as minuted during Meeting for business.*

Although Winter Park Monthly Meeting has gone through many transitions from the days at Rollins Alumni house to our current space in the Winter Park Wellness Center we remain true to the original concepts of the meeting. We do not spend money on rent and most of our attenders are not a member of the meeting but Quakers in spirit.

Previously we had a space that felt like a lovely living room with an extra room for first day school. Numbers of the members have moved on and the old space is no longer available to us. We have several members who remain with us in spirit but cannot be with us in person.

Our core group of 9 people has a caring, deep compassionate spirit for each other and remains strong in our beliefs if 2 or more are gathered in his name.

I regret to add to this the passing of our long time member Betty Howe on 1-3-2015.

## TAMPA MONTHLY MEETING *Spiritual State Of The Meeting Report 2014*

Our Spiritual State of the Meeting report arose from a discernment in which we gathered to consider how Spirit has moved among us this past year, both as a Meeting and as individuals. This report faithfully records our current understanding of our continuing journey as a community of seekers.

**The following queries were considered in our discernment:**

- **How do we support each other as members of this beloved community?**
- **How well do our Meetings for Worship with a Concern for Business lead to a corporate search for and revelation of God's truth?**
- **What has already and would nourish you in our Meetings?**
- **What was our Meeting's witness in the wider community in the last year?**
- **Has there been a deepening and strengthening of the sense of the Divine Presence in our midst during the past year?**
- **Do we feel a sense of our individual spirits fusing into an undivided group as we worship?**
- **Do we leave our Meeting filled with a sense of love and peace and courage to meet the challenge of Spirit-filled living?**

Our community recognized the deep gift of support that members and attenders of Tampa Monthly Meeting feel both on the spiritual level as well as the material. Spiritually, how we hold each other in the Light makes a big difference in the level of support we feel. Being held in prayer is deeply felt and sometimes life-changing. One of the strongest qualities of our Meeting is the unfailing love and reassurance we all experience. Support is felt simply through Friends' attendance at Meeting for Worship. It makes life easier even if people are not experiencing difficult times. Friends also feel an abiding acceptance by the Meeting for who we each are. Sometimes the depth of listening quietly, even if tangible support cannot be given, is very important to the spirit of encouragement. There is a strong sense of "lifting one another up with a tender hand." When members are experiencing difficulty or loss, practical, tangible help such as hospitality, transportation, supportive cards, and shopping is given. Many things done to show support are done by individuals behind the scenes. A desire was expressed to have more of these acts made known to the Meeting. However, others expressed the idea that some like to do things in humble service without acknowledgement. Friends often take initiative to address concerns that are unspoken or to give unasked-for support.

Our Meetings for Worship with a Concern for Business have reflected a seeking of divine Truth in a manner evident in the unity of the Meeting. We do not have very many contentious issues, so unity comes easily. This Meeting is ready to wait and listen until Friends are easy with the decision, rather than rushing into a solution for any issues at hand. A concern was raised that perhaps the Meeting was doing what the committees wanted rather than what the corporate body of the Meeting discerned as God's will. Further discussion revealed that trust in the work of the committees to follow God's truth made for clearer sense of the Meeting. There is a desire to have more members and attenders involved with Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business. Others expressed the observation that committees do hard work but individuals not on committees feel involved in the work of the Meeting as well. We welcome new people to the fold and work to accommodate their needs. People who are obviously interested in the work of the Meeting are more easily welcomed; it was expressed that perhaps we need to work on the welcome of those not so overtly interested. The suggestion was brought forward to announce the upcoming Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business the week before and remind newer people that they are welcome to attend. There are many things that nourish our Meeting. The resumption of Adult First-Day School has renewed many and given opportunity to deepen their connection with the Meeting. There is a need for more



people to work with the children's First-Day School program. The readiness of people who do the children's program strengthens and encourages the Meeting even when no children show up. Friends were reminded that rising and speaking up would help all Friends to be able to hear and feel involved. Educational opportunities for new people – a "Quakerism 101" type of program – is being discerned by Ministry and Counsel. Readings at the beginning of Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business, usually from Faith and Practice or other Quaker writings, have served to nourish and teach both members and newer attenders.

We have been able to witness to the wider community in the following ways this year:

- Continue the book drive and program to provide books and activities for children in underprivileged situations. We collected over 500 books for many students.
- Adopt a family for Christmas
- Support our Yearly Meeting by supporting individual members who serve SEYM in many capacities including financially supporting the sending of first-time attenders to Yearly Meeting and hosting Executive Council Meetings.
- Support members who are representatives to or involved in organizations in the wider Quaker world on regional, national, and global levels (FCNL, RSWR, FPT, FGC).
- Witness to Quaker values in the wider world in various jobs, especially those members who are teachers – modeling these values in structures and systems that are sometimes directly opposed to the values and testimonies we hold as Friends.
- Support of members working with the Mountaintop Removal and PNC Bank actions including the participation in the Climate March in New York.
- Host a visit and talk by David Zarembka, Coordinator of the Africa Great Lakes Initiative of Friends Peace Teams.
- Support of Quaker House and discerning a rising witness regarding moral injury
- Support of the work of John Calvi and presence at his workshops.

There has been a deepening and strengthening of the Divine Presence in our Meeting this year. For many it remains deep and strong but is difficult to measure, seeming to be more of an individual determination. The unity of the Meeting around the new Meetinghouse is an example of the movement of the Divine. Many messages of vocal ministry were less random and seemed more Spirit-led. The Divine Presence is also moving through Friends witnessing to the various concerns stated above. There are some moments of unity during worship with more of a wholeness when more are present. Everyone brings something to Meeting and absence is felt.

Socializing after Meeting for Worship weaves it all together. Some members expressed the desire to have more philosophical, deeper discussions. Meeting for Worship as well as interactions outside of this help to enhance that which we need to meet the challenge of Spirit-filled living. The idea was brought forward to have a project for the entire Meeting to work on that would have a similar energy as the SEYM Youth Committee. When we work together, we get renewed with love, peace, and courage.