

Southeastern Yearly Meeting

of the Religious Society of Friends

Spiritual State of the Meeting Reports

for the calendar year

2018

“The Quaker Meeting is meant to be a blessed community---a living testimony to a social order that embodies God’s peace, justice, love, compassion, and joy, and is an example and invitation to a better way of life. Like our other testimonies, community can be a prophetic call to the rest of society.

---SEYM Faith & Practice, p. 76

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Clearwater Friends Meeting

2018 Spiritual State of the Meeting Report

This year was again a time of significant change. Two deaths greatly impacted our meeting. Sue Day, a long-time and deeply loved member, passed away after a lengthy decline due to Alzheimer's disease. Sid Finkelstein, a cherished attender and husband of a longtime member, died from multiple health issues. While supporting the surviving spouses during their grief, Friends who have known these two individuals for many years are experiencing a deep loss as well. At times like these, the love that exists among us is of great comfort.

On a more joyful note, a Friend from Worchester Friends Meeting who moved to Dunedin a couple of years ago and attends Clearwater Friends meeting is in the process of transferring her membership. In the fall, an attender was received into membership, and several individuals have begun attending meeting including a teenager and his mother, who has applied for membership.

Our meeting has concerned Members who reach out as volunteers to help many people within our community. In addition to the usual Quaker and non-Quaker groups that we have helped in the past, we added others and increased our donations overall to provide community needs particularly as it affected the food insecure among us. We invited leaders of these organizations to visit and tell us about the work they are doing and how we might be able to continue our individual and Meeting support. We work openly with Religious Community Services and one of our Members is on the board of the Shepherd Center. These two groups provide food as well as help the disenfranchised and homeless in our area.

After much discernment, our meeting recently approved entering into partnership with Food Rescue Dunedin. This is a grass roots program that obtains eatable food that would normally be discarded and distributes it in various locations to feed the food insecure. Friends entered the discernment process with love and respect for all and kept to Quaker process, bringing agreement that was uplifting.

In an effort to bring our attenders into our wider Quaker Community, we have chosen to establish a First Day School Committee to more effectively present our Quaker customs and values. This is crucial as it affects the children who are open to the Quaker tradition and brings the excitement of the spirit into our Meeting. Likewise, it will affect the adults who are curious about their own leadings and these people who call themselves "Quakers."

We continually seek to enhance and balance our inner life and outward service. We recognize a need to expand adult education; during our fall retreat, FWCC traveling minister, Geeta McGahey, encouraged us to explore incorporating music into our worship experience; we are expanding our connections with other faith groups in our area; and there is a growing sense that we need to actively consider refocusing our financial resources to provide greater aid to organizations engaged in socially responsible activities.

Fort Myers Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends Spiritual State of the Meeting 2018

We, the community of Friends at Fort Myers strive to deepen our inner relationship with God and to answer to that inner Light within each of us and all others. Meeting for worship - waiting worship - continues to be the center of our community's life.

In this past year, we were pleased to welcome into membership Paul Davis as a convinced Friend and Susan Oehl who transferred from Middletown MM (CT), NEYM. Several also joined our community as regular attenders. But there always is the opposite side of the roster - those who have left. We were saddened by the death of Bill Wells, a retired dentist who, before becoming ill, had volunteered his skilled services to the impoverished Immokalee community. And very recently, we experienced the death of Larry Butler, the last founding member of our faith community and a gifted Christ-centered preacher. We also were saddened to see others move away from our community, and wish them peace and well-being.

Since 2017 several families with young children have been attending. Initially, we felt challenged with the need to address caring for these children who were toddlers and pre-schoolers, in part because we currently do not have a room that can be dedicated to children. The solution is evolving and a minute was created: "We have small children who remain with us during the meeting for worship. We take seriously our role in supporting these children in their growth within the Friends' community. We welcome them and accept their soft sounds as vocal ministry." We continue to address the centering of both children and adults as each learns to accept the other's process. The Meeting continues to labor lovingly.

We continue to consider questions surrounding outreach and our meeting place. Our Outreach Committee feels challenged in preparing outreach activities because it is unclear to whom we should reach out. Through queries and discussions we hope to find a way forward. The Committee has established a website and is exploring ways of improving it.

Our Meeting remains committed to peace and social justice in various settings. We continue to participate in the organization L.I.F.E (Lee Interfaith for Empowerment), which works to improve conditions for the community. We also continually collect for the Harry Chapin Food Bank and the Misión Peniel. Individuals from our meeting have taken on responsibility for regular transport and other assistance to those operations.

Finally, we continue to nourish the spiritual and social growth of our community. We sponsored several activities designed to deepen our spiritual lives including a retreat led by Tampa Meeting's Cece Yocum on "Strengthening Our Spiritual Resources", a series of Quakerism 101 workshops, and a workshop led by SEYM's Bev Ward on "Friends and Unity with Nature: What are you called to do?" We have created opportunities for social gatherings. Our monthly pot-luck following worship provides another opportunity for Friends to just sit back and enjoy each other.

We hope to remain faithful to that still small voice that urges us to take part in God's work, both as individuals and as a community of faith

Approved 10th Day 2nd month 2019

Gainesville Monthly Meeting Spiritual State of the Meeting 2018

As we reflect on the Spiritual State of our Meeting, we see a meeting with a strong spiritual foundation upon which we are building. We are beginning to experience the results of a deliberate choice to build that spiritual foundation as our first priority, including a notable increase in a vital and robust vocal ministry.

Over the last several years we have lost a number of longtime stalwart members to death or declining cognitive function. We have seen other members of our community come together in a sense of love and spiritual commitment to support those who are in need. We see this in a concrete way in the clean-up after our social hour on First Day. We went out of our comfort zone of assigning clean-up duties and simply announced that it was the responsibility of the entire community. After a few months, Friends who seldom helped with clean-up began to take a turn with the dishwasher or scraping plates. Others began to linger longer, sometimes for hours. Conversations deepened into many more spiritual topics.

In April we organized a one-day Meeting retreat at a park. We spent the morning exploring our individual spiritual journeys. In the afternoon, we turned our attention to the things we liked most about the Meeting and things we would like to change. From those suggestions, we began a Mid-Week Meeting, incorporating a time of Spiritual Explorations, a simple meal, and Meeting for Worship. This is primarily organized and facilitated by 2 young adults, with some assistance from Ministry and Nurture in finding materials. We added Wi-Fi to the meetinghouse to facilitate this group as it explores various avenues of spirituality. The existing Spiritual Deepening group was enfolded into the Mid-Week Meeting.

We are experimenting somewhat with our Meeting for Business practices. We are asking for agenda items, including proposed minutes, reports, etc., well in advance so that they may be shared with the meeting community prior to the meeting for business. Our goal is to promote a more spirit-led atmosphere in the actual meeting as we discern a way forward. One of our challenges is a lack of understanding among some members of the community of Quaker process. We have planned a threshing session early in 2019 to work together on issues such as the roles of committees.

We are also experimenting with different modes of communication. We have laid down our printed newsletter; a one page printed 'bulletin' with the calendar for the month, the next month, and the advices and queries is available in the foyer. The information that was available in the newsletter is available on our website. Announcements of events is also available on our Facebook page.

We continue to reach out into the community. In 2018 we experimented with a series of ads on Facebook. The ads brought more traffic to our website and Facebook page. A few individuals came and tried Meeting for Worship. We have continued our long-term support of the Guatemalan Scholarship Fund. We have provided sweat equity support as well as monetary support to the local sanctuary church. We continue to have a Moral Mondays witness in support of immigration justice. In 2018 we added a project with the Caring and Sharing Learning School to assist with an ongoing garden project. The Peace and Social Concerns Committee led a forum on the Rise of Fascism and is developing materials to share with the wider community.

With the increased focus on spiritual activities, the broadening of modes of communication, and expansion of the group that carries the ordinary weekly chores, we have drawn closer together.

Bonnie Zimmer and Jean Larson, Co-Clerks

Gulf Coast Friends Worship Group

Spiritual State of the Meeting Report 2018

Gulf Coast Friends Worship Group continues to meet the second and fourth Sunday of the month under the care of Sarasota Friends Meeting. We are a small worship group, Friends and attenders, who welcome all to experience our meeting for worship with an emphasis on the arts.

We often begin our worship with meditating on a painting, hearing a poem, or singing a song before going into silent worship. We find that deep ministry often results from this centering preparation. As the Spirit moves, we may return to singing together before closing the hour. This is our second year of worship in this manner.

Our big news this year is that thanks to initiative of one of our group, we've moved to the hospitable campus of St. Mark's Episcopal Church off Nassau Street in Venice, FL. We meet in their small meeting space that is set up like a cozy living room and allows us to welcome more people.

Gulf Coast Friends provides an alternative for those seeking a lesser commute midway between monthly meetings in Sarasota and Fort Myers. Our worship begins at 5 p.m. and ends at 6 p.m. We welcome you to join us as visitors or on a more regular basis.

Gulf Coast Friends Worship Group

St. Mark's Episcopal Church

513 Nassau Street

Venice, FL 34285

2nd and 4th Sundays at 5 p.m.

For more information contact: GulfCoastFriendsWorship@gmail.com

Peacefully submitted,

Denise Hart, for Gulf Coast Friends Worship Group

Jacksonville Friends Meeting Spiritual State of the Meeting 2018

Introduction

The English word worship derives from the Old English weorthscipe (weorth, worth + -scipe, -ship), meaning “acknowledgement of worth.”

From their beginnings in the 17th century, Quakers have understood that the most important thing they can do is to worship together, and that the ground of their being—whether they call it God or Nature or Life itself—calls them together to acknowledge each other’s worth. Everything else that we do “after the manner of Friends” begins in this communal activity.

Our sadness in Jacksonville Friends Meeting in recent years has come from the loss of in-person participation in worship by almost all of the recorded members and attenders who still support Meeting from a distance. Our joy has come from the steady stream of visitors and returning newcomers, Seekers in the original Quaker sense of that term, who have found us because they have read or heard something about Quaker worship.

A year ago, we wrote: “Jacksonville Meeting is a sort of ‘Quaker way station’ for those who need to touch base, even if they are on their way. The door is open, Friends and Seekers find us easily, and what needs to happen will happen.”

Since mid-2018, with so few in attendance, we have adopted the advice of the clerk of Southeastern Yearly Meeting and scaled back all activities other than meeting for worship, social gatherings, and Friendly study. We are operating as a de facto worship group.

Spiritual State of the Meeting Worship Sharing

On January 27th, following meeting for worship and potluck, four Friends—two long-time members and two newcomers who joined us last autumn—gathered for worship sharing over the “Spiritual State of the Meeting” queries. The following paraphrases and compiles the testimony of these Friends.

- Quakers are a union, meeting is a place, and this has been a year of loss. The consistency I have relied on for years in the Quaker world is now very topsy-turvy—not only in meeting but also in other long-time peace advocacy organizations I have loved. I can find spiritual feeding at Yearly Meeting events, but rarely here locally. Even so, meeting for worship can be very subtle. You leave with something.
- I was in spiritual crisis last January. Around the time of our marriage last August, we discovered Quaker YouTube videos from Britain. I saw people based in recognizable Christian tradition and a place where I wouldn’t get weird looks for being who I am. This meeting has been a blessing from God. Small means welcoming and comfortable. As I’ve gradually felt that “something was not connecting,” the inward response has come: “Because you haven’t asked.” Now I want to find young Friends groups, I want to find ways to seek out those who need help in our country.
- I can sit here and genuinely call you Friends, because of the deep things you deal with. Gradually I’ve become concerned that my Quakerism has been too self-focused. It is important to do work out in the world. There are stories in the Bible about the apostles realizing they had to set aside being deacons in their own groups in order to go out and do this work. How do Quakers practice this?

- It has troubled me to see this meeting's decline, yet I am not concerned about any lack of the Spirit's continued presence here. Things change. It's good knowing that St. Augustine now has a worship group. What I long for is some way—the organizational form isn't important—to make sure we continue to have weekly meeting for worship here in Jacksonville.

Submitted by
Mike Shell, clerk
2/12/2019

Quaker Meeting of Melbourne State of the Meeting 2018

The Quaker Meeting of Melbourne meets weekly to worship in the Coffee House of the Friendship Fellowship at Pineda, a Unitarian Church that has welcomed us. Visitors from our community and other parts of the world greatly enrich our worship and our connections with the wider Quaker community. We greet with joy new attenders. Informal discussions and potlucks after the rise of meeting occur frequently and helped us know each other better and share our individual spiritual journeys. Several individuals and attenders continue to face great challenges, and the Meeting unites to support them.

We continue to focus on what we believe to be the essential responsibilities of the clerk for our meeting and divide them up amongst ourselves. The meeting greatly appreciates Hope Ascher assuming the role of acting clerk, and we will continue to share corporately the responsibilities of clerk. We currently seek ways to help those who struggle in poverty and discern how we, a small meeting, might help remove the conditions of poverty in our local community.

Miami Friends Meeting State of the Meeting Report February 2019

Each year we are called upon by the Yearly Meeting to examine our local Meeting and evaluate its spiritual well-being. Last year our letter was entitled “Looking at Loss and Acting on Faith.” It was an introspective view of the impact that deaths and departures has had on the Meeting. In the intervening year our vision has shifted to an outward perspective, linking solidly to immigration issues through a closer connection with the AFSC and to wider Dade-County issues through our joining with PACT, People Acting for Community Together, an activist organization that promotes fairness, justice and democracy in Miami-Dade County.

The Meeting is supporting AFSC work in the immigrant community and has made guest space available in Bartram House and use of the Meetinghouse for events such as a solidarity luncheon celebrating immigrant rights. Bartram House has become home to Morena, a Salvadoran asylum seeker, and her son Antonio, while she awaits her court hearing. The newly formed Sanctuary Committee of the Meeting is working with the AFSC to help Morena get the legal, medical, dental and counseling help she needs. The AFSC also helped underwrite a community workshop on Sanctuary, organized by the Meeting.

The Meeting also has a commitment to engagement with earth care with an on-going financial commitment to green investments as well as morally and financially supporting the SEYM Field Secretary for Earthcare and Quaker Earthcare Witness action on the African Diaspora, at the U.N.. We have connected with the Miccosukee Indian tribe who shared the Tribe’s concerns during an extended workshop about pollution and the Army Corps of Engineers’s Everglades Restoration Project, which may flood their homelands.

The Meeting’s physical plant is in constant use by the wider community and support groups. A renovation of the library has revitalized the venue for committees and community groups and has given a new view of our book collection.

The sustainability of the Meeting is tied to the numbers of members and attenders. This past year we have had new members and more attenders and visitors, but the increased demands of new projects and maintaining our properties has put the Meeting’s stamina to the test. We are examining our flexibility, our ability to find more solutions; committees with fewer members are being supplemented by volunteers and our First Day School responsibilities are now addressed on an ad hoc basis.

Our spiritual well-being, however, is not a question of numbers. The new challenges we have undertaken have given the Meeting a sense of commitment to the community while challenging the trust among ourselves.

Orlando Monthly Meeting Spiritual State of the Meeting 2018

How has the Spirit been moving among us this past year?

How does love manifest itself in our meeting?

We continue to feel a strong sense of community. As in 1 Corinthians 12, there are many parts and many gifts, but one body and one Spirit. Love is manifest in the way we work together, listen to each other, appreciate the gifts each brings to the whole, and simply enjoy being together. Fellowship after worship is a time of welcoming hospitality, friendship and laughter. Friends put thought and care, and time and energy into committee work, preparing Conversations to Explore, nurturing our Young Friends Group, bible study, music, and much more.

We have seen the Spirit leading us into greater tenderness, patience and courage.

There are very tangible ways that both our Care & Community committee and members care for those in our Meeting community who may be experiencing health concerns, significant family losses, or tough circumstances. More of this loving care goes on quietly Friend to Friend than we can know.

How does the spirit of worship extend into our committee work and into meeting for worship with a concern for business?

We find that the Spirit of worship extends into working together, not only in listening, love and discernment; but also in coming into that spiritual place of Community. Here we find the fellowship that puts all at ease, as well as a sense of humor. Our committee meetings and meeting for business have not only quiet discernment, but also laughter.

We have seen that understanding Quaker process, seeing problems as shared, and setting aside our personal opinions to discover what Spirit wants for us as we work together in shared discernment creates a 'good order' that empowers us to do work as diverse as hosting the Michener Lecture, resolving legal structures for our Meeting and Trustees, communicating our faith tradition at an interfaith event, and managing our building and grounds with patience, good humor and diligence, and so much more.

Do you have other reflections on the current condition of the meeting--places where you see new life emerging?

We see new life and energy emerging in the increased attendance at worship and in members and attenders contributing to the life of the Meeting. We see it in the growing desire to do outreach and connect with the wider community.

We are discovering how our attention to our spiritual lives and our fellowship ---and the more pragmatic work of putting our property, organization, and Quaker process in good order---has brought us to a place where we can offer more to others and reach out to new possibilities.

We're excited that we could extend ourselves to provide housing for Kody Hersh as he serves as SEYM's Youth and Young Adult Coordinator; to begin a mid-week evening worship to be more open to young adults and others who cannot attend on Sundays; to connect with the interfaith community; and to host more events, including a dinner for advocates for Temporary Protected Status immigrants.

We are excited about the formation of St. Augustine Worship Group. We are looking forward to a mutually enriching connection with this new group of Friends. They are a wonderful example of 'new life' springing up, and we are happy to be in a place where we can offer our support.

As the new year begins, we will be re-activating our Peace & Social Concerns committee and getting ready to convene a working group on outreach. We have, for years, hoped to find energy to do effective Quaker witness; and we feel that way is opening to do this.

Looking ahead, we know there will be challenges and difficulties. Our hope is that we can pay greater attention to the leadings we feel, to listen for the 'new life, and see the ways that open, not missing the Spirit's invitations to join in on what God is doing.

Winter Park Monthly Meeting State of the Meeting 2018

Winter Park Monthly Meeting continues to have a nurturing and committed group of attenders. We have had a few guests over the year, one of which has become a regular. Johanna Jordan gave a presentation on the beginnings of WPMM in December. We have kept to the original purpose of the founders. We don't own a space and have kept a simplicity for the meeting activities.

Several times a year we join our host church in a pot luck program. Most months we have a Meeting for Worship for Business combined with a potluck and a meeting for learning. We use a good portion of our contributions to help Quaker and local venues.

Our 2 members continue to be a part of ur meeting. Mary is in assisted living but our clerk visits her and keeps her updated. Jonathan joined us at Johanna's for last months potluck and discussion.

Our meeting for learnings this year have been Quakerism 101.

We are nurturing with listening to caring about our attenders.

Jan Hansen, Clerk

Palm Beach Monthly Meeting

Spiritual State Of The Meeting Report

January 2019

1. How do we support each other as members of this beloved community?

Listening; We engage many opportunities for listening to each other. We stay connected with weekly pot lucks at lunch, Meetings for Learning, monthly Reiki healing circles and outside time spent at the meeting house we converse or interact by phone or computer. Ministry's monthly meeting goes over the member list, to determine if any members have concerns and take action when appropriate. Friends look after each other, checking in, being aware of needs, providing rides, rally when a need arises; holding in the light those in need.

2. How well do our Meetings for Worship with a concern for business lead us to a corporate search for and revelations of God's truth?

Our Meetings for Worship with a Concern for Business have seen improvements in procedure. They have become more effective as we learn more ways toward Quaker process. Use of silence when difficulties arise has been effective. In our decision making individuals are concerned about what is good for the whole. God's truth= unity.

3. What was our meeting's witness in the wider community in the last year?

Meeting as a group has not participated in any specific action, but individual members are active as they are led. A Few individuals have been keeping anti war peace vigils ongoing for years. One works for tenant rights, one for prison reform?? Shauna?? We serve a number spiritually led groups by making our meeting house available for their meetings at an affordable rate; providing a safe, neutral, non-threatening space. This becomes a form of outreach. This year we printed bumper stickers; "There is that of God in everyone" and some of our visitors as well as members are displaying the stickers on their cars. We are a part of the Lake Worth Interfaith Network.

4. How has our meeting for worship or other meeting activities nurtured our spiritual growth?

Our meeting is smaller, older, seasoned and reflective. We strive to be open and accepting of all. Participating in meetings affords an opportunity to practice our testimonies.

Saint Petersburg Montly Meeting

State of the St. Petersburg Meeting of Religious Society of Friends
History and Spiritual Reflection 2018
Approved St. Petersburg Monthly Meeting for Business 2/17/19

Milestones

Over the last year our Meeting has welcomed 5 steady attenders and 20 visitors. Three members, Kurt Gunther, Francis Morgan, Michelle Flint and their child Kian Morgan-Flint ,have moved away. The Morgan-Flint family has transferred membership to Worcester Friends Meeting. Kurt continues on the ProNica board and remains a member under our Meeting's care.

With dear Friend Susan Hefte, we mourned the loss of her husband and longtime Meeting member, Darryl Hefte, who died on August 9, 2018. His life was celebrated with overflowing attendance at an inspiring Memorial Meeting for Worship.

The work of our committees has continued to be consistent and has kept our Meeting running smoothly. Most committees meet once a month and present reports of their activities and bring requests to the Monthly Meeting for Business, which takes place on the 3rd First Day of each month.

The Ministry and Worship Committee has continued to provide opportunities for community building through socializing and discussions, which have deepened our sense of unity and purpose and successfully led to the integration of new attenders into meeting.

- The ongoing monthly group to study SEYM Faith and Practice continues to deepen our understanding of Quaker testimonies and practices.
- The monthly Quaker Café consisting of a simple meal and fellowship is followed by the Women's Group and Men's Group. They consistently attract 12-15 women and 4-6 men exploring topics decided by the group and facilitated by different members each month. The donations for the meal also help us to meet our fund raising goal.
- The weekly Adult First Day School continues to meet for 45 minutes before Meeting for Worship with 15-25 regular participants. This group engages in discussions of Quaker concerns with occasional prepared agendas and programs led by traveling friends from FGC, SEYM and elsewhere. Typical First Day topics are: "What inspires you," "How does it go with thee?" "A Piece of Quaker History" and "The Advices for the Month." The Adult First Day School attenders form the core of those who attend the Quaker Café and Women's and Men's groups. Almost all are also regular attenders of the Meeting for Worship.

The Children's First Day School began the year with 2-3 regular attenders but most weeks after the summer there were no children. Although the Monthly Meeting has decided to continue to offer CAP trained teachers in 2019, it agreed that the development of new programs to attract young families with small children was a critical issue for 2019.

The Finance Committee changed bookkeepers and the Treasurer revised our budget flow chart to better explain how we spend our money and how well our fund raising efforts are progressing. We continue to operate without an on-site caretaker and the Meeting's financial situation is growing more stable.

The Property Committee continues to provide a welcoming campus and uncluttered, clean spaces with chairs put away for community use of the Meeting room and then arranged for the worship service each

week, a public address system for Meetings for Business and maintenance of the buildings. Safety issues were addressed by changing the locks in the Annex, Peace Room and Garage.

How do we characterize our meeting?

We Are a Welcoming Meeting

We greet each visitor as they enter the Meetinghouse, sit near them and at the rise of Meeting, invite them to introduce themselves, sign the guestbook and to join us in socializing. We provide a snack buffet at the rise of every meeting, a lunch buffet on the Third First day before Meeting for Business and a Potluck on the 4th First Day. We make a special effort to speak with visitors and new attenders after Meeting and invite them to our other programs and we send all first time visitors a handwritten note thanking them for their presence and inviting them to return.

We also try to maintain a positive atmosphere in our discussion groups and in all of our programs and provide encouragement and complementary *SEYM Faith and Practice* to those expressing interest in membership.

Friendly Education Efforts

In 2018 we stepped up our efforts to educate visitors and those who meet us at our various Outreach booths. In the spring we also held a welcome party in our courtyard for the friends of Friends that combined good food, fellowship and opportunities for answering questions about our Meeting.

At demonstrations and programs that relate to Quaker testimonies we offered general introductory pamphlets, literature and sales of appropriate buttons and bumper stickers. The handouts distributed from our Outreach booths linked Quaker testimonies and St. Petersburg Meeting actions to the main topic of the demonstrations and presentations.

Inside the Meeting House, handouts from our outreach tables and Quaker magazines and literature are displayed at the doors, on the bulletin boards and tables in the Meeting Room, in the library and on the library hallway wall. Our introductory pamphlets explain Quaker silent worship process and worship etiquette, the Quaker testimonies, information about our children's religious education program (Children's First Day School) and our adult discussion group before Meeting for Worship (Adult First Day School).

This year we improved and updated our website developed in 2017. The Meeting's web page on Circus McGurkis and the Circus McGurkis Facebook page are now more sophisticated and attracted many more viewers to the Quaker site to which they are linked. This area, however, still needs constant attention and improvement.

We Embrace Diversity and Social Justice:

- **LGBTQ community:** Throughout the year the St. Petersburg Meeting members actively participated in events that support the LGBTQ community with an outreach table at the St. Pete Pride Street Festival and during Interfaith Week we participated in the Interfaith Pride Worship Service.
- **MLK Week:** We continued our annual practice of participating in MLK Day Parade and Partnered with MLK Day of Service Restocking Pantries Food Drive, facilitating a large donation of non-perishable food items by our Meeting. A member of Meeting helped organize and presented at the MLK Interfaith Memorial Service.
- **Immigration Issues:** We hosted a fundraiser for the SOA Border Watch and the Nogales, AZ and Mexico Border Action and sent Sarah McCowan and Gwen Brown to the Southwest to represent us at that Action in November.

- **Middle East:** A Palestinian Quaker made a presentation to our Meeting on his personal experiences as a descendant of the original Christians and a fourth generation attendee of the Quaker School in Ramallah.

We are building community among ourselves and with our neighbors

- **Circus McGurkis** For the second year we revived and reinvented Circus McGurkis, the People's Fair. The 2018 Circus, " Ride the Peace Wave" continued to focus on a down-sized non-profit centered peace and justice fair coordinated by a steering committee of organizers from other faith, social justice and environmental groups and supported most strongly by the volunteers of the Lakewood United Church of Christ. Unfortunately the parking problems and police presence for 2018 at the beautiful LUCC location proved insurmountable. So the 2018 Circus was moved to the more formal environment of the courtyard at the Gibbs High School. The positives of this move were the 800 parking spaces, the fact that Gibbs was originally a historical Black high School before it became an integrated High School. Its status as a magnet school gave us access to art student volunteers and a location in the heart of the African American community. Although not as well attended as 2017 due to competition from a massive Science Fair event on the same date, it nevertheless had a larger number of non-profit organizations including 6 Quaker-related participants: St. Petersburg, Clearwater, Sarasota and Tampa Meetings, Earthcare Witness, and Pro-Nica. It was a huge success and the testimonies of SPICE were evident in all aspects of its planning and rendition. Unfortunately we were unable to reproduce last year's financial success but even with additional expenses related to higher publicity and new signage costs, 3 paid school staff and a registrar, we still ended with a surplus of slightly more than \$1,600 for the next Circus McGurkis.

At the close of 2018 the future of Circus McGurkis is uncertain. Lynn Carol (the author) is retiring as the coordinator of the Circus Steering Committee and the Core volunteer group and it is unknown who, if anyone will step up as coordinator for 2019.

- Our Meetinghouse continued to be a polling place for elections.
- The local Old Southeast Neighborhood Association and the Tropical Shores Neighborhood Association continue to hold many of their meetings in our Meetinghouse.
- We participated in the Old Southeast neighborhood Garage Sale Day. We held a very successful garage sale which not only raised money but also brought us together as a community. We offered food for sale and invited visitors to use our bathroom facilities, rest and visit on our porch.
- **Homelessness** We continued our work with people without shelter. Every week members of our Meeting join with the Celebrate Outreach organization at the downtown Unitarian Universalist Church to provide food and material aid (clothing, toiletries, etc.) and haircuts at the Friday night picnic for the Homeless. This year's Committee on Homelessness also distributed grants of \$500 to each of four organizations that work with issues of homelessness.
- **Low Cost Housing** We once again participated in the Nehemiah Action Assembly of the interfaith group, FAST (Faith and Action for Strength Together)

We are working for Peace and Non-Violence in the World

- We continue our special concern for an outward facing focus, participating in coalition actions working on issues related to our testimonies to raise our own awareness and bring our Quaker perspective to the efforts. We educated ourselves, organized postcard writing parties, and encouraged postcard writing at our outreach tables to express these concerns to our legislators. Our work with homelessness, immigrant rights, LGBTQ rights, and Gun Violence are the concerns on which we have been most active in 2018.

Gun Violence The continuing tragedy of massive gun violence has impacted us through messages and leadings in Meeting for Worship as well as our secular programs.

- We wrote a letter to the editor about the killings in Pittsburg and a letter of condolence and support to the B'nai Israel Synagogue.
- We collaborated in two Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America events with banners and booths as well as a 3-part interactive art installation.
- We supported the students of Pinellas County by marching, tabling, and providing posters and banners for student actions against gun violence.
- We tabled at 2 Anti-Gun Violence presentations at Allendale Methodist Church.
- We participated and provided posters for 2 student walk-outs and a march led by the students at St. Petersburg High School.
- We set up a booth and provided a participatory banner and March contingent at the St Petersburg March for Our Lives Rally.
- We provided banners for the stage at the Tampa March for Our Lives Rally.

Coalition actions with other peace and justice groups:

- Stand on Every Corner demonstrations and phone banking in the Meeting room with FACT (Floridians Against Corruption and Treason)
- Climate Jobs and Justice Booth at March and Rally with the Progressive Democrats and Indivisible
- Keep Families Together and Immigrant Rights Demonstration in Gulfport with the League of Women Voters, American Civil Liberties Union and the Pinellas Democratic Clubs
- Demonstration against ICE injustice at the ICE building in Tampa with the Border Victims Support Group
- Tables at 2 demonstrations sponsored by the local chapters of the Women's March organization (formed by the Washington organizers of the 2017 Post-Inauguration Women's March.)

Use of our Meetinghouse

- We provided the meeting room for organizing meetings of the People's March and small committees of the League of Women Voters and others
- 2 FACT (Floridians Against Corruption and Treason) meetings for phone banking and planning cornering gatherings

Trips and collaboration with Friends groups (SEYM, FGC and ProNica)

- **Pro Nica** In 2018 Yarrow Ries became Stateside Coordinator of Pro Nica and SEYM removed itself from the oversight ProNica Board. The situation changed continuously as the war in Nicaragua escalated. Yarrow, however, continued to collect and send over \$40,000 to Los Quinchos and the Aqualinca Women's Health Clinic through her continuing ties to Jubilee Partners in spite of the violence surrounding both locations.
- **Managua Worship Group** We mourned with the Managua Worship Group the death of its long time member and past Clerk, Pat Fleury on December 17th. The Managua Quakers have been meeting at the Ben Linder House ever since 2017 when the neighborhood around Quaker House became too dangerous and the building itself too dilapidated. No contact has been made with them since Pat Fleury's death.
- The incoming 2019 clerk, Linda Morganstein attended the Clerking Workshop at Pendle Hill and Herb Haigh continues to serve on the Pendle Hill Board.

- We hosted the Friends General Conference (FGC) Executive Committee in our Meetinghouse with accommodations, potlucks and transportation and Susan Wade attended the FGC Summer Gathering
- We hosted the Southeast Yearly Meeting (SEYM) Fall Interim Business Meeting (FIBM) with potlucks and transportation

We continue to work on finding unity on sensitive issues

- 146 Building Project: The project was moved forward with the successful zoning hearing and the city meeting to resolve the sprinkler system requirements. It is now at the contractor bidding stage for destruction and removal of the cottage and construction of the new building. In 2019 there will be major decisions to be made involving the process for financing the projects.
- Conflicts within Meeting
Two Responsible Assertion Skills workshops, one for women and one for men were considered to be very useful. More of these and an FGC presentation on the topic are planned for 2019.

Suggestions for the Future

- The Meeting should sponsor a yearly community-building event that brings a well-known Quaker like John Calvi to do a weekend workshop.
- The Meeting should consult an outside Quaker expert to develop a realistic outreach plan to attract young families with children who will attend a revived Children's First Day School.

Reflections from the 2018 Clerk

Like many spiritual support groups since the beginning of the Trump presidency, our Monthly Meeting has been beset with anxiety and sadness related to world events: gun violence and mass killings, racism, sexism, and scapegoating in our immigration and social services systems, the failures of our broken medical system, devastating environmental damage, destruction of the ecosystem related to climate change, and the decimation of our civil rights.

In spite of this darkness surrounding us, we continue to struggle to overcome the lack of patience, bitterness, anger and aggressive insensitivity that characterizes the tenor of these times. In denying these attributes a home, I believe we should guard against allowing our desire to work on interpersonal conflicts to absorb so much of our time and energy that it becomes a detriment to our wider mission. We must remain aware of our obligation to stay faithful to our testimonies while simultaneously working to become a bastion of integrity and compassion. If our Meeting can consciously provide a retreat for restoring our determination to follow the leading of the Inner Light, we can better continue to be an inspiration for like-minded people who wish to join with us.

Our ministry in the last year reflects these goals. We have had several Meetings for Worship completely without vocal ministry where the silence seemed alive with shared compassion. There were also an unusually large number of especially meaningful gathered Meetings for Worship filled with messages of wise guidance around our response to the issues of the day. I believe these messages have fueled our 2018 presence at so many venues where we rose above our differences to act as a unified group in support of non-violent paths to a peaceful, just world. It is my hope that the truths that emerge in our future Meetings will continue to sustain this same level of open responsiveness in the difficult times ahead.

Submitted by Lynn Carol Henderson, Clerk 2018

Sarasota Monthly Meeting

2018 Spiritual State of the Meeting Report

The Spiritual State of Sarasota Monthly Meeting continues to grow and allow its members and attenders to enhance their own spirituality and social consciousness. The year 2018 presented the meeting with several opportunities and a few challenges.

We are a singular, close knit worship community whose hearts are in the right place. We continue to be supportive of each other, both within and outside of the meeting. We joyfully support members who have attended gatherings in faraway places such as the FCNL Fall Lobby Weekend and various FWCC committee meetings, as well as the local Brady Gun Control chapter, the Prayer Protection Group at the nearby mosque, and SURE (Sarasota United for Responsibility and Equity). For the first time in our history, we participated in the Circus McGurkis People's Fair in St. Petersburg.

Meetings for Worship grow with the return of our snowbirds each fall. In an effort to get better acquainted with each other, a series of programs with members sharing their spiritual journeys was undertaken and was appreciated by all. These programs allow us to become better acquainted with each other on a deeper level, rather than simply worshipping together on a weekly basis. Opportunities for mid-week worship in Friends' homes have enhanced the spiritual deepening of those who are able to attend. The men have continued their long established practice of getting together for lunch on a monthly basis. The women of the meeting are hoping to re-establish their similar practice in the not too distant future. We continue to be delighted by the "Quaker Bakers"—our Young Friends who prepare everything from cookies to pizza on the first First Day of each month. These particular social hours greatly enhance our relationships not only with each other but also with our younger community members. The expressed hope is that our interpersonal relationships can be enhanced at times other than on First Day.

The year has not been without its challenges, though. The meeting faced a major challenge that required painful corrective action. This experience reminds us of the need for and limitations of the meeting's ability to support individuals. Two of our attenders' families are facing critical medical crises with one of their respective children. The meeting has offered its support and stands ready to assist in any way we can to help them through these difficult times.

Unfortunately, 2018 also saw the passing of the second of our three centenarians, Marie Hausman, who departed from us on February 5th at the age of 103. While her Light is gone from our midst, the afterglow she left continues to enlighten those who knew and loved her. One membership was laid down at the member's request, but we are encouraged by the new faces we see on occasion of those who are exploring Quakerism—some of whom are returning to worship with us and are active in the meeting.

By and large, 2018 was a positive and productive year for Sarasota Monthly Meeting. Moving forward we need to build on our successes and overcome the challenges that face us in a Friendly manner. It is through our efforts to be a positive force outside the meetinghouse doors that we trust will enhance not only our meeting but also the community at large.

Savannah Friends Meeting Spiritual State of the Meeting 2018

Savannah Friends Meeting's highlight in 2018 was our move in April to a new location, where we have been warmly embraced by Wesley Oak United Methodist Church. We are now meeting at the church's Joy Cottage at 2603 Mechanics Ave. in Savannah.

Joy Cottage provides ample seating for worship in the main living space, which is frequently bathed in sunlight; a kitchen for our pot luck & Meeting for Business; and ample and easy parking at the site allowing for better access than our prior downtown site. Our host church also welcomes our newly piloted Wednesday evening Meeting for Worship attended by a small group of worshippers.

Savannah Friends Meeting typically hosts an average of 8 participants during worship time; we have approximately 11 members and 8 attenders. We sadly bid farewell to several founding members of Savannah Friends Meeting –Sandy & Harold Branam and Liz Dykes. But we have been happy to welcome new attenders and experienced Quakers (Hollyn Greene and Manius Sultan, and Erica Schoon), adding diversity and youth. Our Meeting is also enriched by Quaker travelers, visitors, and tourists. Some visitors stay part of the year or are passing through; we have particularly enjoyed a short-term visitor each winter from the Brooklyn NY Monthly Meeting. Our recording clerk winter resident is also a co-member of the Valley Monthly Meeting outside Philadelphia; a Friend from the Haddonfield NJ Meeting recently visited while conducting research on Quaker Meetings.

Our Worship and Ministry Committee meets monthly and takes on much of the work of the Meeting, such as organizing the Religious Education schedule; maintaining our list of members and attenders; providing outreach to those who are not able to attend or are no longer active; and facilitating and/or encouraging study groups and social gatherings. We're developing an E-newsletter for our Meeting and discussing ways to organize our Facebook page. One of our attenders has also volunteered to organize our library and files to make them easier to consult.

Our Religious Education program has been well attended; a member or attender makes a presentation that is followed by discussion. Some of our topics have been on simplicity; Nathanael Greene/The Fighting Quaker; a recent biography of Jesus; and the personal sharing of one's spiritual journey.

We continue to consider ways of attracting families and providing a children's program; at the moment we have only two children under 5 who sometimes come to Meeting with their parents; one attender's two teenage daughters have expressed interest in participating in our Religious Education program.

One of our members frequently hosts a potluck in her home and in the past combined this with a book group. We look forward to resurrecting this in the coming year, and always enjoy the social gathering to be with F/friends.

Finally, our Business Meetings have been well attended as we discuss our finances and the direction of the Meeting to ensure its fiscal viability. Fortunately, we have been able to continue with our annual contributions to several local charities and a Tanzanian secondary school for vulnerable girls that was co-founded by one of our members.

---Submitted by John Harris/Clerk, with contributions from Tracey Dolan, Kathryn Newland, and Jessica Binkley. \

Tallahassee Friends Meeting

Spiritual State of the Meeting – 2018

New Friends and seasoned Friends gathered in the November 2018 to reflect on the spiritual state of the meeting as experienced in Tallahassee Meeting. Some expressed the sentiment the meeting was “yeasty,” as in rich, growing, and “takes a while” to rise from Deep Spirit to an always grateful body of Friends. The meeting is filled with the Light – visitors are warmly welcomed, those with needs are helped, but at times it is challenged to find support financially.

During the 2018 election season there was the occasional message that seemed more from the emotions and politics of the speaker, rather than the Spirit. Additionally, there were some messages in Meeting for Worship that were heard by some as racist, or racism shrouded in personal need. Some Friends have been injured, some have stayed away from Meeting, while others have thought about leaving the meeting, and the committee for Worship, Ministry and Oversight has been quietly working towards the healing of all parties.

A committee of care for an attender with a serious illness was a “Quaker miracle” and opened the attender to new friendships within our meeting and a sense of “gratitude beyond words” for the gift of listening. Friends were touched by the Meeting supporting peace and justice concerns by our work on a faith statement on climate change (www.seymquakers.org) our climate change retreat with Beverly Ward, SEYM Field Secretary for Earthcare, and the continued involvement in our community to prevent gun violence. In the wider community, we take part in the Community Remembrance Project of the national Equal Justice Initiative (www.eji.org), support the work of the Tallahassee Community Action Committee, and offered use of the meeting house to groups such as, Sacred Harp shape note singing, the Threshold Choir that sings for the sick and bedridden, and the utility linemen who needed a place to stay while helping Tallahassee and surrounding counties to restore power after Hurricane Michael.

Besides losing power during Hurricane Michael, our meetinghouse grounds had two tall pine trees (approximately 80-100 ft. tall) fall on our out-building garage, breaking the roof ridge and concrete wall, taking down some fencing and smashing several azaleas and antique camellias in the back yard. We were blessed; it was very little damage. The meeting received a monetary gift from another SEYM meeting towards repairing damage, for which we were thankful, but since we had insurance on our property the meeting donated the gift to Second Harvest of the Big Bend. The damage in the four counties to the west of Tallahassee and two counties in southwest Georgia is so severe and many of the people in those counties do not have insurance. Those folks are still in need and Second Harvest of the Big Bend and others are still serving them to this day, four months later.

Tallahassee Friends Meeting is growing, finding its way to a deeper spirituality, rebuilding the work of its committees, experiencing a Quaker way to resolve conflicts, understanding the life of the Friends community, and seeing way forward to engage and help the wider community. We have grown by three new members this year from transfer, conviction and rededication as well.

Tallahassee Friends Meeting
Phoebe Andersen, clerk

Tampa Friends Meeting Spiritual State of the Meeting 2018

How has our meeting for worship or other meeting activities nurtured our spiritual growth?

Tampa Friends appreciate the diversity of spiritual experience present in our worship. When attentive and listening deeply with open heart, we are often blessed as a common thread emerges to feed and nurture us on our spiritual journey. We believe the foundation for this corporate experience is sustained by the active, consistent participation of Friends in our Adult First Day Program and mid-week Spiritual Reflection gathering where our diverse experience of spiritual connection is shared through what we study and discuss. Our worship never feels empty even when silent and we often feel keenly the movement of Spirit in the depth of this silence. While we seldom have a less-gathered worship or 'popcorn' meeting, we recognize that we sometimes arrive restless in spirit which results in less opportunity for centered worship.

Testimony was offered by a Friend about how Meeting has sustained him in his efforts to be spiritually faithful in his life. Seeking with a clearness committee helped with making important decisions in moving forward on a challenging career path. Being loved and held by our spiritual community continues to sustain this Friend.

In considering this query we are led to acknowledge the fruits of the spirit that intentional effort and commitment by Tampa Friends have borne and are renewed in continuing to seek spiritual growth.

Where do you find hope in the Meeting and in our spiritual life?

Hope is found in the darkest of times in our spiritual grounding and spiritual growth. Our faith is nurtured by the new members, and perhaps even moreso, through the grace-filled transitions of Quakers passing on before us.

Hope lies in welcoming newcomers and in their presence we find an affirmation of our efforts to be a spiritual home to those who are led to the Quaker path. It is also through the presence of the visitor, the newcomer, that we find our efforts to clearly be an open and affirming community: clarified, tested, strengthened, and hopeful.

Tampa Friends are blessed when newer members come forward and serve our community. We recognize and are deeply grateful to those who have been steadfast in their work and witness and know that those coming forward offer peace of mind and release to Friends who must lay down some of their commitments of our life together.

We also find hope in the ties we have with those who can only be in relationship through occasional visits. Their reappearance, no matter how infrequent, is a joyful opportunity and again, affirms our efforts to be a welcoming community.

Hope also lies in our continuing commitment to our physical presence. We can literally see the hope of growth in our trees and the continuing transformation of our grounds. Each new property work day, improvement, or project manifests hope as we seek to maintain and create the vessel to welcome and include all who come to Tampa Friends Meeting.

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

We would dearly like to have more families with children in attendance and we steadfastly maintain a First Day School structure to welcome those who appear. We continue to seek ways to reach out to families.

We would like to raise awareness of the purpose and function of clearness committees. Clearness committees offer a process for spirit led discernment to help one work through a possible leading or concern. It helps us to be supportive of one another through life's challenges.

Quakerism 101 would be a good program to help us all, newcomers and longtime Quakers, seek deeper understanding of Quaker process and why we do what we do.

The Tampa Meeting Retreat in January is an important event to help clarify this query in regard to our desire to be more diverse and inclusive.

Concern raised - How do we encourage those who are fed by weekly spiritual reflection gathering to become part of our Quaker meeting worship and corporate effort to be Spirit led?

We recognize and celebrate that we offer diverse entry to the Quaker path through a variety of weekly and monthly activities.

How has our meeting given witness to love within our meeting, in our communities, and in our world?

Tampa Friends are intentional and committed to being clear in words and action that all are welcome, accepted, and loved. We do so in gratitude to all who come to us for offering the opportunity to practice what we profess.

We present to ourselves, community, and world as seekers who recognize our spiritual life to be a faith path. We recognize a common purpose in our desire to be faithful and open to a deeper understanding of who we are and who we can be. We understand that we can each access our measure of the Light and it is vital to share what we have been given to help one another in this faith journey.

We are grateful to have a welcoming space available to meetings and groups, such as Friends World Committee for Consultation, Southeastern Yearly Meeting Executive Committee, Alcoholics Anonymous, and the Bridge. Collecting books for school children and adopting a Christmas family offer opportunities we appreciate. The concerts that we are able to host in our worship space often introduce first-time visitors to the Quaker meeting in Tampa.

The love and care for one another in Meeting and beyond was again exemplified for those present for the memorial service held for Tom Blackburn.

We rise in Spirit to face the deep concerns of our world and this sustains those of us who attend to the broken places. We seek to be faithful in our commitment to non-violence and tenderness recognizing that there is no other path to the world we seek. Through our worship and work together we are able to access a strength of purpose and fierceness of Spirit to do whatever witness to which we are called as individuals and community.

