

**Appendix B**  
**State of the Meeting Reports**

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**Anneewakee Creek Worship Group  
State of the Meeting Report**

(available in hard copy only)

**Asheville Friends Meeting  
State of the Society/Meeting Report  
2004-2005**

Asheville Friends Meeting continues to be a vibrant and growing spiritual community. Although as a meeting we are not in unity regarding certain issues, the spirit still moves within our beloved community. Therefore we find ourselves blessed with many joys and challenges. Our purpose in this report is to relay to the reader what our meeting senses is going well, how we have grown, our challenges and how we have met them, noteworthy Friends' achievements and ministries, those we have lost, and where we are spiritually in relation to worship.

**HOW WE HAVE GROWN**

- In this year we have accepted three new members, approximately 31 new attenders, many with children.
- A weekly E-calendar has been added due to the absence of our newsletter. Announcements, events and meetings are refreshed daily along with links to our monthly meeting for business minutes, and other meeting related sites. Those in meeting who do not have email are given a "buddy" who can print a listing for them, and we make paper copies available in the meetinghouse.
- We have had a resurgence of our Spiritual Enrichment Committee.
- There is new interest in revising a Long Range Planning Committee.
- We are in the process of putting into motion a Pastoral Care Committee, which has grown out of filling areas assumed to be under the care of our Clerk.
- Our library has received a new coat of paint, and sports a more simplified footprint by the removal of unnecessary items.
- A simplicity group began meeting before worship on every other First day.
- Young Adult Friends have organized regular twice-monthly meetings.
- Friendly Eights groups began meeting.
- The Earth Charter was endorsed by the meeting.
- Continued support of individual leadings, and to local Peace Groups.
- Continued involvement with Southern Appalachian Young Friends.
- Well attended series on Quaker Process was offered.

**CHALLENGES**

And how we have met them

**THE CLERK FREE MEETING**

Currently our meeting is operating without a Clerk, simply because there was not a member who felt led to take on the position of Clerk. A surprising thing happened, many members and attenders began to take up the Clerk's responsibilities.

**BREAKING MEETING**—Weekly meeting now has a sign-up sheet, and anyone who attends may sign up to break meeting. Some advantages have been to discover individual's gifts and provide variety to the end of worship. We also have members of Ministry and Counsel stand and introduce themselves during the rise of meeting, serving as touchstones to the community and newcomers.

**CLERKING MEETING FOR BUSINESS**—Monthly meeting now also has a "Guest Clerk" (or Clerk Pro Tem) with a returning Recording Clerk. There was some unease with this arrangement among our meeting that continues at this writing. However, we have not missed a meeting for business, and have been well served by the people who have stepped forward to serve the community in this way. Our worship during meeting for business has deepened, and we realize that silent worship in meeting for

business comes about by many Friends actively "clerking" from their places.

**COMMITTEE WORK**—Creation or renaissance of committees to step up and complete tasks originally assumed to be the Clerk's responsibilities. *Many hands make light work.* Some committees have become more active, such as Ministry and Counsel, which has become host to newcomers, a destination for discernment, and in some sense, a collective Clerk.

### MEETINGHOUSE

We have several concerns regarding the safety and size of our meetinghouse. We have an aging structure, with an outdated deck and bathrooms that are not wheelchair compliant. We have issues with mold, and infestations that are common with a house of this age and use. Our House and Grounds Committee struggles with decisions regarding our space and safety, and the idea of moving, rebuilding, or splitting the community looms in the future.

### RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

There is a sense in meeting that our Religious Education is currently in transition. The meeting is experiencing the added joy and burden of many young children in attendance. There are many parents and other interested friends who are actively nourishing this transition. At this time we are not in unity over the future of Religious Education.

### MARRIAGE UNDER CARE OF MEETING

At this time we realize we are not in unity about same gender unions, what they should be called, or if we can take them under our care. Due to this dis-unity over "marriage", meeting is not able to offer marriage or unions to its members. Review of what it means to hold a couple under the care of the meeting is planned.

### NEW TO QUAKERISM

There is a sense in meeting that many people who actively participate in the life of the meeting are new to Friends, and are not steeped in Quaker process. There has been much interest in offering Quakerism 101 to the community in the coming year, noting the good attendance during the Quaker Process series.

### NEWSLETTER

We are currently without a newsletter. To help with communicating important items, events, announcements, and monthly minutes we have built an E-calendar, and have set up a buddy system to include Friends without email or computer access. At this time we do not know when or if the newsletter will be reinstated.

## FRIENDS OF NOTE

### Special Ministries

Christy Bishoff—works with Christian Peacemakers in Hebron

Jennifer Walker—serves on the board of Right Sharing of World Resources

Lauren Mitchell—served on the Planning Committee of World Gathering of Young Friends

Phil Neal—Friends Committee on Outworld Relations

Elizabeth Roebeling—teaches English to indigenous children in the Dominican Republic

Robin Wells—United Religions Initiative, Friends General Conference-Religious Education Committee

## MEMORIAL

We lost our dear Friend and elder, Ursula Scott in March of 2005. She was indeed a source of Light in our community, and continues to be greatly missed.

David Miller also died in March of 2005 and is remembered by members of the AFM community.

#### AFM ANNUAL RETREAT

In September of 2004 we held an annual weekend retreat at Bonclarken, which was attended by 50 members of our community. It was at this retreat that our Spiritual Enrichment Committee was reborn, and continues to be a presence within the community. The committee is in the process of planning our next retreat at Montreat in September of 2005.

#### *In Conclusion*

As a community we have endeavored to search out the spiritual path, holding our lives and concerns within the light, and to celebrate our joys. We have discovered this continuing revelation of respectful silence, simplicity, and support of the divine within ourselves and each other. We lean on each other and find new connections to each other during this time of transition, sometimes achieving comfort, sometimes accomplishing great work, and sometimes finding what is unnamed. The spirit moves.

#### **State of the Meeting Report Athens (Georgia) Religious Society of Friends, Monthly Meeting of S.A.Y.M.A. Sixth Month, 2005 (year 2004-2005)**

Athens Friends Meeting continued to actively participate in worship, service, action and discussion throughout the year. We are grateful for the service of our new co-clerks Cathianne Watkins and Janice Pulliam. Weekly attendance at meeting for worship continues to range from 7 to 15 people. Since last year, we have returned to our original schedule, with worship held during first hour, followed by a break, followed by discussion or business meeting. These changes and others are documented on our newly-revised web site (<http://athensquaker.org>).

This year saw more activity in our Meeting. We have welcomed several new regular attenders. With the addition of a young family of attenders, we reactivated our First Day School. Two of our youth and several of their friends regularly attend SAYF activities. One of those youths serves on SAYF's nurturing committee and coordinated the SAYF retreat at Hard Labor Creek State Park near Athens, Georgia. Several of our members assisted others from SAYMA with logistical and chaperoning duties.

We held discussions and worship sharing on a variety of topics including: aging, war, and a letter-writing campaign to local officials. At the behest of two of our members, we began an ongoing series of dialogues about Growing the Meeting. We have found these discussions spirit-filled and stimulating, and they have helped clarify the meeting's goals.

As has become our custom, we had a Christmas potluck and party, and we held a candle-lighting worship on Christmas Eve. For Easter, we continued last year's tradition and held worship in a shelter house at a local park. We provided presents and school supplies for a family with whom we have a long-standing relationship. We also provided funding for Christmas presents for children of Athens Justice Project's clients.

The meeting participated in a variety of events in our local and global community. Much of our time and funds this year was spent planning and executing the AFSC "Eyes Wide Open" exhibit, held in October. This event was organized by our Meeting, and we collaborated with a Unitarian congregation and Women in Black as co-hosts. The exhibit was a great success, drawing more than 1000 visitors during its 1-day stay.

During our meeting space clean-up, we recycled computers from the Meeting and Athens Urban Ministries (our landlords). We held our ice cream social in the summer. We collected books and toys to send to Friend's school in Monte Verde (Costa Rica), where one of our attender's family are living, and we continued to provide support for the Montessori Classrooms at Fowler Drive Elementary School.

Athens Quaker Meeting designed tee shirts reading "Wage Peace", and members wore these shirts while participating in the 5K Run/Walk for Habitat for Humanity and other local charities, the Human Rights Festival and the Hot Corner Celebration. We have continued our affiliation with Habitat by participating in the Building a Dream project; members attend meetings and are assisting with fundraising dinners for a multi-faith build scheduled for early 2006. To help spread the Quaker message, we provided a literature table, peace-related bumper stickers, and AFSC "Wage Peace" bracelets at the 27<sup>th</sup> Annual Athens Human Rights Festival and the Hot Corner Celebration.

Along with Women in Black, we organized a second anniversary protest against the Iraq War, held at the entrance to the University of Georgia. Athens Friends joined with several groups to publicly demonstrate our support for global peace and justice. Members attended walks, vigils, and informative talks. We continued our work with Common Ground, a local progressive networking organization.

As a meeting, we have struggled with providing donations to match our budgeted expectations and obligations. We contributed to memorial activities and gifts for several Friends' family members. We have begun disbursing funds for charitable contributions twice annually rather than maintaining a large savings. Although we are not united on the topic of owning a Meetinghouse, we have accounts designated for contributions to meeting house savings which are now invested in Pax World Fund and on loan to the Center for Development in Central America.

**Spiritual State of the Meeting 2004**  
**Atlanta Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends**

"Work is love made visible." So writes 20th century mystic and poet, Kahlil Gibran. Love is the thread that weaves our lives together. Our Meeting thrives because of the love and work of caring and committed individuals, employees and volunteers alike, work that is not always visible on First day mornings during the few hours in which we meet for worship, study and fellowship. Love fills our lives and allows us to make tangible the testimonies of peace, equality, simplicity, community and integrity. The Spirit is very much alive.

We welcomed two worship groups under our care, Canton Worship Group in northwest Georgia and Gwinnett Worship Group in Norcross, a northeast Atlanta suburb. Atlanta f/Friends are actively helping with their nurture and support. We also reconnected with Anneewakee Worship Group and assisted them financially to rent a space for worship, helping to increase their numbers.

We discovered spiritual leadings in reactions to world events and in peace and justice activities. We supported many individuals and groups in their social witness and we encourage more persons to ask for support for their work in the Spirit. The witness/vigil continued weekly at Colony Square in Atlanta protesting the Iraq war and for ending our military presence there. Friends also joined the Georgia Peace and Justice Coalition in their many demonstrations downtown.

The Meeting gave financial assistance to Joe Parko's and Courtney Sicheloff's defense in court to face charges from their sit-in of November 2002 in Senator Zell Miller's office, seeking a meeting to discuss the impending war against Iraq. They successfully avoided a fine and additional jail time.

Green Friends brought the Earth Charter to our attention which we endorsed and recommend to SAYMA.

Sister community El Sitio Cenicero in El Salvador used Meeting funds to conduct a feasibility study of a possible tourism project, including infrastructure requirements and training needs. Carol and Frank Cummings, who now live in nearby Suchitoto, provide the liaison between our Meeting and El Sitio and report to us frequently.

Care and Counsel has assisted several families and individual financially and with meals. Among other activities, the committee held clearness committees, organized a volunteer appreciation party, and re-started welcome dinners.

We hosted the Friends General Conference Central Committee and arranged a potluck for the Fellowship of Friends of African Descent, meeting at Morehouse College.

In considering how best to continue the work of addressing racism in the Meeting after laying down the Ad Hoc Committee on Racism, the Meeting approved the formation of a new standing committee, the Committee on Undoing Racism in Atlanta Friends Meeting. The committee, whose ministry is "to deepen our spiritual lives and our ability to hear the spirit in the voices of all who worship in Atlanta Friends Meeting," continued co-sponsoring with ORAIARH (Our Role As Individuals In America's Racial History) a monthly book group and also a discussion group, "Raising Non-Racist Children." The committee also provided a "Listening Ear" after Meeting for Worship as a safe space for individuals to talk through issues of racism.

Other committees regularly work to counter racism in the Meeting and also support individuals in their work against racism in their personal lives. The Administration committee designates the topic of racism as an agenda item each month, and also annually in a special meeting. ORAIARH, a subcommittee of Social Concerns, meets weekly, sets up a literature table on First Days, and sponsors occasional film showings for the Meeting. Social Concerns supports participation in actions led by and benefiting many people of color: the King Day march, the Poor Peoples Day at the Capitol and the Living Wage Coalition.

The 2004 Gathered Meeting Retreat, "Quaker Spirituality in a Culturally Diverse Community," led by Jean-Marie Barch from FGC's Traveling Ministries Program, provided participants an opportunity for a safe and healing space to work towards understanding the growing cultural and ethnic community of the Meeting. The evaluation of the retreat concluded with the idea that Meeting members can continue working towards making a welcoming environment the norm, not only within the Meeting, but also in each person's life outside of Meeting.

The Meeting joined "Georgians Against Discrimination" to fight the Georgia constitutional amendment against same-gender marriages and other legal unions, and it agreed to serve as a friend of the court in legal challenges to this amendment with Georgia Lord as the Meeting's representative in this effort. The Meeting approved a minute reaffirming our willingness to hold celebrations of commitment, including marriage, under our care for any couple regardless of sexual orientation and gender when one or both partners are active in the Meeting, and to support the efforts of same-sex and transgendered couples to gain increased legal protections, including the option of choosing the benefits of civil marriage.

We noted that First Day school classes seem smaller, yet rewarding with a focus on Quaker values and history. The average attendance has been about 24 children and youth from 2 ½ years through high school. The Meeting has strengthened the Young Friends program for youth aged 12 through 18 years by increasing financial support for the youth coordinator, and transportation and program costs. The Adult First Day class had regular attendance of 10-15 Friends, newcomers, regular attenders and members. Our discussions of readings included "Quakerism 101" from PYM; "Without Apology" by Chuck Fager, "If Grace is True", by Phillip Gulley and James Mulholland, "The Battle for God", by Karen Armstrong and "Beyond Belief", by Elaine Pagels.

To deepen the quality of worship and to assist individuals in achieving clarity of ministry with the guidance of the Spirit, Ministry and Worship committee initiated worship sharing after 4th and 5th week meetings and wrote newsletter articles focused on aspects of worship and guidelines for speaking out of the silence. Also, we are looking for solutions to the problem of inaudible messages during Meeting for Worship and formed an Ad Hoc committee on Hearing Assistance to address this concern.

The Meeting's Finances caused concern for awhile after a long-time lessee moved to new quarters. We are thankful that funds were forthcoming as the need was known.

Our Meetinghouse is aging and three major repairs were considered and approved: replacing the roof, upgrading the insulation and replacing heating/AC elements. These repairs will improve energy conservation and air quality in the Meetinghouse and will bring us in line with recommendations made by Southface, a local energy conservation group.

We rejoice in the many connections with Friends School of Atlanta and the American Friends Service Committee. The Meeting is able to host school and AFSC events at no charge and members of the Meeting serve on the school's and AFSC's respective Boards. School families become involved in the Meeting and AFSC staff connect with our social concerns.

In 2004 we welcomed 11 persons into membership: Jennifer Thompson, Roy Taylor, Chris Roesel, Maggie Hasbrouck-Lay, Janet Melnyck, Anne Lynn, David Lynn, Roby Lynn, Bailey Lynn. Debra Johnson transferred from Memphis Friends and Erin Schroeder, from New Orleans. We welcomed one new associate member, Elliott Johnson-Pritchett, son of Amy Pritchett. Sandra Beer transferred membership to Chatham (NY) Meeting and we released Marty Briggs to another congregation. Walter Degler and Sheila Hutton married under the care of the Meeting as did Heather Barbour and Tom Eberhart.

Our membership at the end of 2004 is 137, of which 119 are living in the Atlanta area and 18 are outside of the area, plus many active attenders.

Karen Morris, Clerk



**Berea Friends Meeting**  
**State of the Meeting Report for 2004-05**

Much has occurred in our meeting this past year, but the events that have had the greatest impact are our all-but-completed purchase of a meeting house, and our loss of two long-term Friends who were intricately woven into the fabric of our meeting. As we look to the new year, we find ourselves excited by the possibilities of owning our meeting house, but it is a poignant time as we face this new future without our dear friends Louise Harmon and Peter Reilly.

Louise, who had courageously and with much faith battled cancer for years, died in June 2004, and Peter died very unexpectedly this past February. Both deaths were tremendous blows to our community, and to their families. Their memorial services were powerful spiritual experiences, and we had to use the local First Christian Church for both of them in order to accommodate the large number of attenders. We heard from many community people on how much they appreciated the Quaker format of a memorial service, and Berea Friends as well felt again the healing and power inherent in our simple and open way of honoring those who have passed on.

In the future, we would like to host some type of celebration of our new meeting house, with an invitation to the wider community to join us. We would like to include in this celebration some type of remembrance of the Friends who have passed away. It seems appropriate, as we plan for our future outreach and witness, that we remember those who, through their wonderful spirits and gifts, brought our spiritual community to the place we are today.

This first meeting house purchase has generated a great deal of enthusiasm in our meeting. As we approach yearly meeting we are looking forward to closing soon on the purchase of the building in which we have been meeting for almost 10 years. In addition to two large meeting rooms, the building includes an apartment, several smaller rooms and a small kitchen off one of the meeting rooms.

Berea Friends prepared financially for the purchase of a meetinghouse over several years. In 1997, we established a Meetinghouse Fund to which Friends could contribute toward the purchase of a meetinghouse. Later we set up a Meetinghouse Loan Fund through which Friends could lend money to the Meeting with the intention of contributing the funds when the meetinghouse idea became a reality. Several times in the past we surveyed members and active attenders about how much they could contribute toward a down payment and whether they would increase their regular contributions if we had the responsibility of a meetinghouse to keep up. All of this preparation stood us in good stead as we considered our ability to purchase and pay for our new building.

Financially, the year has been remarkable. At the beginning of our last fiscal year, on May 1, 2004, the balance in the Meetinghouse Fund stood at \$26,386. By late May 2005, the balance was over \$100,000 and still growing. Three families lent money to the Meeting for the purchase, many local and distant members made contributions, and the Meeting applied memorial gifts received over the year to the Meetinghouse Fund. The Meeting had no trouble securing the balance of the funds needed as a loan from a local bank.

Also during the year, Berea Friends established a Healing Fund (the third of its kind in the history of the Meeting) to facilitate contributions to a Meeting-related family facing extraordinary expenses and loss of income due to illness. From February to May we received \$8,400 through this Healing Fund and passed those funds on to the family. In mid-May we established a Service Fund to facilitate contributions to a 2005 Berea College graduate who is planning a year of working with Tibetan refugees in India. By the end of May we had received just under \$3,000 on this student's behalf. The special funds have provided a structure through which Friends, family, and others not connected to our Meeting can provide financial support for people they care about.

We have been continuing our adult second hour discussions, and recently one of our members has facilitated a series of second hours on the Gnostic gospels. Our Friday soup suppers are continuing as a way to fellowship together, and we are also continuing the mid-week discussion groups when a minimum participation is met.

As we do every Christmas, we did a inter-generational activity of preparing cookies and cards for everyone in the county jail. The children also participated in the trick-or-treat for UNICEF in October, collecting donations door-to-door. Our children continue to join the adult Meeting for Worship for as long as they wish, exiting to a separate quiet room when they feel the need to do more active activities. The formal children's religious education program still happens at the same time as the second hour time for adults.

The meeting membership rolls remain about the same as last year, with 51 adults and 7 children. Average attendance is around 20 or so swelling to near 30 some Sundays. We have seen an increase in visitors, but regular attendance has not changed much since last year. The regular 5 children attending are between the ages of 2 and 11.

### **Birmingham (Alabama) Friends Meeting State of the Meeting Report, April 2004-April 2005**

The highlight of Birmingham Friends life this year is the wedding of Lisa Wienhold and Jon Bartlett held at Tannehill State Park on April 23, 2005. The clearness process led to our deeper friendship with both Lisa and Jon and our appreciation for Jon's deep spirituality formed by his Christian Science heritage. Friends' discussion of Elizabeth Watson's *Marriage in the Light* reminded us, through her beautiful language and common sense, of the best that any close relationship can provide.

We enjoy the gifts of professional photographer Mark Gooch, a generous Friend who records for us our most treasured moments in the life of the Meeting. In addition to photographing Lisa and Jon's wedding, he has taken pictures of Friends during our NCCJ walks, tending the garden and the Meeting House, playing with children and for other special occasions. He prepared a scrapbook capturing the spirit of BFM as well as individual Friends for Jim Flege, whom we are losing to his bride, Tullia and to their new home in Italy. Jim has been clerk, ministry and nurture clerk and a deeply centered spiritual presence in the day-to-day, month-to-month and year-to-year processes Birmingham Friends Meeting and we look forward to his and Tullia's visits to the condo they are maintaining in our city.

Another special celebration was our annual Christmas party, in which we hosted families who have mothers or fathers enrolled in the World of Opportunity Program; Friend Bill Seadler volunteers in the program as tutor to those studying for a GED. We are planning a cookout for these families and those in our neighborhood to be held in June. Some Friends have also established pen pal relationships with the World of Opportunity clients, developing a bridge across racial and class lines.

BFM purposely bought a house in a mixed-race, city neighborhood, and we're working at becoming good neighbors. Each Christmas we give what would be our property tax to our local grammar school P.T.A. (Regarding taxes, we also refuse to pay federal taxes on our telephone bill.)

Our outreach includes buying a table at the annual fundraiser banquet of the Church of the Reconciler (an inner-city, inter-racial church which offers worship services, social services, and meals to the poor and homeless). Friend and Quaker house tenant Ray Fancher is employed by the church.

Other outreach activities include participation in the G.I. Rights Hotline, spearheaded by Adrian Smythies, and the dedication of one room in the Meeting House as a Peace Center open to all and participation in peace demonstrations with Pax Christi and the Birmingham Peace Fellowship, such as the major demonstration on the anniversary of our entry into the Iraq war lamenting our government's responsibility for that. We hosted Birmingham peacekeepers and several Buddhist monks making a walk through the South on their way to the Oak Ridge Hiroshima Day demonstration.

One major concern has been sending aid to Africa; we have viewed videos on Sudan and we have sponsored a Rwandan orphan in Rwanda. We are especially concerned with the AIDS epidemic and have scheduled a social concerns discussion with Katrina Julian of UAB Medical Center on that topic. We have a Quaker Oats box in which Friends drop change during coffee breaks for various international groups

providing aid to various populations. Individual Friends also made substantial donations through the Meeting to AFSC for their Tsunami relief work.

We hosted two cyclists (riding through the rain) from New York who are cycling across the country listening to people's life stories and we hosted and learned much from Julie Harlowe of Moscow Friends House during her stay with us. Several members are involved with Project Hope against the death penalty and after each U.S. execution a black flag lamenting the death of a fellow human being is flown from the top window of the Meeting House.

Nancy Whitt was a member of the first class of the Interfaith Leadership Institute sponsored by the Alabama National Conference for Community and Justice. Her class published a booklet of stories of individual faith communities, coming Islam, Bahai, Buddhist, Jewish, and Christian communities across racial and class lines in Birmingham. Friends also participated in the annual NCCJ fundraising walk which brings together diverse people from throughout the city.

Within our small community, we have enriched ourselves by tending our house, enjoying workdays in which the house is cleaned and flowers are planted. We also added a wheelchair ramp and made our bathroom handicapped accessible this year. On one Friday each month we enjoy a "simple supper" at a Friend's house. The hosting family makes soup and another Friend brings bread and all enjoy the food and companionship.

During "second hours" following worship, in addition to one Sunday being devoted to meeting for business and one for social concerns, we devote two Sundays a month to Quakerism 101 topics, this year including queries, differing Friends' traditions, Universalist Friends, and, of course Quaker weddings. We also read and discussed Elaine Pagels' *Beyond Belief*, her study of the Gospel of Thomas. On several Sundays we listened to Houston Smith's video series on world religions.

Another opportunity for enjoying each other was provided by Peter Furst's creative listening project, a six-week series of meetings during which Friends responded to questions about their spiritual and social lives without interruption or comment. He is developing a compassionate listening series for the upcoming year.

One of our most joyful experiences this year has been our sharing in the lives of several "Quaker kids." The youngest, Maggie, is two; the oldest, Ian, is nine. Molly is five and the cohort of six-year-olds include Emma (presently sporting a pink cast on her broken arm), Lincoln and Henry, who listen to stories, provide us with art work, and sometimes make cookies for us. We have a group of young intellectuals who are also empathetic. We were touched by Emma's ability to make our young World of Opportunity guests feel welcome at our Christmas party.

BFM Women's Meeting has grown beyond Friends to include women of other faiths and some academic women. Currently we meet once a month to discuss books and our lives.

Our small group of Friends has accomplished a lot this year, but we are aware of challenges that lay before us. We would like more interaction with our neighbors and need to work harder on learning who they are and how we can welcome each other as members of the same community. In fact outreach in general is a continual concern; most people are still unaware of Quakers in Birmingham, despite advertising in the newspaper (now discontinued as ineffective) and a news story or two in which we are mentioned. Ray Fancher developed a website through which some have found us. We have a strong e-mail connection, but we're afraid sometimes those not on e-mail remain outside the information loop. We also ask ourselves how we can become more of a community for those among us with special needs, especially as our population ages.

We have long-term and short-term hard working and deeply appreciated attenders who have not been led to join the Society. We have not had a clearness committee for membership in a while.

We might have to rev up for draft counseling, though we pray the draft will not be reinstated and we also need to invigorate the Peace Center for greater participation by citizens of greater Birmingham. We would also like to participate more fully in the drive to re-write Alabama's unjust and racist 1901 constitution.

We lament the fact that Birmingham Friends have been unable to participate more fully in Wider

Quaker Organizations, particularly SAYMA. We look forward to the representative meeting to be held among us this year.

Finally, we all celebrate the renewed health of Connie LaMonte. Her tests following a very tough year of treatment for ovarian cancer have been exceedingly positive and her friends rejoice with her as she re-enters with renewed energy an active life of music, counseling, travel and being fully present to her friends and family.

**BREVARD (NC) FRIENDS MEETING**  
**Report to SAYMA -- June 9, 2005**

**Members: 15 Adults, 1 child      Regular Attenders: 20      Ave. attendance at Worship: 15**

Our Meeting remains a small, yet vital group. We have added one new member, Barbara Chamides, and have also been enriched by the regular presence of several new attenders. One non-resident member, Jay Williams, of South Carolina, died during the year. We celebrated the birth of Arawen Layton Leasure, Dec. 20, daughter of attenders Chanley Layton and Harvest Leasure.

Our Meetings for Worship provide a helpful balance of thoughtful, deep silence and inspired, heartfelt and diverse verbal ministry. SAYMA's Committee on Ministry and Nurture met here in March. Its members conducted a worship sharing session involving our Meeting on the topic, "Love of God, Fear of God". The meditation provided our seekers with new insights into the subject and the participants.

Our main time of fellowship is monthly "Meeting for Eating". Study and discussion opportunities are provided by our bi-weekly Adult Forum, using the book *Plain Living*, by Catherine Whitmire, and two Friendly Eights groups which meet occasionally. The Committee on Ministry & Oversight meets bi-monthly. Other committees meet as necessary.

The Meeting Newsletter, written by Jesse Mock after each Meeting for Business, keeps everyone informed. In addition, we strive to stay connected through e-mails, telephoning, and personal visits.

We received a big surprise in March: a notice that our "home" at Sharing House (since July of 1992) will no longer be available to us after the end of May. We are engaged in the process of finding a short-term meeting place, and then we will turn our attention toward a long-term solution. Maybe, at long last, we will have a meeting room with windows!

Although we do not have a local "Quaker" project per se, our members are engaged in many activities in the community: volunteer work with the Center for Dialogue which our Meeting helped start, a local bread kitchen, Children's Center, war protests and peace vigils, work against the death penalty, and writing or calling state and national legislators.

We believe we are an important presence in our community and in the world, and we remain committed to making that presence ever stronger.

Grace, Peace, and Love

[ **Approved, Meeting for Business, May 15, 2005** ]

**Celo Monthly Meeting - State of Meeting**  
**May 2005**

The heart of Celo Meeting remains our worship experience, which continues to have great depth and life. The return of attenders and members from the past, a surge in new attenders, and a steady increase in memberships have all contributed to this vitality. But we have also experienced an increased level of coming

and going from Meeting during worship, which disturbs several worshiper. The clerks and Ministry and Care have undertaken gently but firmly to make worshiper mindful of this concern.

2004 was an election year, and several of us took active part in campaigning for the losing side. Mindful of the pain and sorrow for our nation, the world polity, and the earth that the election results portended, the clerks scheduled a midweek worship sharing about the election on Wednesday November 3, so as to lessen the possibility of a highly politicized meeting for worship the following first Day. The sharing was rich and deeply moving, and our meeting community was joined by several neighbors in the sharing. Two of these began attending meeting thereafter. The clerk did need to step in to end a discussion that sprang from our habitual close, "Does any Friend have something to add that did not rise to the level of ministry out of the silence?" This reminded us that this grey area between worship time dedicated to listening and speaking out of the silence and announcements needed further attention as to proper ordering of these "borderline" messages. Celo Friends wonder if other SAYMA meetings have experience with this issue.

We continue to labor with our First Day School program, particularly the challenge of creating a meaningful program for teens which actually draws them to the Meeting. We have observed with great interest Asheville Meeting's active First Day School ministry, and have held two meetings to consider how to bring younger Friends from kindergarten up into a longer worship experience with us. An ongoing concern is that the parents still bear most of the burden of leadership and staffing our First Day School activities. After a couple of active years in the adult education program, interest has ebbed, and we await the dehiscence of new seeds from amongst our adult members and attenders.

Peace and Social Concerns continued this year with a small but consistent committee. With the war in Iraq, a degree of dismay and disillusionment has affected Celo Friends, but as the tsunami in southeast Asia demonstrated events may be determined by forces beyond human power to control or even comprehend. The committee's response to these events has been some shift of focus and temporal perspective. We have continued the work of Chuck Fager of Quaker House, who brought the "Consumer's Guide to the Military" to our local high school in the fall. We are also inspired by Cookeville Friends' success in opening their high school to a fuller picture of the implications of military service for teens. One of our clerks spoke out valiantly against the decision by the local school board to initiate a Junior ROTC program, but was given short shrift by the board. However, the County Commissioners agreed to monitor the whether the claimed benefits of the program justify ongoing funding.

Celo Friends are working with other local churches to start an Interfaith Peace Council. Friends hope to give counsel to students considering military service, possibly with the help of other churches. This Council has emerged from the fellowship of different faith communities at the weekly peace vigil in the Burnsville Town Square, begun by a Meeting attender and ongoing since December. In addition Celo has attended the fledgling peace network at Common Light in Black Mountain, along with three other western NC SAYMA meetings. We again sent a delegation to the School of the Americas Watch this November in Columbus GA.

Celo Friends have worked to bring Rural Southern Voice for Peace, begun by a member of our meeting, into better communication with SAYMA, which has resulted in the director reporting at the 2005 SAYMA Yearly Meeting for Business sessions. We have requested a SAYMA rep to be brought forward from Nominating Committee as a liaison to RSVP.

The Meeting matched personal contributions to tsunami relief, thereby raising more than \$2,000. More importantly, two members helped in tsunami relief efforts in South Asia, including two weeks medical relief work in South India by a doctor and another member's help with initial relief in Sri Lanka, where she was visiting family when the wave hit.

We are delighted to report steady progress on our new meeting house, which is now closed in and decked. The basic design was worked out by a local master timberframe builder, with design details worked out as we go along by called meetings for business. It features a timberframe roof with standard construction walls. The roof timbers, decking, and interior wainscoting were all cut and milled by the Meeting. The electrical plan includes sound amplification for the hard of hearing. A riverrock chimney has just been

completed, with stone gathered by the Meeting and Arthur Morgan School in separate workdays from a liberal supply of rock deposits left by the fall '04 hurricane-induced floods. The Meeting has taken great care with the design decision making process by called meetings, which have frequently been monthly. For the most part, members have shown great forbearance in reaching consensus where there has occasionally been strong disagreement. As in other instances, it has been fortuitous to have two Meeting clerks to share this responsibility. The building process is moving along slowly but surely, and the building is beautiful. Y'all come.

Census: Celo Meeting has experienced one death, one birth, and we have received two attenders into membership. We recently provided support and have held two spirit-filled Meetings for Healing for a member suffering from a recurrent cancer. We are losing a longtime meeting stalwart, moving to the Pacific Northwest, who has been an active member, officer, and generous donor, including a gift which made Margithaus - our caretaker residence and social center - possible.

Respectfully submitted to SAYMA,  
Bob McGahey, co-clerk

### **State of the Meeting 2005 Charleston, WV**

Charleston Friends Meeting focused more on internal spiritual growth than on concerns of the world this year, though we continue to pray for peace and reconciliation among nations as we hold our leaders in the Light. We began occasional worship sharing on the fifth First Day of the month, and set aside the last few minutes of worship for expressions of joys and concerns by those present.

Meeting for Worship is usually held in space rented from a community development organization. Attendance has increased, with more frequent visitors and the addition of new (and returning) families. We rejoice when adult children of Friends return for visits, or sojourn in the community enriching our lives with their enthusiasm and experience. We are blessed by having members and attenders with the gift of ministry, and we worship in sometimes deep silence, surrounded by the bustle of a city neighborhood.

Meeting continues its concerns about the American Friends Service Committee -sponsored West Virginia Economic Justice Project and NEW Plus Project. We held two project staff in the Light as they confronted serious health problems, and grieved the loss of Carol Sharlip this spring after a long illness. Through its Peace and Social Concerns committee, Meeting is offering support to the project as way opens. We still hope for stable and adequate funding for this valuable social ministry.

Our experiment with worship sharing began with exploration of how individuals came to Friends, and what makes Meeting important to them. Thinking prayerfully about things that might enrich Friends spiritual life that weren't present then in meeting led to a change in the format of worship, by adding an informal period for sharing joys and concerns and holding people in the Light that many appreciate. More recently we have examined faith and work, and are continuing to look at manifestations of faith in Friends' daily lives in worship sharing.

We continue an informal adult discussion series. Robert Helvey, a retired military officer with a talent for organizing, led a discussion on the work of the Albert Einstein Institution, which has fomented nonviolent democratic change in various parts of the world using tactics similar to the recent Orange revolution in the Ukraine. Referrals from SAYMA resulted in thoughtful discussions on faith and the environment, which continued through consideration of Lester Brown's *Plan B*. Friends struggled to express their concerns for the environment in spiritual terms and in accord with Quaker testimonies, often finding their technical expertise distracting them from the central issue. A discussion on Quakers and Islam brought a fruitful exchange with the local Islamic center, and gave Friends a better appreciation of the faith and

practice of our Muslim brothers and sisters. It also led to an opportunity to express solidarity through contributing to Muslim relief efforts after the devastating tsunami.

For many years, we have prepared a holiday breakfast for mothers and children in a local women's shelter. We also prepare dinner for men's shelter residents in midwinter. We've also maintained our ties to the broader religious community through participation in the Interfaith Council, and the West Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy. Several Friends are active in the West Virginia Patriots for Peace, which holds Friday noon vigils and other events in opposition to the ongoing war in Iraq.

A twice monthly Bible Study group meets in Friends' homes.

Heavy rains in September caused flooding near the Ohio River and forced us to cancel the regional fall Quaker gathering. We look forward to resuming the gathering this year.

Charleston Friends were disappointed by the outcome of the fall's election, not so much by who won and lost, as by the message it seemed to send about the climate of fear in our country. We are saddened by the "permanent war" mentality that appears to have a grip on good people who otherwise share our faith. We are discouraged by the continued violence in the middle east and elsewhere, and dismayed by our country's role in much of it. However, we are also inspired by the millions of Americans who do *not* think the war in Iraq was worth it, who question the wisdom of a foreign policy based on bluster and coercion, and a domestic agenda based on greed. We were moved by the echo of George Fox that we read in Peggy Senger Parsons' letter on "Exactly the same number of peacemakers," when she reminded us, "I am first a citizen of another country, one that is not bound by time or geography, one that is not affected by fear or greed or ignorance. It is the only country that gets my full allegiance, and the only army I will fight in. It is the Kingdom of Christ, and He is my sovereign and friend, and co-creator. And when I work and fight for His cause, it can only benefit this temporal realm."

### **State of the Meeting Report, Chattanooga Friends Meeting 5<sup>th</sup> month/2004 to 5<sup>th</sup> month/2005**

The year has gone by swiftly as Chattanooga Friends continue to provide a place for Friends and attenders to meet in an unprogrammed manner. We have worked on how to improve our ways of greeting newcomers while educating those who come more often. While we rejoice in the attenders who have made our meeting their own and in the return of former Friends who have come back, we have been saddened by the departure of dear Friends to other places in the country or world. Despite the quickly departing year, we have completed several projects and feel uplifted by what we have accomplished.

Chattanooga Friends have focused on enriching the experience of meeting for worship by encouraging Friends to worship and speak true to their leadings from the Spirit. Through our newsletter, second hour discussions, and committee meetings, we have discussed how we know when there is a message, whether the message is for us individually or for us as a corporate body, and when to speak during meeting for worship. We have also rewritten our "Welcome to New Attenders" note, and we have designed a packet of material which we call the "Inquirer's Packet." It is to be given to attenders after they have been coming for three or four visits, and it includes various Friendly tracts as well as the meeting directory, and SAYMA's guide to faith and practice.

Some of our projects have lasted only a day or so while others have been ongoing. In the summer of 2004, we hosted two Buddhist monks who were on a peace march to the Oak Ridge nuclear arms plant, and in the 3<sup>rd</sup> month of 2005, we entertained Julie Harlow as she traveled to educate Friends about Moscow Quaker House. We welcomed the SAYMA Representative Meeting in December and that proved to be enriching. Our First Day School continues to do well. Our community garden produced loads of produce, although we only had three regular gardeners. We have continued to be active in Chattanooga's chapter of the Interfaith Hospitality Network for homeless families.

Our meetinghouse has had its repairs. We replaced windows and storm windows, installed a vapor barrier in the basement in an attempt to reduce mold and fungus in the main part of the house, we remodeled the bathrooms, did some interior painting and most recently installed window locks. A yet unresolved situation is still unfolding as we solve the mystery of three break-ins. All of the time and money we spent on the meetinghouse has led us to question how we spent our time and energy. The meetinghouse, as a few Friends have pointed out, is a concrete reminder of our presence in Chattanooga and it comforts them just knowing it is there.

As a first-time clerk, I have found the job to be demanding yet rewarding. The meeting sent me to a clerking workshop at Pendle Hill facilitated by Arthur Larrabee. That was incredibly helpful and uplifting. One of the points that came out in that workshop was that we are not just “x” number of people coming together to worship but we are “x + 1” total, including the Holy Spirit, the body and spirit of Jesus, who is with us as we worship and pray. The Light is the adhesive that binds us together as a body in unity. Without that Love, we are only individuals. It is the responsibility of the clerk to see that Meetings for Worship with the Attention to Business go smoothly with all voices heard, no one being disrespected, but the whole meeting being held together by the Light of Love.

Submitted by Chuck Jones, clerk,  
For the Chattanooga Friends Meeting  
This 5<sup>th</sup> month of 2005

### **State of the Meeting, Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends Columbia, South Carolina, June 2004-2005**

Columbia Friends Meeting continues to be a lively and spirited presence in central South Carolina. We have experienced changes both within the meeting and how it relates to the larger community. As in past years those changes have involved deep thought and we continue to require us to seek further guidance and discernment.

Columbia Friends were blessed with one new member, Norma Jackson, and were happy to have new attenders which included two families with young children and several college students from the country of Colombia. Our new attenders helped ease the loss of Friends leaving for Walhalla and Russia as well as one family on sabbatical in Portugal. We miss one Friend who left to pursue a different spiritual calling.

Friends continued their work in the larger community. Involvement included prison visitation, community mediation, volunteerism in the homeless community and local peace resource center, and continued support to the local Women in Black vigils against war. We continued our participation in wider Quaker service with representatives to FGC, Quaker House and AFSC Corporation and New Garden Friends School Board. We continue to seek opportunities to work with other groups in support of the Minute on our experience with Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Friends from FGC. We supported a family member of an attender engaged in civil protest. We have joined a military counter recruitment campaign.

Among nurturance needs were comfort on the loss of a family member and fundraising for a family member of a Friend injured seriously in another state. Continued prayers are needed as he starts a difficult recovery. We offered nurturance and prayers for Friends recovering from illness and those needing emotional and spiritual support.

Our vibrant group of 16 Young Friends included ages 18 months to 19 years of age and their energy and enthusiasm has greatly blessed our meeting this year. First day School has had a series of programs on Bible Study, biographies of significant Friends, craft projects, and community service projects. One young friend graduated from High School. Others attained honors and achievements including the publication of an essay in Friends Journal and submission of letters to the editor of our local paper. One of our young friends



serves on our Ministry and Nurture Committee. Young friends have also ably led several of the adult second hour of worship on different topics including the gathering of information for this report.

Columbia is blessed with many friends who have led interesting and challenging programs with a special appreciation for Bible Study and others who spoke their heart about personal witness. Outside speakers have included Julie Harlow ( Friends House Moscow), Ricardo Esquivia from Colombia; Chuck Fager from Quaker House; Barbara McClain local activist, Antonio Vasques of Project Voice AFSC; Humberto Brown of AFSC NYC, Carlos Rosero, Rafael Perea, MD of Colombia, and local community leader Mary Rawl.

Meeting concerns during the year involved speaking slowly, loudly, and clearly in meeting, remembering that we speak from many voices and experiences and we want to remain inclusive. We expressed a desire to have a prophetic voice as well as a welcoming voice. In our programming we strive to be balanced in meeting programming needs. The meeting recognizes the importance in expressing our interest and acting on our concern for nurturing young friends. We continue to struggle with our interest and need for worship and activity space of our own. How to allocate our funds, with friends having varied strong feelings, and how the budget can reflect the right spiritual direction for the meeting remains foremost on our minds as we continue to hold that struggle in the light.

### **State of the Cookeville Preparative Meeting, May 2005**

The Cookeville Preparative Meeting has enjoyed its life as a spiritual community in the past year. We continue to meet regularly, grateful for the friendship and faithful support from those we know and appreciate, even if we have not always found unity on some issues. We have also enjoyed more frequent drop-in visitors this year, some of whom have participated in parts of the meeting life.

This year the Meeting has worked to provide information on military enlistment in the local high school. Along with the Veterans for Peace group, several in the Meeting set up a literature table in the school commons to inform students of their options, such as the Peace Corps and AmeriCorps, to suggest questions that students should ask recruiters, and to point out the effects of war on returning veterans. After the principal received a complaint about some of the literature, extensive meetings and negotiations ensued with him, the school board, and the director of schools. The ACLU, the national Veterans for Peace, and Quaker advocacy organizations contributed advice and counsel to our efforts. Ultimately, in awareness of federal court precedents concerning discrimination against or denying access to a speaker solely to suppress a point of view, the school administration agreed to accept our presence in the school and our efforts to help students fully realize what a decision to commit to the military could mean in their lives. After considerable discussion, the Sense of the Meeting, with one person standing aside, was not to inform the press of this outcome but to simply thank the school administration, in hopes of keeping existing communication bridges open. The difficulty of reaching a Sense of the Meeting made us realize that we need to sharpen our consensus-building skills and learn more about what “standing aside” means.

Spiritual highs of the year include being allowed back into the high school through dialog rather than litigation; our second annual retreat, at which we explored, through queries, how to prepare inwardly and outwardly for worship; hosting a 6-week Quakerism 101 course, which drew on our own and outside resources; initiating what turned out to be a large and successful benefit for a family undergoing the stress of major illness; and participating in a Seder sponsored by the local Havurah group and the Unitarian-Universalists.

## **Annual Report of the Crossville Friends Meeting to SAYMA 2004/05**

1. The weekly Meeting for Worship has been held during the year at the Pleasant Hill - Uplands - Retirement Community, a convenience for the 5 members who live in Pleasant Hill. Other members/attenders come by car, driving from Crossville or Knoxville.

2. The Meeting members continued to voice their strong opposition to the government's war efforts in the Middle East and elsewhere, and wrote frequent individual letters of protest to legislators, letters to the editor, etc.

3. Dennis Gregg, founder and Headmaster of the Obed Headwaters School which has been located at the Crossville Friends Meeting House for the past five and a half years, has with great regret decided to close the school while keeping on several students to the end of the year exceptionally to complete their academic requirements.

4. The Meeting has sought to find ways of reaching out to Friends and others who might be interested in a Quaker meeting located on the premises of the Uplands Retirement Community, and has consequently placed an ad in the classified section of the *Friends Journal* during the past year which will be continued thru the coming year.

5. The Meeting continues to support Central American aid projects, aid initiated by Toby Rogers. He has continued to find funds for the purchase of used school buses, which for year after year he has located, rehabilitated, and filled with miscellaneous school supplies, and then driven south as a donation to needy schools there. To date three school buses, two trucks, and four other vehicles have been donated to schools in Central America.

6. The Meeting House continues to be used by a group of some 10 to 15 who meet for worship and discussions each Sunday evening.

7. Special attention continues to be needed to ensure the timely control of termites in and around the Meeting House, which has been done by the appropriate placement of termite stakes on a timely basis.

8. Meeting for Worship was held at the Cumberland State Park over the Easter weekend as in past years. The Meeting had rented an entire unit with some members staying over the weekend.

9. Meeting members continue to participate in the Friends Committee of National Legislation (FCNL) Letter Writing Project, which among other topics focuses on the global problem of small and light weapons which kill an average of 300,000 people every year. Each month the project focuses on a different topic.

10. Meeting members continue to select in advance an article from the *Friends Journal* for discussion following Meeting for Worship each week. It has been found that this helps members to read the *Journal* more regularly than heretofore.

## **Foxfire Friends Meeting State of the Meeting Report, 2005**

In December we sent a letter to Hutala, Afghanistan, after consultation with the leader of the local mosque and a knowledgeable attender who has had over 30 years of experience teaching in the Middle East, and is familiar with the customs and speaks Arabic. This coincided with the one year anniversary of the US bombing of their village.

One Sunday in late January we were outnumbered by visitors! Oh happy day! All have been back, and five (one family) have become regular attenders.

The newcomers have given us an opportunity to revisit Quaker process and history. For several years the acronym QPE, meaning "Quaker Process Exercise," has been on our calendar for second hour every fourth Sunday. In the hour, anything related to Quaker process is discussed. Recently, we had a lengthy and meaty brainstorming session about childcare and what we want from children's religious education.

Another Foxfire tradition is to hold an occasional “Foxfire Day.” This year we gathered to address the query of “What do we expect from our Meeting?”, to give our meetinghouse a good Spring Cleaning, and share a bought pizza.

During second hour two Sundays a month, we have been studying Beyond Belief by Elaine Pagels. Bob Keiter’s tree house in the meetinghouse play yard continues to delight those who see it and those who play in it. SAYMA’s Ministry and Nurture Committee met at Foxfire one weekend this winter and enriched our Sunday worship.

Some Foxfire f/Friends were led to provide food for 28 peace marchers (from the U.S., Australia, and Japan), who stopped at the Unitarian-Universalist Church in Gray on their way from Oak Ridge to New York City. They intend to submit to the United Nations a proposed resolution asking for non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and the dismantling of current nuclear weapons. Some Foxfire f/Friends joined the walkers for a spell, some for a full day.

Four Foxfire f/Friends also took part in a peace rally in Fayetteville, NC, on March 19, and six took part in the peace rally in Asheville on March 20. Caleb Shimberg, an attender of our Meeting, was one of the speakers. A new elegant one-person banner, black lettering on deep red, announced “another Quaker voice for peace” on one side and “Foxfire Friends Meeting” on the other and included SAYMA’s website address.

### **Greenville Monthly Meeting Annual Report for June 1, 2004-May 31, 2005**

We continue to be proud of and excited by the growth of the Greenville Monthly Meeting (GMM). We have 14-18 attenders (which typically includes 1-2 Furman University students) and continue to embrace visitors from the other churches. We have also welcomed several children as occasional attenders, which has required that GMM address the spiritual and logistical needs of offering First Day School. We also had to say goodbye to four attenders/members who moved out of the area.

#### **GMM’s Activities**

We have been involved in many activities during the past year, most of which were reported in our regularly published newsletter.

The Clemson Preparatory Meeting remains under our care, and we are encouraged by its ongoing development. We have continued our mid-week Worship Group at Furman University, gathering each Wednesday from 12:00-12:30 in the Chapel of the university. Several visiting students have been welcomed to the Furman Worship Group since September.

In the fall, our Clerk gave a presentation about Quakerism to the “Mere Christianity Forum” (a student organization at Furman), which meets every Monday evening to discuss various religious topics.

We were happy and proud to accept Victoria Welborn, one of our attenders (and current GMM treasurer), as an official member of our Meeting and the Religious Society of Friends.

Two of our attenders are now overseas engaged in exciting activities. One (who is a GMM member) is teaching English in a school in Mexico, and the other is serving in Cameroon with the Peace Corps. They provide us with email updates of their activities and adventures.

GMM representatives also continue to attend programs organized by Palmetto Friends Group (PFG) and SAYMA. This spring, GMM members and members from the Clemson Group participated in the annual PFG gathering, which was held in Columbia. We recognize that we would benefit by more involvement in PFG and SAYMA committees and programs.

Especially rewarding has been our attempt to educate and enlighten ourselves about Quakerism and Quaker activities. So far, this has taken the form of three different sessions following Meeting for Worship. The first one focused on our reactions to an article in *The Friends Journal* (“The Divine Source of Vocal Ministry”); the second one centered on our responses to a general query (“Does, or should, speech serve the same function in everyday life as it does in Meeting for Worship?”); and the most recent session involved

watching and discussing a video on Quaker House. (The Quaker House web site describes its mission in the following manner: “Quaker House of Fayetteville [NC] is a witness of the peace testimony of the Religious Society of Friends. Quaker House stands in opposition to the violence and prejudice that exist in our society, offering a peaceful, life affirming presence in the midst of several of the largest military bases in the country. Quaker House staff work for change through education, advocacy, caring and counseling.”) GMM is raising money (separate from its budgeted funds) to contribute to Quaker House after Memorial Day.

As noted in the overview, GMM has been excited by the challenges associated with establishing a First Day School (FDS). Although still evolving, our FDS typically serves the needs of one to three children. A parent and a member/attender work together with the children, leading a variety of activities, including reading stories (many with a Quaker element); observing and identifying things in nature; and assorted craft projects.

A small group in GMM is still interested in finding a permanent home for GMM so that we can meet at a time suited to our group for Sunday worship. The efforts of this group are being undertaken with much reflection and consideration for what is best for GMM.

GMM has also tentatively explored the possibility of channeling the talents of one of our attenders into the area of pediatric healthcare for homeless families. The initial conversations have been informative and warmly received, but they have not yet produced tangible opportunities for our attender.

We conducted two Clearness Committees. Both focused on job-related/vocational issues.

### **GMM’s Giving Opportunities**

GMM has felt led over the past year to dedicate time and financial assistance to various groups and individuals. Most of our financial contributions were to local/state groups. This included supplying clothing and other items to a family at Christmas. Furthermore, we continue to have a representative on the Board of Directors of the Greenville Area Interfaith Hospitality Network (a local group that focuses on the needs of homeless families). We also contributed to relief funds after Hurricane Charley struck the west coast of Florida.

### **GMM’s Fellowship**

GMM continues to rejoice in mutual fellowship. We enjoy socializing after meeting with refreshments and conversation. This has been followed by singing on one or two occasions.

As we noted in last year’s report, we possess much talent and potential for spiritual growth and leadership. We pray for opportunities to serve God and our community, and to continue to find joy in the Light and among ourselves.

### **Conclusion**

As a Meeting, we make efforts at leading simple, environmentally-responsible lives. Indeed, one of our attenders recently had a letter published in The Friends Journal pertaining to this general issue. Given our concerns along these lines, we would like to close our report with a verse that was shared by two of our former attenders, Lew and Helen Stratton:

Work with joy.  
Pray with love.  
Dream from your heart.  
Share what you have.  
Live simply.  
Love deeply.  
Thank God always.

Presented by Scott Henderson, Clerk  
May 1, 2005

**Huntsville Friends Meeting  
State of the Meeting Report**

(available in hard copy only)

**Memphis Friends Meeting  
State of the Meeting Report, 2004-2005**

*How is the Spirit Faring Among Memphis Friends Meeting?*

In Memphis Friends Meeting the gathering for worship remains our center pole. It is there we are most aware of the Spirit among us. This year our vocal ministry has often expressed concerns for our nation, its leadership, the war, the love of the enemy or how to find God in those we strongly disagree with. Out of such concerns came the opportunity to help bring the AFSC *Eyes Wide Open Exhibit* to Memphis. This display of over 1,300 pairs of combat boots and scores of civilian shoes represented some of the human cost of the Iraq war. Rain threatened, but the outdoor exhibit at the National Civil Rights Museum was very moving. We have continued to display a tally of casualties on a large sign from our front Meetinghouse window.

Ministry and Nurture has been an active committee this year in support of the Meeting. They have focused on Inreach and Outreach – creating two brown-bag lunch series after meeting on introductory Quakerism and the testimonies. They continue to focus on opportunities for building and supporting a greater sense of community. The meeting was also challenged this year by what seemed at times to be inappropriate vocal ministry. Ministry and Nurture considered ways to nurture the Meeting through this time which necessitated patience and gentle eldering. This may not have changed the behavior, but it was an opportunity for us to deepen our spiritual community as we sought corporately to seek that of God in a difficult situation.

The Memphis Young Friends have grown in number this year, with 3 toddlers, 1 high-schooler, 3 new middle-schoolers, and a consistent group of active boys and a girl. They were most fond of Ron McDonald's storytelling, which occasionally could be heard through the meeting room wall, leaving us all curious. In addition to these stories, First Day School included lessons on conscientious objection, nonviolence and having a meeting for business to decide actions to help the victims of the tsunami. We see evidence in the words and concerns of these Young Friends that they have a heart for justice and peace, that encourages us all. We have also seen the development of character and leadership as Young Adult Friends, who have grown up in the Meeting, begin to take on roles of responsibility, such as recording clerk and yearly meeting workshop leader.

Shiloh Barnat joined her family (Stephen and baby Lydia) in membership this year. We are enriched by the Friends who are newer to the Meeting as they become involved, and share their gifts and concerns with us. Ministries of the Meeting most often depend on individuals sharing these gifts and concerns. We have continued making and serving quarterly meals at a homeless shelter for women and children. Our newsletter has a strong voice and helps keep us connected. Our involvement with the larger Quaker world continues through volunteer leadership with the Yearly Meeting.

The Spirit fares among us from the centering worship out into the world, in varied, simple and sometimes challenging ways.

**Nashville Friends State of the Meeting Report – May, 2005**

“How does the Spirit fare among us?”

The Nashville Friends Meeting is a spiritual community with many parts. Our new Meetinghouse, which we have had for almost two years now, has served well in attracting new attenders. Indeed, we have so many attending now that we have instituted the wearing of nametags. The growth in numbers has been accompanied with a deepening of Spirit during Meetings for worship. The gathered silence is often so deep, so profound, that our worship often runs an extra 10 to 15 minutes longer than before. Many of our

community are comfortable in speaking from the silence, and the messages are from the heart.

The Wednesday evening Meeting for Worship, started in the mid-1990s, continues every week at 7:00 PM with faithful attendance by those who want additional worship and those unable to come to Sunday Meeting for Worship.

The Nashville Friends meeting has been blessed with a large number of children in our First Day School. Our teen group is the most active we have had in years. Ten of our Young Friends have attended Southern Appalachian Young Friends (SAYF) retreats this year! The SAYF community is a true gift of SAYMA and we appreciate it.

Partly in response to the increase in new attenders, Ministry and Counsel sponsored Quakerism classes on Tuesday evenings. Friends who had attended the spring 2004 series were reluctant to disband, so a continuation class, using Catherine Whitmire's Plain Living book, was held in the fall of 2004. A third class, using Michael Birkel's book Silence and Witness: the Quaker Tradition, was held in spring 2005. These classes were designed to last six weeks each, but the chapter in Birkel's book on Testimonies was so engrossing that the third class lasted seven weeks. Each series had between six and ten regular attenders.

The Ministry and Counsel committee has been seeking discernment in the area of membership: What is the meaning of membership in our monthly meeting? What are the responsibilities of members toward the meeting community? What are the responsibilities of the meeting towards its members? Of special concern are those who are listed as members but who have been out of touch with the meeting for a number of years.

Nashville Friends support our members who follow their spiritual leadings in the wider Quaker community. One of our members has received support and guidance through a committee as she works with Friends General Conference (FGC) activities and attends the School of the Spirit. Others in our meeting have received financial support to attend the SAYMA yearly meeting, the annual FGC Gathering, and Pendle Hill clerking workshops.

After much work as a faith community, Nashville Friends found a spiritual path through the thorny situation of having an attender who is also a registered sexual abuse offender. Our meeting eventually developed a comprehensive working paper that addresses the concerns of all involved by presenting a Policy and an Action Plan. We realize that our work is ongoing. The threshing sessions that preceded the minute were deeply moving. We worked through the process with love and God-given guidance.

Following the concept of Inner Light leads to Outward Action, we are involved in a number of activities that reflect our individual and group witness to basic Quaker testimonies. In support of the Peace testimony, several members of Nashville Meeting organized a series of well-attended early Sunday morning meetings on the so-called "100 Year Lamb's War," based on the work of Chuck Fager. Following these meetings, two major activities were begun. One activity was the organization of a series of Alternatives to Violence (ATV) workshops; the first workshop was held Spring 2005, with two more planned for the near future. The second activity was the training of several Friends to answer telephone calls as part of the GI Rights Hotline. This hotline serves active-duty U.S. military service personnel who have questions regarding their participation in wartime actions.

We held our annual Regional Gathering of Friends in early March this year, expanding our invitation to all Friends from the western edge of SAYMA. We were happy to have a strong group from Cookeville Preparative Meeting take part in the leadership of this year's gathering. Much Spirit and community was felt among us, and there was deep sharing.

Nashville Friends continue to make our presence known in the community, both in the immediate neighborhood of our meetinghouse and in the greater Nashville area. We have representation in the local Neighborhood Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC). CAC recently obtained a significant grant from MDHA. The grant money will be used for neighborhood improvement in the vicinity of North Nashville where our meetinghouse resides. The residents determine the usage, such as renovating existing housing; vacant lots and empty houses make up about 30 percent of this mostly Black residential neighborhood. Through the work of individual Friends, we have an ongoing dialog with members of churches located near us. The meeting also has a membership in Tying Nashville Together (TNT), a Nashville-wide consortium of faith communities

that seeks to improve the conditions of our citizens. The Meeting also continues its long-time support of the Nashville Peace and Justice Center.

Our meetinghouse is used regularly for daytime and evening activities during the week. Local organizations not directly associated with the Nashville Meeting have also been allowed use of the meetinghouse for yoga classes, Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, drumming workshops, and play rehearsals, to name a few. The Nashville meeting requires our property to be used in a responsible manner, and normally a member or attendee is associated with each organization that uses it.

Nashville Friends Meeting continues to grow in the Spirit and seek its unique vision and place in the world. As we continue in this new space, we are very conscious of the energy it takes to complete our vision for it. Friends' giving has increased, and yard sales have been held. There is much to wrestle with and much to be grateful for this year as we continue to seek to be faithful and balance our commitments with our means, our external actions with our communally discerned spiritual clarity.

### **State of the Meeting Report to SAYMA Oxford Friends Meeting -- May 2005**

As we gathered to prepare this report, several aspects of our meeting life emerged clearly: our dedication to Children's Meeting; our care of one another; our careful attention to Quaker process; and living out the Quaker testimonies in our community.

Children's Meeting After spending the first 10 minutes with all of us in worship, the children and the adult who has volunteered for that week leave meeting and go to a separate area. We have used various Quaker curriculum (*e.g. John Woolman, Quaker Earthcare*) and story books on Quaker history. Some adults make up their own lesson based on something important in their life (*e.g. the Holocaust, and Buddhist meditation and yoga*) and tie it into Quaker testimonies. We had one lesson on Sojourner Truth complete with computer generated tattoos, "And ain't I a woman?" One high point each year is the visit of farm animals to meeting, brought by one of our members involved in animal rights and welfare advocacy.

At rise of meeting, the children and adult return and share what they have learned – this may include skits, songs or arts and crafts. We realized that for every single person at meeting, this time with the children is the highlight of our life together. In the same way that spoken ministry emerges out of the silence, we are all ministered to in a "gathered" way by the children. The adults who teach, and all of us who listen so eagerly each Sunday, learn as much or more than the children. Parents expressed "profound gratitude" for the nurture given their children. One person commented that we have the most emphasis on children of any meeting he had ever attended. One of the adults who teach regularly described her experience as "just fabulous." Our small size (average of 15 adults and 3-5 kids each week) make it easy to do it this way.

Our care of one another: As one member stated, "There is much love for one another." Everyone cares for everyone. We have been small enough to function without committees until now. As we close this yearly report a number of family crises among those at our meeting (and the subsequent pain and confusion that affected the entire meeting) have led us to contact Memphis MM for pastoral support. The clear sense of the meeting is leading us to establish a Ministry and Nurture Committee, with a meeting for learning set with two members of Memphis MM. As we talked with Memphis MM, it was clear that folks could begin to "fall through the cracks" since we are growing. It made all the difference to both our clerk and our meeting that we could call upon Memphis MM and receive such immediate support and wisdom!

We have reached a point after 6 years together (worship group, preparative meeting and monthly meeting) that we have a corporate identity. We have faith in the group and Quaker process, and though from one week to the next we could have only few of the same faces and lots of turnover, we still have the same deeper sense of being a meeting. We do feel keenly the lack of "elders" in the sense of having so few very seasoned Quakers in meeting, and yet we feel hopeful about taking the next steps "in the Light."



Careful attention to Quaker process: From our time as a preparative meeting we have given much time and energy to learning how to conduct a Quaker meeting for business. We were blessed to have an assistant Clerk who had been Clerk at London Monthly Meeting, and she has guided our clerk and meeting well. A number of excellent Quaker pamphlets on "the sense of the meeting" have been studied and referred to over and over again. We have had business meetings that became worship sharing, much to our deep satisfaction!

We have also taken seriously the discipline of silence, and though rare, we have spoken ministry. An article in the Friends Journal on spoken ministry served as the basis for both a worship sharing and a meeting for learning on what it means to have a gathered meeting, and what constitutes true spoken ministry. Since spoken ministry is so rare, some in our meeting have expressed a longing for more. But no one feels stifled or "forbidden" to speak, and many feel the Spirit in our silence – "the silence is wonderful" said one. We concluded that "we have everything we need" to grow, but that we have not paid as much attention to nurturing the spiritual lives of adults as we have of the children. We plan to have more time together to do this, even as we all feel a sense of "openness" to each other and the Spirit.

Community outreach: As part of making known our presence in Oxford, we had a beautiful portable wooden sign made that sits on the front lawn of the home we meet in. We are now listed in the Yellow Pages under "Churches-Quaker" and have our own voice mail system. Folks usually find us from the internet listings. We are still active in the AMOS Network (social justice) and Interfaith Compassion Ministry (local food pantry and emergency funds) as well as Friends Committee on National Legislation. Two of our members were speakers at Friends General Conference summer gathering in 2004. We hosted the Wheels of Justice tour for three days and arranged several university and town appearances. We delighted in visits from Friends traveling from Cambridge, MA, and two of our members were given hospitality by the Live Oaks (Houston, TX) meeting, during their time at the Anderson Cancer Center. One member gave a talk ("Quakers: More than Oatmeal) at the Unitarian Universalist fellowship in Tupelo.

Next big challenges? Our clerk feels it is time (after three years) for her to step down, and the sense of the meeting is NO (chuckle), so this will be an interesting development! We did have a peaceful and gracious "transfer of power" (more chuckles) from our first treasurer to our new treasure, so it bodes well for us! We are also forming our first Ministry and Nurture Committee. Viewing the two [wonderful] videos, Dan Snyder's *Nonviolence and the Dynamics of Transformation*, and Chuck Fager's *A Quaker Declaration of War*, challenges us to identify our corporate witness to the Peace Testimony – we don't know yet what that will be, but trust way will open!

**Royal Worship Group  
State of the Meeting Report**

(available in hard copy only)

## Sevier County Worship Group Annual Report June, 2005

We continue to meet once a month on the second Sunday in Friends' homes. Most of these journeys require a long climb up a steep hill, sometimes with a rough road. But when we are together in silence, we seem to connect beyond the busyness of our individual daily lives. "We know each other in the things of the Spirit." Our average attendance is twelve, ranging from six to eighteen when we gather. We cherish our silence and our fellowship. We are reluctant to move beyond our present purpose: worshiping together followed by fellowship and exchange of ideas, recipes, good snacks, garden bounty, and our individual outreach into the community.

In the Light, Jane Price for the group

### State of Meeting Report for Swannanoa Valley Friends Meeting, 2004-05

Our meeting for worship continues to be a deeply satisfying time of entering together into silence. Sometimes the meeting is silent throughout, but often some vocal ministry occurs carrying the silence into verbal form. Attendance at meeting for worship remains around thirty. New attenders continue to join us. First day school and child care are provided when there are children present. In our meetings for business, we continue to develop sensitivity to all points of view while, at the same time, acting with appropriate speed. We are blessed with harmony in our deliberations.

Our Facilities Committee has had to continue working on issues pertaining to the property we purchased several years ago and now wish to sell. The group who purchased the property has defaulted on their note and we are laboring to work out the terms of a contract that will result in a successful completion of the sale. Due to this preoccupation, we have not been able to select and purchase a permanent meeting place at this time. We are meeting at Common Light in Black Mountain. Common Light is a retreat center owned and operated by two of our members. It is located near the downtown and at the confluence of two streams. It provides an especially beautiful and peaceful setting for our meeting.

Meeting here has given us the opportunity to participate in several retreats and programs that have enriched the life of our meeting. Pendle Hill and Common Light cosponsored three weekend retreats with Dan Snyder. These weekends were centered on "Peacemaking and the Life of the Spirit" We were joined for these weekends by members from Brevard, Celo and Asheville meetings. SVFM made several scholarships available to people wishing to attend. We have also enjoyed a group book study on Engaging the Powers by Walter Wink, a film series on Violence/Nonviolence, and a study of the book When the Rain Returns which is about the Israeli/Palestinian conflict and was coauthored by our Clerk, Tony Bing. We are looking forward to a weekend with Tony and Zohara Simmons also centered on When the Rain Returns.

In addition to these studies on peace in our world, many members of our meeting are involved in community service locally. Some areas of involvement include teaching and tutoring at the Swannanoa Valley Youth Development Center, helping local people with basic needs through SV Christian Ministry, participation in Asheville's National Day of Solidarity with Palestinians, and sponsorship and participation in an Earth Day conference offered locally by Caring for Creation: Interfaith Partners of WNC. We contributed to the AFSC Crisis Fund for victims of the tsunami in Asia. We are involved in support of state legislation for a moratorium on the death penalty and in opposition to another piece of legislation that would deny legal recognition to same sex couples. One of our members, also, keeps us informed about the action priorities of FCNL.

We have cared for the needs of members and attenders in various ways. They included oversight

of the wedding of David LaMotte and Deanna Lemond, a ninetieth birthday celebration for Kay Parke, and giving care to members with serious illness or in need of clarity in facing special challenges. We were saddened by the death of Bill Neisel, one of our elderly members. We conducted his memorial service at Highland Farms and a graveside service. We also provided hospitality to his family who had traveled far to be with us. We have joyfully welcomed one new member and four transfers from other meetings. Seven people are enrolled in a Quakerism 101 class.

The Spirit has richly blessed us in this past year. We are grateful.

### **West Knoxville Monthly Meeting State of the Meeting Report – 2005**

Our spiritual journey this year has been one of powerful transitions. We have experienced together the death of a young adult Friend and our first in-ground burial at our burial grounds. We also have celebrated a marriage in our Meeting and the births of two children into our Meeting community as well as the graduation from school of six of our Young Friends. We have joined together in Spirit for a memorial service, marriage under the care of the Meeting, baby showers, and graduation celebrations. Sharing in these activities has brought us closer together in the Spirit and has heightened our sense of community and love for one another.

Friends have also been deeply involved in the care and nurturing of members of our community who are facing illnesses and physical struggles. A number of Friends have been participating in physical and spiritual healing sessions with a member of our Meeting who has been undergoing surgeries and subsequent treatments for cancer. Our community bonds and our spirits have been strengthened through these Friends' acts of faith, love, prayer, and caring.

This year has been an active year for our Meeting in terms of exploring our spiritual beliefs and seeking to know through the Spirit more about Quaker faith and practices. We have held a series of "Quaker 101" sessions throughout the year, and both our Adult Friends and Young Friends have been involved in these discussions. We have continued weekly meetings of our "Quaker Things" group, and Friends have participated in these sessions seeking to explore our spiritual journeys and beliefs together. We have held Threshing Sessions to explore the meaning of membership and to learn more about how Friends perceive membership, responsibilities to the Meeting, and the nature of being Quaker. We also have had a special second hour honoring our Birthright Friends and seeking to learn from them about their spiritual journeys and their perceptions of membership and of being Quaker. In addition, we held a "family retreat" at our Meeting House this year to bring us closer together as a community and to offer us the chance to play, study, and sing together and to have more involvement between age groups within our Meeting.

We also have sought to learn more from Friends and activists outside of our own community regarding ways to seek peace, nurturing, and caring. Among other activities and sessions, we hosted a meeting and session with the Friends General Council Religious Education Committee and a visit from Sara Woodard from the Center for Development in Central America. We also invited Harry and Laura Robie of Berea Monthly Meeting to meet with our Ministry and Nurture Committee to help us learn more about how Berea coordinates its yearly retreats and about developing Queries. Our Peace and Social Concerns Committee has worked with the American Friends Service Committee and is now involved in seeking to establish a Peace Center at our Meeting. Friends also have been active in participating in the activities of the Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) and have worked to support their activities and to carry our concerns forward to local and state political offices. We have also worked to support the activities of the Oak Ridge Environmental Peace Alliance (OREPA), and Friends have participated in peace rallies and other local activities seeking to promote peace and social justice. In addition, we have continued our alliance with and support of Compassionate Ministries Uganda and are pleased to learn of their continued growth and

success.

Our Young Friends have been quite active in SAYF activities and retreats and also sponsored a trip to the Unitarian Church as part of their exploration of spiritual faiths and practices. The Young Friends have been a vital part of our spiritual journey this year and have helped our Meeting to grow in Spirit and understanding.

A number of Friends have also been involved in various small meeting groups and activities, including Friendly 8s and Meeting for Healing. We have opened the Meeting House to various traveling groups, such as those visitors coming to Hiroshima Day, and we have enjoyed also sharing in their journeys and testimonies.

In summary, this year has been a very active one spiritually for our Meeting. We have been brought together in Spirit through the many transitions we have undergone this year, and we have been challenged to think long and deeply about the meaning of membership, the nature and value of our individual spiritual journeys and testimonies, our relationships to one another and to the Spirit, and the meaning of being Quaker and participating meaningfully in the Quaker Community.