

Morningside Monthly Meeting State of the Meeting Report 2010

We gathered after Meeting for Worship on Firstday, Twelfthmonth 19, 2010 to consider the state of our Meeting .

This year of 2010 has found Morningside Monthly Meeting deeply engaged with events of losses and growth. We have lost three members and one long term attender: Sarah Leuze, Elizabeth McLaughlin, Martha Grutchfield and Linda Evans. The Meeting worked to provide spiritual and practical care when we could. These deaths took us back to Friends Cemetery in Brooklyn and we remembered past members who are buried there. We have experienced the loss of several members who have moved, even though they haven't transferred their membership. We have lost participants in First Day School. It has been a struggle for us to figure out what we need to do about First Day School. A number of our current members and attenders have serious health issues. We are struggling with finances this year more than we ever have. We are grateful that our rent will remain the same next year.

Even as we have mourned these losses, we have appreciated the blessings of new growth. We have three new members: Lee Rada, Judy Jablow and Mason Jenkins, and a fourth, Jack Patterson, joined us by transfer. We welcomed Ayla Rae, a daughter born to one of our members. We have had increased attendance by students from local colleges and by former members of Quaker prison worship groups with the friends both groups have brought with them. There have been improvements in our worship space for which we are grateful. Our library is growing, and new people especially are using it. We started three new spiritual nurture groups this year. Two older long term ones continue. They have been an important way of building community.

Our silent worship together continues to be a deep well of inspiration from which messages are occasionally drawn. We are often led in spirit by the wonderful sounds of the winds around our 12th floor tower room in Riverside Church, while appreciating the new blinds that help to block the drafts from the windows. We have been working on our announcement of "Afterwords," to make our expectations gentle and clear. We continue to like this sharing of more personal reflections and "joys and sorrows" that builds community. Our collective worship binds us as we care for one another, as we seek to welcome and include visitors and new attenders, and as we work with each other to speak to the concerns of our community and the wider world.

We end the year with seven support groups. We have had as many as eleven during the year. Many Friends attended our spring retreat, which was organized around the Testimony of Integrity, and many Friends participate in our after-Meeting workshops and presentations, which are developed and held under the care of our Ministry and Counsel Committee. Long term members and attenders and new people regularly show strong attendance at our monthly breakfast for newcomers, which provides a safe place to get to know one another, as well as a free meal.

Despite these structures, we acknowledge our need to do more. We do not have an advancement committee, but we have focused on welcoming new comers the last few years. We are not always as careful as we need to be in social hour to reach out to new

people consistently, but increasingly we seem to be taking more personal responsibility in this area. We have developed a packet of information to give to interested attenders.

Our participation in the wider Quaker community remains strong, as many Friends have participated actively in the work of New York Yearly Meeting and attended and led workshops at Friends General Conference Gathering , and this year the Meeting sponsored a young Friend who has grown up in the Meeting to attend the Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) annual youth pilgrimage. The Meeting has provided many scholarships to support Friends in these activities.

We have enriched our connections with Riverside Church, beyond our commercial relationship as a tenant. We participated in the World Communion Day service at Riverside. One of our members introduced a period of silence at the service. We acknowledged our gratitude for our good relationship with the church with a contribution to Riverside's food pantry. Several Friends participate in Riverside Church's Prison Ministry Group to study concerns raised by Michelle Alexander's book "The New Jim Crow." Morningside Meeting hosted for the second year a reunion of people in the New York area who attended prison worship groups .

Our committees have been effective this year. Ministry and Counsel, in addition to providing oversight for the spiritual nurture groups and the support groups and developing monthly programs that speak to the spiritual and religious dimension of Quaker life, has set a goal for the coming year to collect information about community resources such as the names of reliable agencies for health care workers, services for seniors, etc. The Communications Committee has worked to make our website easier to use. Friends can use it to send out general announcements, which builds community. Friend Finder is a new and helpful feature this year that allows us to look up each others' addresses and phone numbers and send email messages securely from the web site. We are grateful that we again have a newsletter, which we are beginning to distribute by email and through the MorningsideMeeting.org website. Peace & Social Concerns has decided to focus on three themes: hydrofracturing, prison issues and anti-Muslim sentiment. Our outreach financial contributions are often designated for groups in which Friends have direct personal involvement. The Hospitality Committee arranges regularly for satisfying refreshments in the social hour after Meeting for Worship, including the wonderful cookie swap that preceded these deliberations.

As we encounter difficult situations, we will often let the questions gestate, not rushing to come up with an answer. We sense it is important to get to know each other more intimately for trust to develop. Sometimes we experience people as being too needy, and we don't always cope with this problem well. We need to seek some boundaries and structures while continuing to be compassionate. We need to be careful of how we talk to each other, being kind and not judgmental. It is important to be inclusive. It's important to acknowledge when we have made a mistake. Always, we seek to speak and act from the core of Spirit and Love within each of us that we all share.