

Appendix B: State of the Meeting Reports

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* available in hard copy only

ANNEEWAKEE CREEK FRIENDS WORSHIP GROUP
State of the Worship Group Report

Our small worship group is nearly six years old and is in process of growing. With financial help and spiritual support from Friends in Atlanta Meeting, we have found a new site for worship and will hold our first meeting there on 7-18-04.

We will be moving to 2078 Fairburn Road, #10 (in the Yoga room at the "I AM Wonderful" Health and Nutrition Store). The store is located just 1/3 of a mile South of I-20 in Douglasville, Ga. in the first small strip mall on the left. We will have a large sign out front, mostly paid for by Atlanta Friends. The room where we will meet is quiet and peaceful with a wonderful hand-painted mural on the wall. Atlanta Meeting has donated chairs as they are replacing them with new ones in their meeting room. The owner of "I Am Wonderful", Karla Olterman, is quite enthusiastic and supportive and we look forward to a cordial relationship. One of our occasional attenders works for the local newspaper and will write and publish a press release a couple of weeks before we begin meeting in our new space. We also registered for the URL: acfwg.org and designed a web site with information about Friends. Directions to our meeting will be on the world wide web by the time the FGC Gathering begins.

Sue May of Atlanta Friends Meeting came and explained how building enhancements at the FCNL offices in Washington, DC would increase Friends presence in the nation's capital. At the end of the presentation we made a donation to the Friends Committee for National Legislation. We have continued our ongoing support of the local domestic violence shelter in coordination with the local Unitarian-Universalist congregation. We have distributed "War Is Not The Answer" signs and bumper stickers around the county.

Some of the other social concerns to which attenders have contributed time and money are the local hospice program, a Simplicity Study Group that meets in the local Borders Bookstore, and an Atlanta chapter of a nationwide group of business persons advocating and implementing socially responsible business practices. Support went to a men's program to stop domestic violence, to a local fibromyalgia support group, and to national and international programs and projects developed and run by individual Friends. We supported former AFSC-SERO 's Middle East Program Director, Ilise Cohen in establishing a new program to bring people from different cultures and political affiliations together to work on projects which will increase justice and peace in the world.

Please hold us in the Light of the Holy Spirit as we move forward.

Janet Minshall for Anneewakee Creek Friends Worship Group
6-8-04

Asheville Monthly Meeting

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Asheville Monthly Meeting

(cont'd.)

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State of the Meeting Report
Athens (Georgia) Religious Society of Friends
Monthly Meeting of S.A.Y.M.A.
Sixth Month, 2004 (year 2003-2004)

Athens Friends Meeting continued to actively participate in worship, service, action and discussion throughout the year. We are grateful for the service of our co-clerks Betsey Collins and Deb Weiler. Weekly attendance at meeting for worship continues to range from 7 to 15. We are trying a new schedule, with discussion or business meetings held during first hour, followed by a break, and worship held during second hour. Our First Day School has been inactive this year. We have three youths who attend SAYF retreats regularly.

We welcomed Charlie Rowland into membership last June. Recently, he has begun to organize our archives. Jack and Bobbie Coker transferred their membership from Lanthorn Monthly Meeting (Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting) to Athens Monthly Meeting. These new members already seem like they have been with us for much longer and we appreciate their steady light. We have welcomed several new, regular attenders also. Several homeless advocates, who choose to live with the homeless, trying to provide a supportive atmosphere, joined us in worship throughout the fall. Their presence led us to explore some of the issues related to homelessness.

We held discussions and worship sharing on a variety of topics including: accepting our various faith-perspectives; mindfulness; Friend's Peace Teams; First Day School; SAYMA's Faith & Practice; Hiroshima and Nagasaki; prayer; separation of church and state; early spiritual development; alternative transportation; the Earth Charter; the writings of Eckhart Tolle; prisoner rehabilitation, and the Central American Free Trade Association (CAFTA).

As has become our custom, we held a candle-lighting worship on Christmas Eve. For Easter, we broke with tradition, and held worship in a shelter house at a local park in response to several years of rain on our outdoor worship. We provided presents for a family with whom we have a long relationship. We wrapped their presents at our Christmas potluck and party. We also provided funding for Christmas presents for children of Athens Justice Project's clients. We held a Winter Solstice Celebration for the first time this year.

The meeting participated in a variety of events in Athens. We continued to co-host a neighborhood ice cream social with Oconee Methodist Church, our landlords. This year we collected and gave away children's books at the ice cream social. We hosted programs for the Center for Development in Central America (CDCA) in August and April. We provided literature tables at the World Trade Film Forum and at the Athens Human Rights Festival. At the Human Rights Festival, one of our members gave a talk about the draft, registration, and military recruitment. Meeting members assisted with the 4- and 5-year old Montessori public school classroom taught by one of our

members. A garage sale was held to raise funds for classroom supplies.

Athens Friends joined with several groups to publicly demonstrate our support for global peace and justice. Members attended walks, vigils, and informative talks. We collaborated with the Athens Global Justice Collective, Women in Black, and Citizens not Suspects. We joined Common Ground, a local progressive networking organization. The meeting co-hosted a local showing of the “Global Village or Global Pillage” video with the Presbyterian Student Center. We provided a letter explaining Friends beliefs regarding rehabilitation to the State Board of Pardons and Parole in response to a request to support the parole of a prisoner with whom we have corresponded for many years.

We have begun disbursing charitable contributions twice annually rather than maintaining a large savings, however, we have accounts designated for contributions for meeting house savings. Meeting house savings are invested in The Center for Development in Central America, and will also be invested in the Friends Meeting House Fund.

Atlanta Friends Meeting Spiritual State of the Meeting, 2003

America, the richest and most powerful nation in the world, can well lead the way in [a] revolution of values. There is nothing, except a tragic death wish, to prevent us from reordering our priorities, so that the pursuit of peace will take precedence over the pursuit of war. There is nothing to keep us from molding a recalcitrant status quo with bruised hands until we have fashioned it into a brotherhood. ... War is not the answer.

- Dr. Martin Luther King, in "Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence"

On March 20, 2003, the United States military began bombing Iraq. The Atlanta peace movement had had its instructions in place for several days: "Meet at Five Points. Bring signs, banners, candles, and your resistance!" I made my way from the MARTA station to the demonstration with an exceedingly heavy heart, and tears in my eyes (tears that are there again as I write these words, not erased by the year that has passed). My country had defied the United Nations, a massive international peace movement, and our own steadfast peace testimony, by starting a war. The facts were beyond my belief then, and now. The scene was surreal, as young protesters from movements less than a year old stopped traffic on Peachtree and chanted anti-Bush slogans.

Scattered among the crowd were our Atlanta Friends Meeting and AFSC activists, distributing "War is Not the Answer" signs. In the crowd were five stalwarts, including two from the Meeting, who had been arrested at Senator Zell Miller's office for asking to discuss the war with him.

Elizabeth and Courtney Siceloff were there, Elizabeth in her wheelchair, with Courtney faithfully pushing it. As I begin this report of the spiritual state of Atlanta Friends Meeting in 2003, their image stays before me. Brighter than any candle, this couple shone that day with faith in the power that takes away the occasion of all war. Sixty-plus years of work for peace and social justice had not tired them, but rather given them more determination, energy, and life. They personified the peace testimony, as they had for decades. No mere invasion could stop their work.

True to the same Spirit, Atlanta Meeting members this year have helped consolidate the momentum of the peace movement, planting the seeds of a new Georgia Peace and Justice Coalition in the ground plowed by anti-war work. In Atlanta now, "Every Church (is) a Peace Church" -- the name of a new coalition of black and white churches in the area.

Elizabeth Siceloff could not have had a better memorial than this newly invigorated movement. When she died in early June, the Meeting community gathered with her family, still full of the love she had given them. The Meetinghouse could not hold the memorial service, which moved to a larger space. We were grateful that Courtney and Elizabeth had recorded their stories on videotape, as part of a Meeting project. Courtney has now relocated to East Lake Commons, among many Friends.

In October, we experienced a second deep loss, when Ed Turner was killed suddenly in a car accident. Ed was a truly original personality. We knew him for his steady kindness and quiet consideration, but learned at his memorial service about his mathematical abilities, his sense of humor, and his international travels. The places Elizabeth and Ed once occupied in the Meeting Room still feel empty.

Meeting for Worship has been physically and spiritually full. In 2003, the Meeting attracted many new attenders, people seeking a spiritual home to deal with the turmoil around them. We successfully encouraged families to join Meeting during the first fifteen minutes of worship. In August, we hosted the Fellowship of Friends of African descent, welcoming Quakers from many parts of the United States. We began a process of reconciliation with the Anneewakee Worship Group, and are considering a quarterly meeting to create a greater sense of community among Friends in north Georgia.

The *Ad Hoc Group* was formed at the May, 2002, Business Meeting, to address the needs of an employee who had resigned and the racism within the meeting that led to the resignation. They are seeking a path by which the Meeting community may acknowledge and abandon attitudes that keep us from answering that of God in every person. The Group asks the Meeting to hold them in the Light as they continue to search for a way forward toward that goal.

The committee formerly known as "Oversight" changed its name to "*Administration Committee*" this year with the blessing of Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business. Administration Committee took seriously its duty to examine the personal racism in the lives of individual members as well as in its approach to committee business this past year, in hiring, leases, confronting instances of racism and racial insensitivity in the Meetinghouse, bringing questions of racism to the broader Meeting community, and setting aside a time in each of its meetings to examine committee process with respect to racial sensitivity.

The Meeting provided assistance for several efforts at our sister community, *El Sitio*, El Salvador, this year. Two activities supported by the annual collaboration of the Meeting were \$500 to pay teachers for the upper grades in the school and \$1100 for the initial phases of an effort of CRC to improve organization among youth, from 15 to 25 years old, in its communities. A \$5000 small loan fund created a number of years ago for women began to function this year as well. In addition, members and friends of the Meeting pledged a total of over \$25,000 to establish a loan fund for University students for the next 3-5 years.

Average weekly attendance for *First Day School* is 23 children per week, not counting the high school class. The basic curriculum structure for the classes are as follows: Upper Elementary and Junior High are building their curriculum around the New Testament. Lower Elementary is focusing on Quaker values and diversity. The primary curriculum centers around Quaker values with lesson stories coming from the New Testament and children's literature with no more than 50% of stories derived from the New Testament.

The 2003 *Gathered Meeting Retreat* in March was an opportunity for attenders to explore Quaker testimonies throughout a weekend of mini-workshops facilitated by Meeting members. The mini-workshops, simplicity, peace, integrity, community and equality (S.P.I.C.E.), began with a seven- to ten-minute videotape segment of meeting elders talking about their lives as Friends and each of the testimonies.

The *Library* added to its collection several more items devoted to the history or sociology of race relations in the United States. A new subcommittee of the *Meetinghouse Committee* cleaned out the kitchen. Other Friends posted an art exhibit in the Greeting Room.

Ministry and Worship worked on a number of approaches to deepening the quality and spirit of worship throughout the year. The perennial issues of latecomers, inappropriate messages and inaudible messages were approached with varying degrees of success. M&W

spent much of the year on the issue of racism within the Meeting. They discussed the queries presented by ORAIARH, as well as the continuum on the inclusive church.

With commitment from the *Social Concerns Committee*, in 2003 the Atlanta Friends Meeting was involved in several initiatives trying to bring peace and justice to the Atlanta area, our nation and the world. In early 2003 we continued to distribute "War Is Not the Answer" yard signs. Work in making people of all races welcome in the Meeting included ORAIARH's weekly anti-racism meetings and table of information, monthly meetings on "Raising Non-Racist Children," and promotion of and participation in initiatives led by Concerned Black Clergy and the Georgia Citizen's Coalition on Hunger, including the Grady Coalition and Poor People's Day at the Capitol. In the area of care of the earth, members of meeting helped to initiate Georgia Interfaith Power & Light (GIPL) to encourage faith groups to work on green power production.

The *Young Friends program* continued with activities oriented towards both service and community-building that brought 6th through 12th-graders together after meeting and at other times during the week. Examples of activities include cleaning up Meetinghouse grounds and lunch and pool-playing at Twain's. The year ended with a "lock-in" at the Meetinghouse during which about eight young Friends made dinner and shared it with residents of a homeless shelter.

Friends contributed generously to the Meeting during 2003, and we were able to approve all budget requests for 2004.

In 2003 we welcomed nine people into membership in the Atlanta Meeting. Daphne Clement, Julie Hirneisen-Sarosy, Cam McWhirter and Alex Horsley transferred from other Friends Meetings. Amy Pritchett, Scott King, Joe Parko, Erika Fitz and Elaine Ruscetta joined as new members. We were saddened by the deaths of two members, Elizabeth Sicheloff and Ed Turner, during the year. David Thurman and Duncan Teague married under the care of the Meeting. As of Twelfth Month 31, 2003, Atlanta Friends Meeting has 128 active members, 107 in the Atlanta area and 21 outside the Atlanta area, plus many active attenders.

We are a vibrant, diverse spiritual community, moving in the Light into 2004.

-- Susan Cozzens, Clerk

Berea Monthly Meeting

(available in hard copy only)

Birmingham Monthly Meeting

(available in hard copy only)

Birmingham Monthly Meeting

(cont'd.)

(available in hard copy only)

Birmingham Monthly Meeting

(cont'd.)

(available in hard copy only)

BREVARD (NC) FRIENDS MEETING:
Report to SAYMA Yearly Meeting: June 10, 2004

Members: 15 Adults Attenders: 20 Average attendance at Worship: 15

Our Meeting continues to be small: 15 members (4 non-resident), 13 regular attenders, and 7 less regular. While our energies are limited, making it difficult to carry on as many activities as we would like, our core of members and attenders is a dedicated, conscientious group. Our Meetings for Worship are good and meaningful, but visitors from other Meetings could be helpful in enriching our worship experience. We continue to seek ways to enlarge, and diversify, our numbers.

We were saddened by the death of member **Betty Neale** on January 26, 2004. Betty joined our Meeting in 1995, was Recording Clerk for 3 years, compiled a booklet of autobiographical sketches of members/attenders, kept a photo display of members, and graced our Meeting with her quiet presence.

We regret that **Lury Ignizio** withdrew her membership, and that of her five children, due to their inability to attend or to be active in our Meeting.

We have added no new members, but are delighted to have several new attenders.

Activities beyond Meeting for Worship, and bi-monthly Meetings for Business include: monthly "Meetings for Eating"; bi-weekly Adult Forum, using Pendle Hill Pamphlets *Spiritual Discernment* by Patricia Loring, *Mysticism and the Experience of Love* by Howard Thurman, and the book *Plain Living*, by Catherine Whitmire; and two Friendly Eights groups which meet occasionally. Our only committee to meet regularly is Ministry & Oversight.

Our Meeting Newsletter, written by Jesse Mock after each Meeting for Business, keeps everyone in touch. In addition, we strive to stay connected through e-mail, telephone, and one-on-one visits.

Events of particular note:

- Post two directional signs for the Meeting, which are placed only on Sundays.
- Donated \$3,000, from the Donna Waterman Fund, to the FCNL Building Campaign.
- Hosted Wes Cheney, traveling minister, biking to Ft. Benning protests against "Sch. Of Americas".
- Gave physical and financial support to Mercy Seat, our local housing for the homeless.
- Continue assisting Center for Dialogue, Sharing House, and Adopt-a-Family programs.
- Studied, and endorsed, The Earth Charter.
- Worshipped with 11 other faith groups at Thanksgiving, Week of Christian Unity, and Lent.

- On the occasion of the 15th anniversary celebration of the Center for Dialogue (which our Meeting initiated), members Jesse and Dorothy Mock were presented with Transylvania County's first "Architects of a Peaceful Community" award. Friends heartily approve this award!

Our Meeting does not have a local "Quaker" project as such, but our members are engaged in war protests, work against the death penalty, writing/calling state and national legislators, and working with other local groups in addition to those mentioned above.

Grace, Peace, and Love

[Approved, Meeting for Business, May 16, 2004]

Celo Monthly Meeting

(available in hard copy only)

Charleston Monthly Meeting

(available in hard copy only)

Chattanooga Monthly Meeting

(available in hard copy only)

Chattanooga Monthly Meeting

(cont'd.)

(available in hard copy only)

Columbia Monthly Meeting

(available in hard copy only)

Cookeville Preparative Meeting

(available in hard copy only)

Crossville Monthly Meeting

(available in hard copy only)

FOXFIRE FRIENDS MEETING OF THE HOLSTON VALLEY STATE OF THE MEETING REPORT

Our visibility in the neighborhood grows. Our grounds have undergone improvements with new flowers and trees and a tree house is in progress. A new neighborhood association has its meetings in our building. One member drafted a handout about Friends and our Meeting for those who attend neighborhood meetings. This handout was helpful in giving a talk about Quakers to a Methodist women's group. Our meetinghouse was also used for an overnight SAYMA committee meeting.

We also painted a large cloth banner that reads: "Another Quaker Voice for Peace—Foxfire Friends Meeting, Johnson City, TN"; several Friends marched with the banner at a peace march in honor of Martin Luther King, Jr. in Abingdon, VA. We also used the banner for a March 20th peace rally in Asheville.

We have a new "Orthopraxis" board to help both older and newer Friends and attenders learn about Quaker practice.

We have written a "Standards of Government Minute" which we asked the Yearly Meeting to consider. The Yearly Meeting then distributed it to the monthly meetings in SAYMA.

Foxfire Friends attended a Friday service and shared a Ramadan meal with members of the local Islamic center. This gave us an opportunity to share traditions from our faiths.

Our Peace and Social Concerns committee has been more active this year. We continue to write letters to government officials and newspapers on fifth Sundays. We have spent time discussing the Earth Charter and are making commitments to live it out in our personal daily lives.

We have had contact with distant members David and Grace Rubenstein and Errol Hess and continue to reach out to them and their families. We have also welcomed a returning former attender and her children.

Approved 5-2-04

Greenville Monthly Meeting

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Huntsville Monthly Meeting

(available in hard copy only)

Memphis Monthly Meeting

(available in hard copy only)

Memphis Monthly Meeting

(cont'd.)

(available in hard copy only)

Memphis Monthly Meeting

(cont'd.)

(available in hard copy only)

2004 State of the Meeting Report Nashville Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quaker)

Responding to the query, "How does the Spirit fare among us?" Friends spent a Second Hour discerning the following answer.

This year has been one in which both the human and physical parts of our Meeting have felt abundantly filled with the Spirit. It seems as if the openness of our new worship space has opened our hearts to deeper and more varied messages of and from God. Our several year search for a new meeting house was carried to fruition by our faithful listening - to each other and to what Spirit would have us do. Many of us were disappointed when the first possibility was not to be. Little did we know that at the time we were relinquishing that possibility, we were being provided with what we sought. From the first time Friends entered what became our new location, we experienced the power and presence of the Divine in this building. Not without hitches, way opened and we sold our old house and purchased the new in good Quaker practice - no bargaining, but stating and accepting our published price.

At one time in our discernment process Friends expressed the concern that undertaking such a project would sap our community energy, we find ourselves relieved and encouraged that that was not the case! In a flurry of activity we packed up the old house and moved it all into storage at the new one. For just one month, while the demolition of the modifications made by the previous owner was completed, we worshipped in homes. Our first Meeting for Worship in the new house was filled with joy and gratitude, despite being in the midst of sawdust piles, scaffolding, plastic sheathing and new paint odors. Many Friends rallied to participate in weekly "Sweat" and Painting Parties as we finished up behind the contractors; painted walls, clambered up ladders and scaffolding to paint 15 foot high crown molding and install new insulation in the open raftered ceiling. Under the leadership of the focused and careful House and Grounds Committee we shored up the "sanctuary" floor before the laying of the new Brazilian sustainable eucalyptus floor. Such cooperation and community we had rarely seen! Great conversations about life and faith abounded. Even before the first phase of work had been completed we were realizing some of the vision that drove the move as more families joined us in worship and we began our participation in neighborhood projects.

With the new openness that has brought about increased attendance, we have found the need for more intentional educational opportunities. In response, a brochure was developed for visitors and a course of introduction to Quakerism has been well and eagerly attended by new and long time seekers. At the same time we have been able to sustain cherished events such as our annual Fall Weekend and our third annual Regional Gathering of Friends. This year we extended the latter to include other meetings in our area and all of us were richly blessed by a return visit by Michael Wajda and Alison Levie of the Friends General Conference Traveling Ministries Program as they led us in deep discernment about our spiritual lives. We have noticed that worship on First Days after such gatherings is noticeably deeper and richer.

We have labored with balancing the press of life outside Meeting with fulfilling the responsibilities of being participants in a faith community that is dependent on volunteers for its existence. Some Meetings for Worship with Attention to Business have been sparsely attended,

yet we have been led by those in positions of responsibility in staying centered on what God would have us do as all ages of Friends have been faithful in attending to committee work and community commitments. Our younger Friends have made it easier for the older Friends to attend business meetings as they provided light lunches for us. In return we supported their collection, purchase and distribution of warm hats, gloves etc for the homeless in Nashville. The Meeting as a whole has gotten under the weight of carrying out the work of the Peace and Social Concerns Committee by our participation in the Shalom Community, Tying Nashville Together and Nashville Peace and Justice Center. We have delighted in being able to host our yearly meeting representative meeting and an FGC committee meeting - rising to the challenge of providing meals for many with only the most rudimentary of kitchens. With the generous donation of Friends' musical talents and organizational skills, we organized and put on a smashing Open House attended by about 200 neighbors and friends. A veritable stone soup of tasty delicacies fed our guests.

We can name many ways in which we care for each other - among these are writing letters of introduction for those traveling, letters in support of citizenship application, supporting the recognized ministry of a member; providing scholarship for Friends seeking experience of a wider Quaker experience; holding one another in prayer and maintaining a hardship fund. Nevertheless, we recognize that there is more we can do in welcoming and including newcomers and those who feel marginalized. Having approved a statement of purpose, we are challenged to live into it, to uphold our integrity as we live up to the measure of Light each has been given. Now that our space has been blessed by the music at the Open House, we find ourselves yearning for more music on a more regular basis.

As we move into a new year, we look to the Divine for guidance in some particular challenges facing our meeting. We pray that we are faithful in listening with hearts and minds for that Divine voice in all aspects of our lives and can find the way to step up to that which is asked of us. We pray that we can first seek out that of God in others and see what love can do when faced with persons and policies with which we disagree.

Approved at Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business, Fifth Month, 2004

New Moon Worship Group

(available in hard copy only)

Oxford Friends Meeting
June 2004

Dear SAYMA Friends,

Greetings from [one of] your newest, and most far-flung monthly meetings! We regret that we did not get our State of the Meeting report ready in time to submit to Yearly Meeting (sometimes the urgent business of the moment overshadows these kind of important tasks).

In lieu of such a report, Mary Calhoun suggested a simple “Letter to Yearly Meeting” might be in order, and we do wish to be included in these year’s business minutes. We will share some of the important milestones of the past nineteen months since we first became a monthly meeting, as well as our corporate sense of our meeting’s spiritual growth.

Our meeting “birthday” was in November 2002, and we have informally celebrated the event with Friends from Memphis, our caring meeting, who have worshipped with us on more than one occasion. We also welcomed several SAYMA representatives who were traveling through our region. Several members and attenders have gone to the past two Yearly Meetings, and we are looking forward to making at least one Quarterly Meeting in the next year. We were privileged to have a Friend from Russia join us in worship earlier this year, and have hosted two special educational tours out of the Atlanta AFSC office (one featuring Filipino human rights activist Bal, and the other Katie Brownrigg from the African Peace Education Program).

Though isolated geographically, we are definitely tied into the wider community, both through the work of several of our members and attenders in areas of global slavery, international law relating to national security and environmental issues, work with AFSC’s Campaign of Conscience in Iraq, Heifer Project International and other such concerns. Our meeting as a whole has contributed time and money to host educational and fundraising events related to the above-mentioned causes. Several from our meeting have been very active in organizing anti-war vigils, joining with other churches and community groups.

On the local level, our meeting has made a strong commitment in time and money to two complimentary organizations: Interfaith Compassion Ministries (ICM) and The Amos Network. The first, ICM, is a coalition of both African American and white churches providing emergency food, housing and other kinds of critical support. The Amos Network goes beyond charity to address the root causes of poverty and racism present in our city and county. We are heartened by the participation of both large and small African American and white congregations, as well as the local mosque, in the Amos Network.

Because we meet in the home of two of our members (who fortuitously had built a major addition to their home in Oxford just as our worship group was forming), we do not have rent or mortgage bills, and can give away a large portion of our small budget! Our meetings for worship have grown to include some twenty-eight adults and children, though in the summer these numbers are smaller. Two area newspapers have done “meet the Quaker” type feature articles on

our meeting and we continue to welcome newcomers on a weekly basis. We are grateful for the literature from the Quaker Bookstore and make extensive use of materials produced by London Yearly Meeting as well (where two of our current members were active before coming to the U.S.). We have also counted several [well-behaved] dogs as regular “attenders” and all of us mourned the death of our original “Quaker dog” Charlie. [note from clerk – the meeting really wanted me to include this part about the dogs!]

Perhaps the area we have expended the most thought and prayer, time and money, has been our Children’s Meeting. We have grown from providing merely “babysitting” services, to the active involvement of many of our adults in presenting a wide variety of interactive lessons. Our meeting as a whole now sees the care of our children as the job of all of us. We have held special meetings periodically to evaluate the children’s program, review new Quaker curricula, and brainstorm on ways to enrich our own time with the children. All our children currently sit with us in silent worship for the first 5-10 minutes of meeting, and then go out with the leader of the day. One of the highlights of each week is the time when the children come back at rise of meeting and share with the whole meeting what they learned, the crafts they made, or [quite often] the wonderful skits, puppet shows, or songs they have rehearsed. We have actually learned quite a bit of Quaker history from teaching Children’s meeting ourselves, or enjoying the children’s plays.

We are known as the silent meeting by our Memphis Friends – which means we are still learning about spoken ministry. As one way to grow in this area, we held our first worship sharing this year. Many of us participated in worship sharing when we went on retreat with Memphis Monthly Meeting, and this inspired us to do it on our own. We have had periodic meetings for learning on simplicity, the peace testimony, and “leadings.” We began to minute in the manner of Friends our meetings for worship for business even when we were still a worship group, and we have found this particular Quaker discipline extremely helpful in making our corporate decisions. Next to care of the children, learning about the Quaker “sense of the meeting” for corporate decisions in business meeting has been a priority. We are fortunate that our assistant clerk served as clerk for another monthly meeting prior to joining us in Oxford. We continue to read the very helpful literature on this topic.

We had our first marriage under the care of the meeting this June. Apart from the folks who became members when our meeting was founded, we have welcomed three additional Friends into the Society (one a teenager), and thus held three clearness for membership meetings.

Spiritually, we have found ourselves called to support one another through a number of serious illnesses (a large number, for such a small group) and two other major life decisions. Such energy focused inwardly has occupied a lot of our time. This has been balanced by our community and global commitments, but we feel the tension and stress of this. We find that our “meeting for cookies” (as our coffee hour has been affectionately named) a consistent opportunity for spiritual discussion and support, as well as great good humor. The close ties that are possible in a small meeting have enabled us to weather times of conflict and misunderstanding. We have

also learned the hard way to avoid the use of email for any serious discussion – we now insist on meeting face to face. We use email to send out notices of events and circulate business minutes, but restrict it to that use.

In a special called meeting for worship for business, the clerk asked those gathered to sum up how our meeting has grown, and what our challenges are right now. Hearing how deeply people felt connected to our meeting in a fairly short period of time was cause for rejoicing. We recalled a comment from a visiting Friend that our meeting for worship “makes me realize why I became a Quaker.” We have honored silent worship, and treasured our uncommon spoken ministries – perhaps a different balance will emerge between the silence and speaking in the next phase of our growth.

Our meeting sees itself as one that takes very seriously the query: What does it mean to be a Quaker meeting today? We have been low-key in our outreach, and feel ready to take new steps for greater visibility. We are sensitive, on the one hand, to a lack of diversity (in terms of race and class) in our meeting, but blessed with a diversity of faith backgrounds (Jewish and Buddhist to name two). In writing our own “Welcome for Oxford Friends Meeting” brochure we came to realize that we want to balance acknowledgment of Quakerism’s Christian roots with the diversity of spiritual paths our members and attenders now walk! This seems especially important to our meeting because of our location in the Deep South, where the dominant culture is conservative (theologically and politically) Christianity.

We recall various challenges that we have successfully handled corporately, and now look forward to being a caring meeting for a potential worship group in Starkville. We are also planning a meeting for learning on death and dying “the Quaker way.”

To sum it up, we have coalesced from a group of interested individuals to a real community. What happens next will be exciting and challenging, confusing and enlightening – of that we have no doubt!

Royal Worship Group

(available in hard copy only)

Sevier County Monthly Meeting

(available in hard copy only)

Swannanoa Valley Monthly Meeting

(available in hard copy only)

West Knoxville Monthly Meeting

(available in hard copy only)